

Psalm 45—Biblical Typology: Solomon and his Wife as a Type of Christ and the Church

From John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*,
trans. Rev. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), English updated.

In this psalm, the grace and beauty of Solomon, his virtues in ruling the kingdom, and also his power and riches, are illustrated and described in terms of high commendation. More especially, as he had taken as his wife a stranger out of Egypt, the blessing of God is promised to him in this relationship, provided the newly espoused bride, bidding adieu [goodbye] to her own nation, and renouncing all attachment to it, devote herself wholly [completely] to her husband. At the same time, there can be no doubt, that under this figure the majesty, wealth, and extent of Christ's kingdom are described and illustrated by appropriate terms, to teach the faithful that there is no felicity [happiness] greater or more desirable than to live under the reign of this king, and to be subject to his government.

To the chief musician upon the lilies; of the sons of Korah; for instruction; a song of loves.

It is well known that this psalm was composed concerning Solomon; but it is uncertain who was its author. It is, in my opinion, probable, that some one of the prophets or godly teachers (whether after Solomon's death, or while he was yet alive, it is of no importance to inquire) took this as the subject of his discourse, with the design of showing, that whatever excellence had been seen in Solomon had a higher application. This psalm is called *a song of loves*, not, as some suppose, because it illustrates the fatherly love of God, as to the benefits which he had conferred in such a distinguished manner on Solomon, but because it contains an expression of rejoicing on account of his happy and prosperous marriage. Thus the words, *of loves*, are put for a descriptive epithet, and denote, that it is a love-song. Indeed, Solomon was called *beloved of the Lord*, 2 Samuel 12:25. But the context, in my opinion, requires that this term *loves* be understood as referring to the mutual love which husband and wife ought to cherish towards each other. But as the word *loves* is sometimes taken in a bad sense, and as even conjugal [marital] affection itself, however well regulated, has always some irregularity of the flesh mingled with it; this name of this song teaches us that the subject here treated of is not some obscene or unchaste amours, but that, under what is here said of Solomon as a type, the holy and divine union of Christ and his Church is described and set forth. . . .

PSALM 45:1-5

1. My heart is boiling over with a good matter: I shall speak of the works which I have made concerning the king: my tongue is as the pen of a swift writer. **2.** Thou art fairer than the sons of men: grace is poured into thy lips; because God hath blessed thee for ever. **3.** Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one! with glory and majesty. **4.** And in thy majesty do thou prosper: ride forth upon the word of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. **5.** Thine arrows are sharp (so that the people fall under thee) in the heart of the enemies of the King.

1. *My heart is boiling over with a good matter.* This preface shows sufficiently that the subject of the psalm is no common one; for whoever the author of it may have been, he here intimates, at the very outset, that he will treat of great and glorious things. The Holy Spirit is not accustomed to inspire the servants of God to utter great swelling words, and to pour forth empty sounds into the air; and, therefore, we may naturally conclude, that the subject here treated of is not merely

a transitory and earthly kingdom, but something more excellent. Were not this the case, what end would it serve to announce, as the prophet does in such a magnificent style, that his heart *was boiling over*, from his ardent desire to be employed in rehearsing the praises of the king? . . . It is then of the same import as if the inspired writer had said, My heart is ready to breathe forth something excellent and worthy of being remembered. He afterwards expresses the harmony between the tongue and the heart, when he compares his tongue to *the pen of a swift and ready writer*.

2. *Thou art fairer than the sons of men.* The Psalmist commences his subject with the commendation of the beauty of the king, and then he proceeds also to praise his eloquence. Personal excellence is ascribed to the king, not that the beauty of the countenance, which of itself is not reckoned among the number of the virtues, ought to be very highly valued; but because a noble disposition of mind often shines forth in the very countenance of a man. This may have been the case with Solomon, so that from his very countenance it might have appeared that he was endued with superior gifts. Nor is the grace of oratory undeservedly commended in a king, to whom it belongs, by virtue of his office, not only to rule the people by authority, but also to allure them to obedience by argument and eloquence, just as the ancients feigned that Hercules had in his mouth golden chains, by which he captivated the ears of the common people, and drew them after him. How manifestly does this rebuke the meanspiritedness of kings in our day, by whom it is regarded as derogatory to their dignity to converse with their subjects, and to employ remonstrance in order to secure their submission; nay, who display a spirit of barbarous tyranny in seeking rather to compel than to persuade them, and in choosing rather to abuse them as slaves, than to govern them by laws and with justice as a tractable and obedient people. But as this excellence was displayed in Solomon, so also did it shine forth more fully afterwards in Christ, to whom his truth serves the part of a scepter, as we shall have occasion by and by to notice more at large. . . .

3. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.* Here Solomon is praised as well for his warlike valor, which strikes terror into his enemies, as for his virtues which give him authority among his subjects, and secure him their reverence. On the one hand, no king will be able to preserve and defend his subjects, unless he is formidable to his enemies; and, on the other hand, it will be to little purpose to make war boldly upon foreign realms, if the internal state of his own kingdom is not established and regulated in uprightness and justice. Accordingly, the inspired writer says, that the sword with which he will be girded will be, in the first place, a token of warlike prowess to repel and rout his enemies; and, secondly, of authority *also*, that he might not be held in contempt among his own subjects. He adds, at the same time, that the glory which he will obtain will not be a merely transient thing, like the pomp and vain-glory of kings, which soon decay, but will be of lasting duration, and will greatly increase.

4. He then comes to speak of the virtues which flourish most in a time of peace, and which, by an appropriate similitude, he shows to be the true means of adding strength and prosperity to a kingdom. At first sight, indeed, it seems to be a strange and inelegant mode of expression, to speak of *riding upon truth, meekness, and righteousness* (verse 4); but, as I have said, he very suitably compares these virtues to chariots, in which the king is conspicuously borne aloft with great majesty. These virtues he opposes not only to the vain pomp and parade in which earthly kings proudly boast; but also to the vices and corruptions by which they endeavor most commonly to acquire authority and renown. Solomon himself says in the Proverbs, "Mercy and truth preserve the king; and his throne is upholden by mercy" (Proverbs 20:28). But, on the contrary, when worldly kings desire to enlarge their dominions, and to increase their power, ambition, pride, fierceness, cruelty, exactions, rapine, and violence, are the horses and chariots which they employ to accomplish their ends; and, therefore, it is not to be wondered at if God

should very often cast them down, when thus elated with pride and vain-glory, from their tottering and decayed thrones. For kings, then, to cultivate faithfulness and justice, and to temper their government with mercy and kindness, is the true and solid foundation of kingdoms. The latter clause of the verse intimates, that every thing which Solomon undertakes shall prosper, provided he combine with warlike courage the qualities of justice and mercy. Kings who are carried headlong with a blind and violent impulse, may for a time spread terror and consternation around them; but they soon fall by the force of their own efforts. Due moderation, therefore, and uniform self-restraint, are the best means for making the hands of the valiant to be feared and dreaded.

5. *Thy arrows are sharp, etc.* Here the Psalmist again refers to warlike power, when he says that the *arrows* of the king shall be sharp, so that they shall pierce the *hearts of his enemies*; by which he intimates that he has weapons in his hand with which to strike, even at a distance, all his enemies, whoever they may be, who resist his authority. In the same sense also he says that *the people shall fall under him*; as if it had been said, Whoever shall engage in the attempt to shake the stability of his kingdom shall miserably perish, for the king has in his hand a sufficiency of power to break the stubbornness of all such persons.

PSALM 45:6-7

6. Thy throne, O God: is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is the sceptre of equity. **7.** Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: because God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

6. *Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever.* In this verse the Psalmist commends other princely virtues in Solomon, namely, the eternal duration of his throne, and then the justice and rectitude of his mode of government. The Jews, indeed, explain this passage as if the discourse were addressed to God, but such an interpretation is frivolous and impertinent. Others of them read the word *Elohim*, in the genitive case, and translate it *of God*, thus: *The throne of thy God*. But for this there is no foundation, and it only betrays their presumption in not hesitating to wrest the Scriptures so shamefully, that they may not be constrained to acknowledge the divinity of the Messiah.

