

Scriptural Notations on The Commentary on the Song of Songs by Origen: Scriptural Verses, Notations and His Text

Introduction

Over the years I have examined the three Song commentaries by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux, including the Song of Songs itself in the original Hebrew text. After this rather thorough and lengthy examination it was easy to see that of all biblical books, by far the Song has sparked the greatest interest among Jews and Christians. The reasons are numerous, but the most obvious one is love...marital love unabashedly expressed between two spouses. Within the Christian context this is transposed by taking the bridegroom as Jesus Christ and the bride, either as the Church or individual person. Suffice it to say that the Song of Songs always has been integral to Christian spirituality and has produced many commentaries, especially by monastic authors. Some years ago this venerable tradition had led me to post on the Lectio site a full listing of the scriptural references to the commentaries of the three authors under consideration. Since then I had let the document sit in a kind of limbo without going anywhere chiefly because I was unsure as what to do next. Drawing up that list was intended as a first step to develop what seemed a terrific idea, but when it came to something concrete I ran into a dead-end. On top of it all, everyone with whom I shared this project was enthusiastic but offered no concrete suggestions. Unfortunately it stopped there although those who has accessed the list claimed it was helpful.

Recently I decided to revisit that document which amounts to a data sheet of scriptural verses. The desire to do something with it persisted, so now was as good a time as any. Perhaps I just got tired of waiting for some insight From Above to descend without little or no effort on my part. Ever since the original posting of the quotes often I thought of how each author must have understood the Song of Songs. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa stand out because they're among the earliest commentators.¹ In fact, Origen's **Commentary** is a fountainhead for all subsequent Christian texts on the Song. Wonderful as that may be, a fuller insight into each author could be obtained only by following the laborious route of pulling out the quotes and reading them in the spirit of *lectio divina* in by themselves. Each man approached the Song by commenting on the first verse and moved on to the next with a view of going through the entire Song. However, none of them completed their task which is typical for authors of all centuries. And so with the scriptural verses now abstracted, you could actually put yourself in the mind of each author as he rummaged through the Bible looking for verses to give voice to what was on his mind and in his heart relative to a given Song verse. That's the value of the list. It shows how they read not only the Song of Songs but Scripture in general. In sum, we're dealing with a fascinating process which doesn't seem to have been documented fully.

The next step—the actual goal of this document—is once a person has considered the scriptural verses (say for a given section or homily), it's up to him to reconstruct that part of the commentary with these verses in mind. Obviously it won't be the same text but hopefully close enough in spirit. In essence, we're dealing with these scriptural passages which are accompanied by notations upon them, the commentary itself being secondary, if you could put it that way. So during the process of going through the scriptural verses you're "blotting out" the homily itself in order to see what you'll come up with by pondering the verses alone. Knowledge of the original Hebrew or Greek makes this prospect all the more exciting, for it fleshes out the commentary beyond the author's original intent all the while respecting the parameters in which he worked. If you took that approach, how different would, for example, your commentary end up from Gregory of Nyssa's? Who knows...it might even be better. A point worth pondering and not beyond reach of someone so inclined.²

All these variables should make the project not laborious but a challenge and above all, an enjoyable experience. At the heart of all this is that you're learning how to become like the bride in the Song of Songs, one being prepared for your divine bridegroom. Regardless of the result, you get special insight into how each man read Scripture and how he came up with what he did. You're reading the very same scriptural verses as did Origen, Gregory and Bernard and thereby are following in their scriptural footsteps.

Origen and Gregory of Nyssa are closer to each other in time and culture, whereas Bernard lived considerably later. That means Bernard's **Commentary** might be omitted, too early to determine, though it demands the same type of examination. Gregory's text is the only one in Greek; Origen wrote his in Greek, but only the Latin text has survived. Bernard wrote his commentary (obviously) in Latin. Despite their differences, all three authors read the Song of Songs in a spirit of *lectio divina* even though the first two may not have used that term whereas it was familiar to Bernard. As is the case with documents on this home page, the scriptural notations, Song commentaries and any other observations are to be read in the spirit of *lectio divina*, the sole goal of this document. Any technical or historical information can be obtained from other sources.

This document is divided into three sections. To make them identifiable more easily (they are based upon Lawson's division in his translation;³ the same applies in the Sources Crétiennes text), first come [the scriptural references which are in green](#) followed by the

¹On this lectio site, the reader may wish to see a commentary on the Song by St. Gregory the Great, i.e., under "Patristics." It was done by a colleague of mine.

²As you move through the text, verses tend to repeat themselves which is inevitable, and only so many observations can be made about it. Still, some will be made where appropriate. However, each of these verses are situated within the larger whole, those verses which both precede and follow...including the given section as a whole.

notations in blue and finally the **Song Commentary** itself in red. For the most part scriptural citations are from the **RSV**. Origen doesn't necessary quote each verse as it is but sometimes alludes to it or refers to a particular biblical example or phrase.