The simple and natural sense is, that Solomon reigns not tyrannically, as the majority of kings do, but by just and equal laws, and that, therefore, his throne shall be established for ever. Although he is called *God*, because God has imprinted some mark of his glory in the person of kings, yet this title cannot well be applied to a mortal man; for we nowhere read in Scripture that man or angel has been distinguished by this title without some qualification. It is true, indeed, that angels as well as judges are called collectively *Elohim, gods*; but not individually, and no one man is called by this name without some word added by way of restriction, as when Moses was appointed to be a god to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1). From this we may naturally infer that this psalm relates, as we shall soon see, to a higher than any earthly kingdom.

Dictatorship is better than anarchy.

In the next verse there is set before us a fuller statement of the righteousness for which this monarch is distinguished; for we are told that he is no less strict in the punishment of iniquity than in maintaining justice. We know how many and great evils are engendered by impunity and license in doing evil, when kings are negligent and slack in punishing crimes. Hence the old proverb, **That it is better to live under a prince who gives no allowance, than under one who imposes no restraint.** To the same purpose also is the well-known sentiment of Solomon,

“He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.”— (**Proverbs 17:15**)

Just and rightful government defined.

Just and rightful government, therefore, **consists of these two parts: first**, That they who rule should carefully restrain wickedness; and, **secondly**, That they should vigorously maintain righteousness; even as Plato has well and wisely said, that **civil government consists of two parts — rewards and punishments.**

When the Psalmist adds, that the king was *anointed above his fellows*, this is not to be understood as the effect or fruit of his righteousness, but rather as the cause of it: for the love of uprightness and equity by which Solomon was actuated arose from the fact, that he was divinely appointed to the kingdom. In ordaining him to the honor of authority and empire, Jehovah, at the same time, furnished him with the necessary endowments. The particle should be understood here in the sense of *because* as if it had been said, It is no wonder that Solomon is so illustrious for his love of justice, since, from the number of all his brethren, he was chosen to be consecrated king by holy anointing. Even before he was born, he was solemnly named by a divine oracle, as successor to the kingdom, and when he was elevated to the throne, he was also adorned with princely virtues. From this it follows, that anointing in respect of order preceded righteousness, and that, therefore, righteousness cannot be accounted the cause of the anointing. The royal dignity is called *the oil of gladness*, because of the effect of it; for the felicity and welfare of the Church depended on the kingdom promised to the house of David.

Solomon as a type of Christ

To this point I have explained the text in **the literal sense**. But it is necessary that I should now proceed to illustrate somewhat more largely **the comparison of Solomon with Christ**, which I have only cursorily noticed. It would be quite sufficient for the pious and humble simply to state what is obvious, from the usual tenor of Scripture, that the posterity of David **typically** represented Christ to the ancient people of God; but as the Jews and other ungodly men refuse to submit cordially to the force of truth, it is of importance to show briefly from the context itself, the principal reasons from which it appears that some of the things here spoken are not applicable fully and perfectly to Solomon.

As I intimated at the outset, the design of the prophet who composed this psalm was to confirm the hearts of the faithful, and to guard them against the terror and alarm with which the melancholy change that happened soon after might fill their minds. An everlasting duration, it might be said, had been promised to this kingdom, and it fell into decay after the death of one man.

To this objection, therefore, the prophet replies, that although Rehoboam, who was the first successor of that glorious and powerful king, had his sovereignty reduced within narrow limits, so that a great part of the people were cut off and placed beyond the bounds of his dominion, yet that was no reason why the faith of the Church should fail; for **in the kingdom of Solomon God had exhibited a type or figure of that everlasting kingdom which was still to be looked for and expected.** In the first place, the name of king is ascribed to Solomon, simply by way of eminence, to teach us, that what is here said is not spoken of any common or ordinary king, but of that illustrious sovereign, whose throne God had promised should endure as long as the sun and moon continued to shine in the heavens (Psalm 72:5). David certainly was king, and so were those who succeeded Solomon. It is necessary then to observe, that there is in this

term some special significance, as if the Holy Spirit had selected this one man from all others, to distinguish him by **the highest mark of sovereignty**. Besides, how inconsistent would it be to commend very highly warlike valor in Solomon, who was a man of a meek and quiet disposition, and who having ascended the throne when the kingdom enjoyed tranquility and peace, devoted himself only to the cultivation of those things that are suitable to a time of peace, and never distinguished himself by any action in battle?