The process of going through the scriptural verses of all Origen's **Commentary** is challenging and has required several reorganizations to present the material as clearly as possible. The contents of the notations are relatively modest but can be expanded with no problem. When there is a large number of verses, some aren't commented upon. In fact, these notations comprise the only new feature in this document though the arrangement is unique, that is, all three parts form a single unit. It should be noted that even after having gone through just part of Origen's Prologue, you get a better handle on his approach. All in all, the enterprise presented here is a kind of experiment which may be modified at a later date. Ultimately it could form the basis of an outline for some future commentary on the Song itself, not a far-fetched idea.

One further observation: Origen wrote his **Commentary** about the year 240 which isn't terribly long after the canon of the New Testament was established. That means this record was still a novelty of sorts for many people. In the hand of a gifted student of the Torah, surely Origen must have considered it a mine of the purest god.

Because this document is relatively long, it is broken up into three manageable sections for convenience. The font is 10 point in Nyala script which seems sufficient to accommodate a fairly large document in clear type regardless of size. Obviously the PDF format enables enlargement.

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Origen⁴

The Prologue

Pro #1

Heb 5.12: For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food.

1 Pt 2.2: Chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

1Pt 2.2: Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.

Heb 5.14: But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

Heb 5.13: For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child.

1Cor 7.25: Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

2Cor 8.10: And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire.

Ezk 10.1: Then I looked, and behold, on the firmament that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in form resembling a throne.

According to the purpose of this document, this first set of notations can be as a concise outline for reconstructing one's own commentary on the Song of Songs following the text used by Origen. The opening scriptural verse (Heb 5.12) indeed is an auspicious beginning to this project. That is to say, Origen was an exegete, so this verse must have attracted his attention as suitable to begin his commentary. *Ta stoicheia* or first principles refer to one of a row or order of the letters of the alphabet. Thus the "alphabet" Origen proposes form a beginning...*arche*...which is applicable to divine words. *Logion* is used instead of the more familiar *logos* and often applies to an announcement or better, an oracle.

The entire Prologue should be taken as what it is...a prologue to the actual reflections on the Song of Songs where Origen sets forth his ideas as how to proceed. It's important insofar as being among the earliest expositions on the Song and thereby sets the tone for subsequent texts.

Origen as a natural born exegete speaks about the need for education, hence reference to babes and milk of the spiritual variety which works to salvation, *eis soterian* (literally, into salvation). Remaining a babe is equivalent to being *apeiros* or unskilled; literally, without experience.

Origen singles out those who are unmarried (1Cor 7.25) which is interesting in light of the Song of Songs being which concerns the love relationship between two spouses. He implies that those who are such are best suited for the Song which is something of a paradox. Thus it is important for Origen to make this clear right from the beginning.

3 Note that Lawson's translation has been scanned. Due to some technical difficulties, all parentheses have been removed.

4 The English text is **Origen. The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies**, translated and annotated by R.P. Lawson; Ancient Christian Writers #26. (New York, 1956). When scanning in the text, all quotation marks have been eliminated due to a few technical difficulties. The original Latin text: **Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques** (Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 375, Paris 1991; Luc Brésard and Henri Crouzel).

Reference to the cherubim (Ezk 10.1) over whom appeared the firmament is not unlike a sapphire (blue in color) in the form of a throne. *Raqyah* means firmament, something that is spread out. For Origen this image represents an intermediate or second stage in reading scripture, the first pertaining to creation and the third to the Song of Songs. Despite the beauty of the first two stages, Origen implies that they pale in comparison to the third.

It seems to me that this little book is an epithalamium that is to say, a marriage-song, which Solomon wrote in the form of a drama and sang under the figure of the Bride, about to wed and burning with heavenly love towards her Bridegroom, who is the Word of God. And deeply indeed did she love Him, whether we take her as the soul made in His image, or as the Church. But this same Scripture also teaches us what words this august and perfect Bridegroom used in speaking to the soul, or to the Church, who has been joined to Him. And in this same little book that bears the title Song of Songs, we recognize moreover things that the Brides companions said, the maidens who go with her, and also some things spoken by the Bridegrooms friends and fellows. For the friends of the Bridegroom also, in their joy at His union with the Bride, have been enabled to say some things—at any rate those that they had heard from the Bridegroom Himself. In the same way we find the Bride speaking not to the Bridegroom only, but also to the maidens; likewise the Bridegroom's words are addressed not to the Bride alone, but also to His friends. And that is what we meant just now, when we said that the marriage-song was written in dramatic form. For we call a thing a drama, such as the enactment of a story on the stage, when different characters are introduced and the whole structure of the narrative consists in their comings and goings among themselves. And this work contains these things one by one in their own order, and also the whole body of it consists of mystical utterances.

But it behooves us primarily to understand that, just as in childhood we are not affected by the passion of love, so also to those who are at the stage of infancy and childhood in their interior life—to those, that is to say, who are being nourished with milk in Christ, not with strong meat, and are only beginning to desire the rational milk without guile—it is not given to grasp the meaning of these sayings. For in the words of the Song of Songs there is that food, of which the Apostle says that strong meat is for the perfect; and that food calls for hearers who by ability have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil. And indeed, if those whom we have called children were to come on these passages, it may be that they would derive neither profit nor much harm, either from reading the text itself, or from going through the necessary explanations. But if any man who lives only after the flesh should approach it, to such a one the reading of this Scripture will be the occasion of no small hazard and danger. For he, not knowing how to hear loves language in purity and with chaste ears, will twist the whole manner of his hearing of it away from the inner spiritual man and on to the outward and carnal; and he will be turned away from the spirit to the flesh, and will foster carnal desires in himself, and it will seem to be the Divine Scriptures that are thus urging and egging him on to fleshly lust!

For this reason, therefore, I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of the vexations of flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel the passion of his bodily nature, to refrain completely from reading this little book and the things that will be said about it. For they say that with the Hebrews also care is taken to allow no one even to hold this book in his hands, who has not reached a full and ripe age. And there is another practice too that we have received from them—namely, that all the Scriptures should be delivered to boys by teachers and wise men, while at the same time the four that they call deuteroseis—that is to say, the beginning of Genesis, in which the creation of the world is described; the first chapters of Ezechiel, which tell about the cherubim; the end of that same, which contains the building of the Temple; and this book of the Song of Songs—should be reserved for study till the last.

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Pro #2

Ps 68.11: The Lord gives the command; great is the host of those who bore the tidings.

Gen 1.26: Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

Gen 2.7: Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

2Cor 4.16: So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.

Rom 7.22: For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self.

Eph 4.13: Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

1Jn 2.12-14: I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1Cor 3.1-2: But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready.

1Cor 13.11: When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

Eph 4.13: Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Ecl 2.14: The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I perceived that one fate comes to all of them.

Mt 11.15: he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Jer 50.1: The word which the Lord spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet.

Is 20.2: At that time the Lord had spoken by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "God, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take off your shoes from your feet," and he had done so, walking naked and barefoot.

Prov 3.23: Then you will walk on your way securely and your foot will not stumble.

Mt 18.8: And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.

Ps 73.2: But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had well nigh slipped.

Is 26.17-18: Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs, when she is near her time, so were we because of thee, O Lord; we were with child, we writhed, we have as it were brought forth wind. We have wrought no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

Ps 5.9: For there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is destruction, their throat is an open sepulcher, they flatter with their tongue.

Ps 55.9: Destroy their plans, O Lord, confuse their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city.

Ps 3.7: Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! For you did smite all my enemies on the cheek, you did break the teeth of the wicked.

Ps 10.15: Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; seek out his wickedness until you find none.

Jn 6.32: Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven." vs. 41: The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."

Jn 4.13: Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again."

Jn 15.1: I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.

1Sam 2.5 (1Kg 2.5): Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne serve, but she who has many children is forlorn.

Ex 23.26: None shall cast her young or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

Gal 6.8: For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

1Cor 15.49: Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Col 1.15: He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

Is 49.2: He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

Ezk 23: (The allegory of the sisters, Oholah and Oholibah).

Gen 24.67: Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Gen 29.17: Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful and lovely.

2Sam 13.1-2 (2Kg 13.1-2): Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. Vs. 14-15: But [Amnon] would not listen to her [Tamar]; and being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred; so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone."

Prov 4.6: Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

Prov. 8: Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

Wisd 8.2: I loved her and sought her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride, and I became enamored of her beauty.

Sg 5.8: I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

1Jn 4.7-8: Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

Jn 16.28: I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.

1Cor 1.24: But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Vs.30: He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Jn 1.1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14.6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.

1Jn 4.16: So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Jn 14.23: Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

1Tm 6.16: Who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Jn 17.3: And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Lk 10.27 (Dt 6.5): And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Rom 8.35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Rom 8.39: Nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lk 10.30: Jesus replied, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him,

and departed, leaving him half dead.

Lk 10.37: He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

1Cor 8.6 & Rom 11.36 combined: yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

Jn 10.34: Jesus answered them, Is it now written in your law, 'I said, you are gods?'

Ps 82.1: God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.

Ps 96.5: For all the gods of the peoples are idols; but the Lord made the heavens.

Mt 22.39: And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

1Jn 4.7: Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

tin 4.8: In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

Mt 22.35: And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

Mt 22.37-39: And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Mt 22.40: On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

Mt 19.18: He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness.

Mt 22.39: And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Lk 10.27: And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Mt 22.40: On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

2Cor 4.8-9: We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed.

2Cor 4.17: For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Rom 5.5: And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Gen 29.18: Jacob said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

1Cor 13.7-8: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

1Tm 2.15 (Origen makes an allegory of this vs.): Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness with modesty.

1Jn 4.8: He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

Mt 11.27: All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Jn 15.26: But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.

Wisd 6.16: A faithful friend is an elixir of life; and those who fear the Lord will find him.