But, above all, no clearer testimony could be adduced of the application of this psalm to Christ, than **what is here said of the eternal duration of the kingdom**. There can be no doubt, that allusion is here made to the holy oracle of which I have already made mention, That as long as the sun and moon shall endure in the heavens the throne of David shall endure. Even the Jews themselves are constrained to refer this to the Messiah. Accordingly, although the prophet commenced his discourse concerning **the son of David**, there can be no doubt, that, guided by the Holy Spirit to a higher strain, **he comprehended the kingdom of the true and everlasting Messiah**. Besides, there is the name *Elohim*, which it is proper to notice. It is no doubt also applied both to angels and men, but it cannot be applied to a mere man without qualification. And, therefore, **the divine majesty of Christ**, beyond all question, **is expressly denoted here**.¹

I now proceed to notice the several parts, which however I shall only refer to briefly in passing. We have said that while this song is called **a love song, or wedding song**, still divine instruction is made to hold the most prominent place in it, lest our imaginations should lead us to regard it as referring to some lascivious and carnal amours. We know also, that in the same sense **Christ is called “the perfection of beauty;”** not that there was any striking display of it in his countenance, as some men grossly imagine, but because he was distinguished by the possession of singular gifts and graces, in which he far excelled all others. Nor is it an unusual style of speaking, that what is spiritual in Christ should be described under the form of earthly figures.

The kingdom of Christ, it is said, shall be opulent; and in addition to this it is said, that it shall attain to a state of great glory, such as we see where there is great prosperity and vast power. In this description there is included also abundance of pleasures. Now, **there is nothing of all this that applies literally to the kingdom of Christ, which is separated from the pomps of this world**. But as it was the design of the prophets to adapt their instruction to the capacity of God’s ancient people, so in describing the kingdom of Christ, and the worship of God which ought to be observed in it, they employ figures taken from the ceremonies of the Law. If we bear in mind this mode of statement, in accordance with which such descriptions are made, there will no longer be any obscurity in this passage.

Christ is armed with His sword (cf. Revelation 1 & 19).

It is also deserving of our notice, that, after the Psalmist has commended this heavenly king for his eloquence, he also describes him as **armed with his sword**. As, on the one hand, he governs by the influence of persuasion, those who willingly submit to his authority, and manifest docility of disposition; so, on the other hand, as there have been in all ages, and will continue to be, many who are rebellious and disobedient, it is necessary that the unbelieving should be made to feel in their own destruction that Christ has not come unarmed. While, therefore, he, is

¹ “We therefore agree . . . that it applies exclusively to the Messiah, and to the mystical union between him and his Church; set forth in an allegory borrowed from the manners of an Eastern bridegroom, and the Church as his bride.”—Editor

alluring us with meekness and kindness to himself, let us promptly and submissively yield to his authority, lest he should fall on us, armed as he is with his sword and with deadly arrows.

Grace and justice

It is said, indeed, with much propriety, that *grace is poured into his lips*; for the Gospel, in its very nature, breathes the odor of life: but if we are stubborn and rebellious, this grace will become a ground of terror, and Christ himself will convert the very doctrine of his salvation into a sword and arrows against us. From this also there arises no small consolation to us, that the multitude and insolence of the adversaries of Christ may not discourage us.

False religions reject Jesus Christ.

We know well with what arrogance **the Papists** reject Jesus Christ, whom, nevertheless, they boast to be their King; we know also with what profane contempt the greater part of the world deride him, and how frowardly **the Turks** and **Jews** reproach him. In the midst of such disorder, let us remember this prophecy, That Christ has no lack of a sword and arrows to overthrow and destroy his enemies.

The eternal divinity of Christ is established.