1Jn 4.8: He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

Origen quotes from Genesis as to man being made in the divine image and likeness (*eikon* and *homoiosis*), quite appropriate for laying out his intent in the Prologue. Because a human being is rooted in this twofold nature, that means automatically he is qualified, if you will, for a espousal relationship with God. *Eikon* is permanent whereas *homoiosis* is subject to change and tends toward the *eikon*. Perhaps that is why Origen quotes from 2Cor 4.16 about our outer nature (*homoiosis*) wasting away while our inner one (*eikon*) is being renewed, not that necessarily the former by nature tends that way. Another way of putting this is that we become a mature person who shares Christ's fulness or *pleroma* (cf. Eph 4.13). This *pleroma* has a measure or *metron* with regard to stature (*helikia*) by which all else is determined.

In the person of John, Origen is writing to fathers, young men and children (cf. 1Jn 2.12-14), an appeal to all levels of growth that they strive for the marital relationship of the Song. Again, in the person of John, Origen says that his readers of the Song are still babes requiring milk; they haven't yet attained solid food (i.e., the Song itself).

Next follow a sequence of verses with respect to walking which means advancing along this path and avoiding everything else that hinders it. They may be abstracted as follows: walking securely, foot not stumbling, cut off either hand or foot and steps having slipped.

Origen adds a series of verses beseeching God to destroy enemies which might thwart a spouse-to-spouse relationship. In sum, so far we've seen a concern as to growth and the perils accompanying it, all with a view of relating to Jesus Christ as a bride according to the pattern set forth in the Song of Songs. In fact, Origen concludes with presenting Jesus as bread from heaven.

Origen presents several quotes by Jesus as to eating and drinking, this being a theme that pops up here and there early on in his Prologue. It is important insofar as the Song is to be ingested, that it is to be treated as food. If this is not followed through, the references to barrenness and corruption will apply which are a form of hunger.

Again, recourse is made to being made in the divine image and likeness, the former compared with the man of dust.

Nevertheless, we carry around both, hence the importance of the words "just as" in 1Cor 15.49 which demonstrates the connection between them. As for the Song, it is designed specifically to alleviate this bearing of the man of dust in favor of the one of heaven.

For the first time Origen speaks of an actual marriage, that between Isaac and Rebekah, which falls in light with the Song of Songs. And so Rebekah may be taken as an example of the female spouse in the Song itself. Like Isaac when he took his wife, the

reader is to take the Song of Songs into his tent. In this way he will be comforted. The verb is *nacham* which, like so many Hebrew words, has multiple meanings, one of which means to take vengeance.

The story of Absalom's sister Tamar serves as a warning not to defile one's mind and body when it comes to reading the Song of Songs. I.e., it's a cautionary tale here in the Preface. We can see here a clear progression from wisdom or *chakmah* (it implies skill and dexterity at a given task, not unlike proper to a workman) to the daughters of Jerusalem of the Song equating the (divine) bridegroom with *chakmah*. The commands "prize" and "honor" apply equally to both which are taken up and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ which Origen begins to expound.

A key point regarding *chakmah* (the divine bridegroom) is Jesus saying that person who loves him...has *agape* for him...will keep his word, the verb being *tereo* (to keep guard) which parallels the "guard" of Prov 4.6, *shamar* which connotes an observing or tending to, a bit more dynamic. Such keeping makes a person inseparable from Christ (*choreo* connotes a giving way, a retiring) which leads to the example of the Good Samaritan. It fulfils Dt 6.5 about loving (*ahav* connotes a longing or sighing after) God with or literally "in" one's heart, soul and mind, the last reading literally "in all your excessiveness" (*me'od*). Thus Origen unites the keeping of wisdom with the Song's bride and brings both over to a manifestation of *agape* to the robber left by the wayside. In other words, a unity between what starts off as a bit abstract ending in a concrete, human situation which is the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Despite the intimacy of divine *agape* presented here, Origen inserts a reference to that which balances it, "unapproachable light," the adjective *aprositos* suggestive of knowing the existence of light (*phos*) but not the way to it. Such *aprositos* counters the height and depth which cannot separate us from Christ.

This section begins with the last ends, that is, the Good Samaritan, where *agape* is shown through *eleos* which means more the object of pity or compassion.

Jesus speaks of being as "gods" quoting Ps 82.6 which compares with Ps 82.1 where God judges in the midst of these same gods. There is a danger that being a god (reference is to the divine likeness, not multiple divinities) can be distorted into idols. The distinction is made and then maintained by the exhortation to have *agape* for one another. Both Jesus and the lawyer quote from Dt 6.5 where the verb *ahav* or love is used. Note the three uses of the preposition *b-* (in) which read "in all your heart, in all your soul and in all your excessiveness" (*me'od*).

The apostles, despite being despised, are the first agents who had been responsible for bringing about the transformation of *ahav* into *agape*. Here in his Prologue Origen knows the value of *ahav* and wishes to transform it into *agape* which prepares a person for participating in the divine love affair of the Song of Songs.

The *ahav/agape* which Jesus quotes from Dt 6.5 is "from" the heart followed by "in" the soul and strength. Both love of God and neighbor "depend" the *Torah* and prophets, the verb being *kremannumi*, literally as to hand or suspend.

Paul lives a contradiction of being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down. For him it is a "slight momentary affliction" or *parautika elaphron tes thlipeos*. The first word suggests immediacy, that which is present here and now; the second, that which is light or nimble; the third, pressure.

With regard to his seven year service, Jacob is a forerunner of sorts concerning the four qualities of *agape*: bears, believes, hopes and endures. In other words, Jacob had this in mind while serving Laban for Rachel.

The verb *meno* as "continues" suggests an abiding or remaining with regard to faith, love and holiness.

Despite any afflictions ('momentary'), the Holy Spirit which has been given will assist us. He is Counselor or Paraclete which can be intimated as that "faithful friend" who is an "elixir" or *pharmakon* which can be either a drug, medicine or even a spell. And so the Paraclete fulfils that sitting by God in the "divine council" by similarly sitting among believers in Christ.

Before we come to consider the things that are written in this book, therefore, it seems to me necessary to say a few things first about love itself, which is the main theme of this Scripture; then about the order of the books of Solomon, among which we find that this one is put third; then about the name of the book itself, why it is entitled The Song of Songs; and, lastly, for what apparent reason it is written in dramatic form and, like a story that is acted on the stage, with dialogue between the characters.

Among the Greeks, indeed, many of the sages, desiring to pursue the search for truth in regard to the nature of love, produced a great variety of writings in this dialogue form, the object of which was to show that the power of love is none other than that which leads the soul from earth to the lofty heights of heaven, and that the highest beatitude can only be attained under the stimulus of love's desire. Moreover, the disputations on this subject are represented as taking place at meals, between persons whose banquet, I think, consists of words and not of meats. And others also have left us written accounts of certain arts, by which this love might be generated and augmented in the soul. But carnal men have perverted these arts to foster vicious longings and the secrets of sinful love.

You must not be surprised, therefore, if we call the discussion of the nature of love difficult and likely to be dangerous also for ourselves, among whom there are as many inexperienced folk as there are people of the simpler sort; seeing that even among the Greeks, who seem so wise and learned, there have none the less been some who did not understand what was said about love in the sense in which it was written, but took occasion from it to rush into carnal sins and down the steep places of immodesty, either by taking some suggestions and recommendations out of what had been written, as we said above, or else by using what the ancients wrote as a cloak for their own lack of self-control.

Lest, therefore, the like should happen to us, and we too should interpret in a vicious and carnal sense the things the ancients wrote with good and spiritual intent, let us stretch out our hands, alike of body and soul, to God; that the Lord, who gave the word to them that preach good tidings with great power, may by His power bestow the word also on us; so that we, out of these things that have been written, may be able to make clear a wholesome meaning in regard to the name and the nature of love, and one that is apt for

the building up of chastity.

In the beginning of the words of Moses, where the creation of the world is described, we find reference to the making of two men, the first in the image and likeness of God, and the second formed of the slime of the earth. Paul the Apostle knew this well; and, being possessed of a very clear understanding of the matter, he wrote in his letters more plainly and with greater lucidity that there are in fact two men in every single man. He says, for instance: For if our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; and again: For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man; and he makes some other statements of a similar kind. I think, therefore, that no one ought any longer to doubt what Moses wrote in the beginning of Genesis about the making and fashioning of two men, since he sees Paul, who understood what Moses wrote much better than we do, saying that there are two men in every one of us. Of these two men he tells us that the one, namely, the inner man, is renewed from day to day; but the other, that is, the outer, he declares to be corrupted and weakened in all the saints and in such as he was himself. If anything in regard to this matter still seems doubtful to anyone, it will be better explained in the appropriate places. But let us now follow up what we mentioned before about the inner and the outer man.

The thing we want to demonstrate about these things is that the Divine Scriptures make use of homonyms; that is to say, they use identical terms for describing different things. And they even go so far as to call the members of the outer man by the same names as the parts and dispositions of the inner man; and not only are the same terms employed, but the things themselves are compared with one another. For instance, a person is a child in age according to the inner man, who has in him the power to grow and to be led onward to the age of youth, and thence by successive stages of development to come to the perfect man and to be made a father. Our own intention, therefore, has been to use such terms as would be in harmony with the language of Sacred Scripture, and in particular with that which was written by John; for he says: I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father; I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who was from the beginning; I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one. It is perfectly clear; and I think nobody should doubt that John calls these people children or lads or young men or even fathers according to the soul's age, not the body's. Paul too says somewhere: man, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto little ones in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not meat. A little one in Christ is undoubtedly so called after the age of his soul, not after that of his flesh. And finally the same Paul says further: When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a man, I destroyed childish things. And again on another occasion he says: Until we all meet...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ: he knows that those who believe will all meet unto a perfect man and unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ.