Here I will again briefly repeat what I have noticed above, namely, that however much the Jews endeavor by their cavillings to pervert the sense of this verse, *Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever*, yet it is **sufficient of itself to establish the eternal divinity of Christ**: for when the name *Elohim* is ascribed either to angels or men, some other mark is at the same time usually added, to distinguish between them and the only true God; but here it is applied to Christ, simply and without any qualification. It is of importance, however, to notice, that Christ is here spoken of as he is "God manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). He is also called God, as he is the Word, begotten of the Father before all worlds; but he is here set forth in the character of Mediator, and on this account also mention is made of him a little after, as being subject to God. And, indeed, if you limit to his divine nature what is here said of the everlasting duration of his kingdom, we shall be deprived of the inestimable benefit which redounds to us from this doctrine, when we learn that, **as he is the head of the Church, the author and protector of our welfare, he reigns not merely for a time, but possesses an endless sovereignty**; for **from this we derive our greatest confidence both in life and in death**. From the following verse also it clearly appears, that Christ is here exhibited to us in the character of Mediator; for he is said *to have been anointed of God, yea, even above his fellows* (Isaiah 42:1; Hebrews 2:17). This, however, cannot apply to the eternal Word of God, but to Christ in the flesh, and in this character he is both the servant of God and our brother.

PSALM 45:8-12

8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, from where they have made thee glad **9.** The daughters of kings were among thy honorable women: thy consort stood on thy right hand in gold of Ophir. **10.** Hearken, O daughter! And consider, and incline thy ear; and forget thy own people and thy father's house. **11.** And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and thou shall worship him. **12.** And the daughter of Tyre with a gift: the rich among the people shall entreat thy face.

8. *All thy garments smell of myrrh.* As to the signification of the words I am not disposed to contend much, for I find that even the Jews are not agreed among themselves as to the

meaning of the third word, except that from the similarity of pronunciation it may be conjectured to denote cassia. It is sufficient that we understand the prophet as meaning that the garments of the king are perfumed with precious and sweet-smelling odors. He describes Solomon coming forth from his ivory palace amidst shoutings of universal applause and joy. I translate the word *minni*, as *whence* [from where], and refer it to the *ivory palaces*.

Two ditches: Excess superfluity versus too much austerity.

Superfluity and excess in pleasures cannot be justified, not only in the common people, but not even in kings; yet, on the other hand, it is necessary to guard against **too much austerity**, that we may not condemn the moderate display of grandeur which is suitable to their dignity, even as, a little after, the prophet describes the queen sumptuously and royally apparelled. We must, however, at the same time, consider that all that is here commended in Solomon was not approved of by God. Not to speak of other things, it is well known that from the very first **the sin of polygamy** was a thing displeasing to God, and yet concubines are here spoken of as included among the blessings of God, for there is no reason to doubt that by *the honorable women*, or *maids of honor*, the prophet means Solomon's wives, of whom mention is made in another place. The daughter of the king of Egypt, whom Solomon had married, was his principal wife, and the first in rank but it appears that the others, whom sacred history describes as occupying an inferior rank, were provided for in a liberal and honorable manner. These the prophet calls the *daughters of kings*, because some of them were descended of the royal blood.

In what sense, then, it might be asked, does the prophet account it among the praises of Solomon that he had many wives—a thing which God condemns in all private *persons*, but expressly in kings (Deuteronomy 17:17)? Doubtless it may easily be inferred that in commending, according to a common practice, the wealth and glory of the king, as the prophet here does, he did not mean to approve of the abuse of them. It was not his design to set forth the example of a man in opposition to the law of God.

It is true, indeed, that the power, dignity, and glory, which Solomon enjoyed, were granted to him as singular blessings from God; but as generally happens, **he defiled them greatly by not exercising self-control, and in abusing the great abundance with which he was blessed, by the excessive indulgence of the flesh.** In short, it is here recorded what great liberality God manifested towards Solomon in giving him every thing in abundance. As to the fact that he took to him so many wives, and did not exercise a due moderation in his pomp, this is not to be included in the liberality of God, but is a thing as it were accidental.

10. Hearken, O daughter! and consider. I have no doubt, that what is here said is spoken of the Egyptian woman, whom the prophet has described as standing at the right hand of the king. It was not, indeed, lawful for Solomon to marry a foreign woman; but this of itself is to be accounted among the gifts of God, that a king so powerful as the king of Egypt was, sought his alliance. At the same time, as by the appointment of the Law, it was required that the Jews, previous to entering into the marriage relation, should endeavor to instruct their wives in the pure worship of God, and emancipate them from superstition; in the present instance, in which the wife spoken of was descended from a heathen nation, and who, by her present marriage, was included in the body of the Church, **the prophet, in order to withdraw her from her evil training, exhorts her to forget her own country and her father's house, and to assume a new character and other manners.** If she did not do this, there was reason to fear, not only that she would continue to observe in private the superstitions and false modes of worshipping God to which she had been habituated, but that also, by her public example, she

would draw away many into a similar evil course; and, indeed, this actually came to pass soon after.