So, then, just as these different ages that we have mentioned are denoted by the same words both for the outer man and for the inner, so also will you find the names of the members of the body transferred to those of the soul; or rather the faculties and powers of the soul are to be called its members. We read in Ecclesiastes, therefore: The eyes of a wise man are in his head: and again in the Gospel: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear: and in the prophets likewise: The word of the Lord that was made in the hand of Jeremias the prophet, or whoever it happens to be. The passage that says: Let not your foot stumble, is another instance of the same; so also is: But my feet were moved a little less. The womb of the soul also is plainly designated where we read: Lord, from fear of You we have conceived in our womb. So likewise who is puzzled when it is said that their throat is an open sepulcher, and again: Cast down, O Lord, and divide their tongues, and also when it is written: You broke the teeth of sinners, and again: Break You the arm of the sinner and of the malignant?

But what need is there for me to collect more examples of these things, when the Divine Scriptures are full of any number of evidences? It is perfectly clear that in these passages the names of the members can in no way be applied to the visible body, but must be referred to the parts and powers of the invisible soul. The members have the same names, yes; but the names plainly and without any ambiguity carry meanings proper to the inner, not the outer man. Moreover, this material man, who also is called the outer, has food and drink of like sort with himself—that is to say, corporeal and earthly; but in the same way the spiritual man, who also is called the inner, has for his proper food that living Bread which came down from heaven, and drinks of the water that Jesus promises, saying: Whosoever shall drink of this water, which I will give to him, shall not thirst for ever.

The same terms, then, are used throughout for either man; but the essential character of the things is kept distinct, and corruptible things are offered to that which is corruptible, while incorruptible things are set before that which cannot be corrupted. It happens in consequence that certain people of the simpler sort, not knowing how to distinguish and differentiate between the things ascribed in the Divine Scriptures to the inner and outer man respectively, and being deceived by this identity of nomenclature, have applied themselves to certain absurd fables and silly tales. Thus they even believe that after the resurrection bodily food and drink will be used and taken—food, that is, not only from that True Vine who lives for ever, but also from the vines and fruits of the trees about us. But concerning these we shall see elsewhere.

Now then, as the foregoing remarks have shown, one person is childless and barren according to the inner man, while another has plenty of offspring. And we notice that the saying: The barren has borne seven, and she that has many children is weakened, is in accord with this; as also is that which is said in the blessings: There shall not be one among you that is childless or barren. This being so, it follows that, just as there is one love, known as carnal and also known as Cupid by the poets, according to which the lover sows in the flesh; so also is there another, a spiritual love, by which the inner man who loves sows in the spirit. And, to speak more plainly, if anyone still bears the image of the earthly according to the outer man, then he is moved by earthly desire and love; but the desire and love of him who bears the image of the heavenly according to the inner man are heavenly. And the soul is moved

by heavenly love and longing when, having clearly beheld the beauty and the fairness of the Word of God, it falls deeply in love with His loveliness and receives from the Word Himself a certain dart and wound of love. For this Word is the image and splendor of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation, in whom were all things created that are in heaven and on earth, seen and unseen alike. If, then, a man can so extend his thinking as to ponder and consider the beauty and the grace of all the things that have been created in the Word, the very charm of them will so smite him, the grandeur of their brightness will so pierce him as with a chosen dart—as says the prophet—that he will suffer from the dart Himself a saving wound, and will be kindled with the blessed fire of His love.

We must realize also that, just as an illicit and unlawful love may happen to the outer man—as that, for instance, he should love a harlot or adulteress instead of his bride or his wife; so also may the inner man, that is to say, the soul, come to attach its love not to its lawful Bridegroom, who is the Word of God, but to some seducer or adulterer. The prophet Ezechiel plainly states this fact under the same figure, when he brings in Oolla and Ooliba to represent Samaria and Jerusalem corrupted by adulterous love; the actual passage in the prophetic scripture declares this plainly to those who desire a deeper understanding of it. And this spiritual love of the soul does flame out, as we have taught, sometimes towards certain spirits of evil, and sometimes towards the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, who is called the faithful Spouse and Husband of the instructed soul, and from whom indeed the Bride derives her title, particularly in this piece of Scripture with which we are now dealing; this, with the Lords help, we shall explain more fully when we come to expound the actual words of the book.

It seems to me, however, that the Divine Scripture is anxious to avoid the danger of the mention of love becoming an occasion of falling for its readers; and, to that end and for the sake of the weaker ones, it uses a more respectable word for that which the wise men of the world called desire or passion—namely, charity or affection. For instance, it says of Isaac: and he took Rebecca and she became his wife, and he loved (dilexit) her; and again the Scripture speaks in the same way about Jacob and Rachel: But Rachel had beautiful eyes and was fair of face, and Jacob loved (dilexit) Rachel and said, I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter. And the unchanged force of this word appears even more plainly in connection with Amnon, who had a passion for (adamavit) his sister Tamar; for it is written: And it came to pass after this that Absalom the son of David had a sister who was very fair of face, and her name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved (dilexit) her. The writer has put loved here in place of had a passion for. And Amnon, he says, was so troubled that he fell sick because of Tamar his sister, for she was a virgin, and Amnon thought it a serious thing to do anything to her. And a little later, with reference to the outrage that Amnon did to Tamar his sister, the Scripture says thus: And Amnon would not listen to what she said, but overpowered her and humbled her and slept with her. And Amnon hated her with an exceeding great hatred, for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love (dilectio) with which he had loved (dilexerat) her.

In these places, therefore, and in many others you will find that Divine Scripture avoided the word passion and put charity or affection instead. Occasionally, however, though rarely, it calls the passion of love by its own name, and invites and urges souls to it; as when it says in Proverbs about Wisdom: Desire her greatly (adama) and she shall preserve you; encompass her, and she shall exalt you; honor her, that she may embrace you. And in the book that is called the Wisdom of Solomon it is written of Wisdom herself: I became a passionate lover (amator) of her beauty. I think that the word for passionate love was used only where there seemed to be no occasion of falling. For who could see anything sensuous or unseemly in the passion for Wisdom, or in a mans professing himself her passionate lover? Whereas had Isaac been spoken of as having a passion for Rebecca or Jacob for Rachel, some unseemly passion on the part of the saints of God might have been inferred from the words, especially by those who do not know how to rise up from the letter to the spirit. Most clearly, however, even in this our little book of which we are now treating, the appellation of passionate love has been changed into the word charity in the place where it says: I have adjured you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Nephew, to tell Him that I have been wounded by charity. For that is as much as to say: I have been smitten through with the dart of His passionate love.

It makes no difference, therefore, whether the Sacred Scriptures speak of love, or of charity, or of affection; except that the word charity is so highly exalted that even God Himself is called Charity, as John says: Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God and knows God; but he that loves not knows not God, for God is Charity. And although some other time might be more suitable in which to say something about these words that, by way of example, we have cited from Johns Epistle, it seems not unreasonable to touch briefly on the matter in this context too. Let us love one another, he says, for charity is of God; and a little later: God is Charity. In saying this, he shows both that God Himself is Charity, and that He who is of God also is Charity. For who is of God, save He who says: I came forth from God and am come into this world? If God the Father is Charity, and the Son is Charity, the Charity, that Each One is, is one; it follows, therefore, that the Father and the Son are one and the same in every respect. Fittingly, then, is Christ called Charity, just as He is called Wisdom and Power and Justice and Word and Truth. And that is why the Scripture says that if charity abides in you, God abides in you —God, that is to say, the Father and the Son, who also come to him who has been perfected in charity, according to the saying of Our Lord and Savior: I and my Father will come to him and will make our abode with him.

We must understand, therefore, that this Charity, which God is, in whomsoever it exists loves nothing earthly, nothing material, nothing corruptible; for it is against its nature to love anything corruptible, seeing that it is itself the fount of incorruption. For, because God, who only has immortality and inhabits light inaccessible, is Charity, it is charity alone that possesses immortality. And what is immortality, except the life eternal which God promises to give to those who believe in Him, the only true God, and in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent? And for that reason we are told that the thing which in the first place and before all else is acceptable and pleasing to God, is that a man should love the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his powers. And because God is Charity, and the Son likewise, who is of God, is Charity, He requires in us something like Himself; so that through

this charity which is in Christ Jesus, we may be allied to God who is Charity, as it were in a sort of blood relationship through this name of charity; even as he, who was already united to Him, said: Who shall separate us from the charity of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

This charity, however, reckons all men as neighbors. For on that account the Savior rebuked someone, who thought that the obligation to behave neighborly did not apply to a righteous soul in regard to one who was sunk in wickedness; and for that same reason He made up the parable that tells how a certain man fell among robbers, as he was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and blames the priest and the Levite, who passed by when they saw the man half-dead, but approves the Samaritan who showed mercy. And, by means of the reply of him who raised the question, He affirmed that the Samaritan was the neighbor of the man, and said: Go, and do you in like manner. By nature, indeed, we are all of us neighbors one of another; but by the works of charity a man who has it in his power to do service to another who has not that power, becomes his neighbor. Wherefore also our Savior became neighbor to us, and when we were lying half-dead from the wounds the robbers had inflicted on us, He did not pass us by.

We must recognize, therefore, that the charity of God is always directed towards God, from whom also it takes its origin, and looks back towards the neighbor, with whom it is in kinship as being similarly created in incorruption. So you must take whatever Scripture says about charity as if it had been said with reference to passionate love, taking no notice of the difference of terms; for the same meaning is conveyed by both. But if anyone should remark that we speak of loving money and harlots and such-like evils, using the same word as that which has obvious reference to charity, you must understand that in such contexts we speak of charity by an improper use, and not according to its basic sense. To take another example, the word God is used primarily of Him of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, and in whom are all things; so that it declares plainly the virtue and nature of the Trinity. But by a secondary and so to speak improper usage Scripture describes as gods those to whom the word of God came, as the Savior affirms in the Gospels. And the heavenly powers also seem to be called by this name when it is said: God has stood in the congregation of gods; and, being in the midst of them, He judges gods. And by a third usage, false rather than improper, the daemonic gods of the Gentiles are so styled when Scripture says: All the gods of the Gentiles are devils.