Such is the reason of the exhortation which the prophet here gives her, in which, in order to render his discourse of more weight, he addresses her by the appellation of *daughter*, a term which it would have been unsuitable for any private man to have used. The more clearly to show how much **it behoved the new bride to become altogether a new woman**, he employs several terms thereby to secure her attention, *Hearken, consider, and incline thy ear*. It is certainly a case in which much vehemence and urgent persuasion are needed, when it is intended to lead us to a complete renunciation of those things in which we take delight, either by nature or by custom. **He then shows that there is no reason why the daughter of Pharaoh should feel any regret in forsaking her father, her kinsfolk, and the land of Egypt**, because she would receive a glorious recompense, which ought to allay the grief she might experience in being separated from them. To reconcile her to the thought of leaving her own country, he encourages her by the consideration that she is married to so illustrious a king.

Let us now return to Christ. And, in the **first** place, let us remember that **what is spiritual is here described to us figuratively**; even as the prophets, on account of the dullness of men, were under the necessity of borrowing similitudes from earthly things.

When we bear in mind this style of speaking, which is quite common in the Scriptures, we will not think it strange that the sacred writer here makes mention of *ivory palaces, gold, precious stones, and spices*; for **by these he means to intimate that the kingdom of Christ will be replenished with a rich abundance, and furnished with all good things**. The glory and excellence of the spiritual gifts, with which God enriches his Church, are indeed held in no estimation among men; but in the sight of God they are of more value than all the riches of the world. At the same time, it is not necessary that we should apply curiously to Christ every particular here enumerated;² as for instance, what is here said of the many wives which Solomon had. If it should be imagined from this that there may be several churches, the unity of Christ's body will be torn in pieces.

I admit, that as **every individual believer is called "the temple of God"** (1 Corinthians 3:17 and 6:19), so also might each be named "the spouse of Christ;" but properly speaking, there is only one spouse of Christ, which consists of the whole body of the faithful.

She is said *to sit by the side of the king*, not that she exercises any dominion peculiar to herself, but because Christ rules in her; and it is in this sense that **she is called "the mother of us all,"** (Galatians 4:26).

A prophecy concerning the future calling of the Gentiles.

This passage contains a remarkable prophecy in reference to the future calling of the Gentiles, by which the Son of God formed an alliance with strangers and those who were his enemies.

² This is certainly a most important rule in interpreting the allegorical compositions of Scripture. It is not to be imagined that there are distinct analogies between every part of an allegorical representation, and the spiritual subjects which it is designed to illustrate. The interpreter who allows his ingenuity to press too closely all the points of the allegory to the spiritual subjects couched under it, seeking points of comparison in the complementary parts, which are introduced merely for the purpose of giving more animation and beauty to the discourse, is in danger by his fanciful analogies of degrading the composition, and falling into absurdities. Editor.

There was between God and the uncircumcised nations a deadly quarrel, a wall of separation which divided them from the seed of Abraham, the chosen people (Ephesians 2:14); for the covenant which God had made with Abraham shut out the Gentiles from the kingdom of heaven until the coming of Christ. Christ, therefore, of his free grace, desires to enter into a holy alliance of marriage with the whole world, in the same way as if a Jew in ancient times had taken to himself a wife from a foreign and heathen land. But in order to conduct into Christ's presence his bride chaste and undefiled, the prophet exhorts the Church gathered from the Gentiles to forget her former manner of living, and to devote herself wholly to her husband.

As this change, by which the children of Adam begin to be the children of God, and are transformed into new men, is a thing so difficult, the prophet enforces the necessity of it the more earnestly. In enforcing his exhortation in this way by different terms, *hearken, consider, incline thy ear*, he intimates, that the faithful do not deny themselves, and lay aside their former habits, without intense and painful effort; for such an exhortation would be superfluous, were men naturally and voluntarily disposed to it. And, indeed, experience shows how dull and slow we are to follow God.

By the word *consider*, or *understand*, our stupidity is tacitly rebuked, and not without good reason; for whence arise that **self-love** which is so blind, that false opinion which we have of our own wisdom and strength, the deception arising from the fascinations of the world, and, in short, **the arrogance and pride which are natural to us**, but because we do not consider how precious a treasure God is presenting to us in his only begotten Son? Did not this ingratitude prevent us, we would without regret, after the example of Paul (Philippians 3:8), reckon as nothing, or as "dung," those things which we admire most, that Christ might replenish us with his riches.

By the word *daughter*, **the prophet gently and sweetly soothes the new Church; and he also sets before her the promise of a bountiful reward**, to induce her, for the sake of Christ, willingly to despise and forsake whatever she made account of up until now. It is certainly no small consolation to know that the Son of God will delight in us, when we shall have put off our earthly nature. In the meantime, let us learn, that to deny ourselves is the beginning of that sacred union which ought to exist between us and Christ.

By her *father's house* and *her people* is doubtless meant all the corruptions which we carry with us from our mother's womb, or derive from evil custom; nay, under this mode of expression there is comprehended whatever men have belonging to themselves; for there is no part of our nature sound or free from corruption. It is necessary, also, to notice the reason which is added, namely, that if the Church refuses to devote herself wholly to Christ, she casts off his due and lawful authority.

By the word *worship* we must understand not only the outward ceremony, but also, according to the figure synecdoche [in which a part is taken for the whole], a holy desire to yield reverence and obedience. Would to God that this admonition, as it ought, had been thoroughly weighed! for the Church of Christ had then been more obedient to his authority, and we should not in these days have had so great a contest to maintain in reference to her authority against the Papists, who imagine that the Church is not sufficiently exalted and honored, unless with unbridled license she may insolently triumph over her own husband. They, no doubt, in words ascribe supreme authority to Christ, saying, that every knee should bow before him; but when they maintain that the Church has an unlimited power of making laws, what else is this but to give her loose reins, and to exempt her from the authority of Christ, that she may break forth into any excess according to her desire? I stay not to notice how wickedly they arrogate to

themselves the title and designation of the Church. But it is intolerable sacrilege to rob Christ and then adorn the Church with his spoils.

It is no small dignity which the Church enjoys, in being seated at the right hand of the King, and it is no small honor to be called "the Mother" of all the godly, for to her it belongs to nourish and keep them under her discipline. But at the same time it is easy to gather from innumerable passages of Scripture, that Christ does not so elevate his own Church that he may diminish or impair in the least his own authority.

12. *And the daughter of Tyre with a gift.* This also is a part of the recompense which the prophet promises to the queen in order to mitigate or rather to extinguish entirely, the longing desire she might still feel after her former condition. He says: that the Tyrians will come humbly to pay her reverence, bringing presents with them. Tyre, we know, was formerly a city of great renown, and, therefore, he accounts it a very high honor that men will come from a city so distinguished and opulent to greet her and to testify their submission to her.

It is not necessary for us to examine every word minutely, in order to apply to the Church every thing here said concerning the wife of Solomon; but in our own day we realize some happy fruits of this prophecy when God has so ordered it, that some of the great men of this world, although they themselves refuse to submit to the authority of Christ, act with kindness towards the Church, maintaining and defending her.

PSALM 45:13-17

13. The daughter of the King is all glorious within: her clothing is of garments embroidered with gold. **14.** She shall be brought to the King in raiment of needle-work: the virgins after her, her companions, shall be brought to thee. **15.** They shall be brought with joy and gladness; they shall enter into the palace of the King. **16.** Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children: thou shalt make them princes in all the earth. **17.** I will make thy name to be remembered throughout all generations: therefore the people shall praise thee for ever and ever.

13. *The daughter of the King is all glorious within.* This verse may be understood in a twofold sense; either as meaning that the queen, not only when she appears in public before all the people, but also when sitting in private in her own chamber, is always sumptuously apparelled; or, that the splendor and gorgeous appearance of her attire is not merely a thing of display, designed to dazzle the eyes of the simple, but consists of expensive and really substantial material. The prophet accordingly enhances the happy and lofty condition of the queen by the circumstance, that she has not only sumptuous apparel in which she may appear on particular occasions, but also for her ordinary and daily attire. Others expound it in this sense, That all her glory consists in the king inviting her familiarity into his presence; and this opinion they rest on the ground that immediately after there is a description given of her as passing into the chamber of the king accompanied with a great and glorious train of followers. This display of pomp exceeds the bounds of due moderation; but, in the meantime, we are taught by it, that while the Church is thus richly apparelled, it is not designed to attract the notice of men, but only for the pleasure of the King. If in our day the Church is not so richly adorned with that spiritual beauty in which the glory of Christ shines forth, the fault ought to be imputed to the ingratitude of men, who either through their own indifference despise the goodness of God, or else, after having been enriched by him, again fall into a state of poverty and want.

16. *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.* This also serves to show the glory and transcendent excellence of this kingdom, namely, that the children will not be inferior in dignity

to their fathers, and that the nobility of the race will not be diminished after the death of Solomon; for the children which shall be born to him will equal those who had preceded them in the most excellent virtues. Then it is added, that they shall be *princes in all the earth*, because the empire shall enjoy such an extent of dominion on every side, that it might easily be divided into many kingdoms. **It is easy to gather, that this prophecy is spoken expressly concerning Christ;** for so far were the sons of Solomon from having a kingdom of such an extent, as to divide it into provinces among them, that his first successor retained only a small portion of his kingdom. There were none of his true and lawful successors who attained the same power which he had enjoyed, but being princes only over one tribe and a half of the people, they were, on this account, shut up within narrow limits, and, as we say, had their wings clipped.

But at the coming of Christ, who appeared at the close of the ancient Church, and the beginning of the new dispensation, it is an undoubted truth, that children were begotten by him, who were inferior in no respect to their fathers, either in number or in excellence, and whom he set as rulers over the whole world. In the estimation of the world, the ignominy of the cross obscures the glory of the Church; but when we consider how wonderfully it has increased, and how much it has been distinguished by spiritual gifts, we must confess that it is not without cause that her glory is in this passage celebrated in such sublime language. It ought, however, to be observed, that the sovereignty, of which mention is here made, consists not in the persons of men, but refers to the head. According to a frequent mode of expression in the Word of God, the dominion and power which belong properly to the head, and are applicable peculiarly to Christ alone, are in many places ascribed to his members. We know that those who occupy eminent stations in the Church, and who rule in the name of Christ, do not exercise a lordly dominion, but rather act as servants. As, however, Christ has committed to them his Gospel, which is the scepter of his kingdom, and entrusted it as it were to their keeping, they exercise, in some sort, his power. And, indeed, Christ, by his ministers, has subdued to his dominion the whole world, and has erected as many principalities under his authority as there have been churches gathered to him in divers nations by their preaching.

Solomon's disgrace

17. *I will make thy name to be remembered, etc.* This also is equally inapplicable to Solomon, who, by his shameful and impious rebellion, stained the memory of his name with disgrace. In polluting by superstitious abominations the land which was consecrated to God, did he not bring upon himself indelible ignominy and shame? For this deed alone his name deserves to be buried in everlasting oblivion. Nor was his son Rehoboam in any degree more deserving of praise; for through his own foolish presumption he lost the better part of his kingdom.

To find, therefore, the true accomplishment of what is here said, we must come to Christ, the memory of whose name continues to prosper and prevail. It is no doubt despised by the world, nay, wicked men, in the pride of their hearts, even reproach his sacred name, and outrageously trample it under their feet; but still it survives in its undiminished majesty. It is also true, that his enemies rise up on all sides in vast numbers to overthrow his kingdom; but notwithstanding, men are already beginning to bow the knee before him, which they will continue to do, until the period arrive when he shall tread down all the powers that are opposed to him. The furious efforts of Satan and the whole world have not been able to extinguish the name of Christ, which, being transmitted from one generation to another, still retains its glory in every age, even as at this day we see it celebrated in every language. And although the greater part of the world tear it in pieces by their impious blasphemies, yet it is enough that God stirs up his servants every where to proclaim with fidelity and with unfeigned zeal the praises of Christ.

In the meantime, it is our duty diligently to use our endeavors, that the memory of Christ, which ought to prosper and prevail throughout all ages, to the eternal salvation of men, may never at any time lose any of its renown.