Thus, then, the name of charity belongs first to God; and for that reason we are bidden to love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength—Him, that is, from whom we have the very power of loving. And this command undoubtedly implies that we should also love wisdom and right-doing and piety and truth and all the other virtues; for to love God and to love good things is one and the same thing. In the second place, we are bidden also to love our neighbor as ourselves by a use of the word that is, as it were, derived and secondary. And the third usage is that by which loving money, or pleasure, or anything that is connected with corruption and error, is called charity by a misnomer. So it makes no difference whether we speak of having a passion for God, or of loving Him; and I do not think one could be blamed if one called God Passionate Love (*Amorem*), just as John calls Him Charity (*Caritatem*). Indeed I remember that one of the saints, by name Ignatius, said of Christ: My Love (*Amor*) is crucified, and I do not consider him worthy of censure on this account. All the same, you must understand that everyone who loves money or any of the things of corruptible substance that the world contains, is debasing the power of charity, which is of God, to earthly and perishable objects, and is misusing the things of God by making them serve purposes that are not His; for God gave the things to men to be used, not to be loved.

We have discussed these matters at some length because we wanted to distinguish more clearly and carefully between the nature of passionate love and that of charity; lest perhaps, because Scripture says that God is Charity, the charity and love that is of God should be esteemed to be in our every attachment, even to corruptible things. And we have seen that through charity is truly the possession and the gift of God, His work is not always appropriated by men for the things of God and for what God wills.

At the same time we ought to understand also that it is impossible for human nature not to be always feeling the passion of love for something. Everyone who has reached the age that they call puberty loves something, either less rightly when he loves what he should not, or rightly and with profit when he loves what he should love. But some people pervert this faculty of passionate love, which is implanted in the human soul by the Creator's kindness. Either it becomes with them a passion for money and the pursuit of avaricious ends; or they go after glory and become desirous of vainglory; or they chase after harlots and are found the prisoners of wantonness and lewdness; or else they squander the strength of this great good on other things like these. Moreover, when this passion of love is directed on to diverse skills, whether manual crafts or occupations needful only for this present life—the art of wrestling, for example, and track running—or even when it is expended on the study of geometry or music or arithmetic or similar branches of learning, neither in that case does it seem to me to be used laudably. For if that which is good is also laudable—and by that which is good we understand not anything corporeal, but only that which is found first in God and in the powers of the soul—it follows that the only laudable love is that which is directed to God and to the powers of the soul.

And that this is the case is shown by Our Savior's own statement when, having been asked by a certain person what was the greatest commandment of all and the first in the Law, He replied: You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with all your powers;...and the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself, and He added: On these two commandments depends the whole Law and the Prophets, showing thereby that true and perfect love consists in keeping these two, and that the entire Law and Prophets hang on them. And the other injunction: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, and whatever other commandment there may be is summed up in the words: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

This will be better explained as follows. Suppose, for instance, that there is a woman with an ardent passion of love for a certain man

who longs to be admitted to wedlock with him. Will she not act in all respects and regulate her every movement in a manner designed to please the man she loves, lest maybe, if she acts against his will in something, that excellent man may refuse and scorn her society? Will this woman, whose whole heart and soul and strength are on fire with passionate love for that man, be able to commit adultery, when she well knows that he loves purity? Or murder, when she knows him to be gentle, or theft, seeing she knows him to be pleased with generosity? Or will she covet other peoples goods, when all her own desires are absorbed in passionate devotion for that man?

That is the sense in which every commandment is said to be comprised in the perfection of charity, and the strength of the Law and the Prophets to depend on it. Because of this good gift of charity or love, the saints are neither straitened in tribulation, nor utterly perplexed in doubt, nor do they perish when they are cast down; but that which is at present momentary and light of their tribulation works for them above measure an eternal weight of glory. This present tribulation is not described as momentary and light for everyone, but only for Paul and those who resemble him in having the perfect charity of God in Christ Jesus poured out in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

In the same way also it was the love of Rachel that kept the patriarch Jacob from feeling the searing of either heat by day or cold by night through seven long years of toil. So too do I hear Paul himself, enkindled by the power of this love, declare: Charity bears all things, believeth all things, hopes all things, endures all things; charity never falls. There is, therefore, nothing that he who loves perfectly would not endure; but there are many things that we do not endure, simply because we have not got the charity that endures all things. And, if we are impatient under certain burdens, it is because we lack the charity that bears all things. In the struggle that we have to wage with the devil, too, we often fall; undoubtedly because the charity that never falls is not in us.

The Scripture before us, therefore, speaks of this love with which the blessed soul is kindled and inflamed towards the Word of God; it sings by the Spirit the song of the marriage whereby the Church is joined and allied to Christ the heavenly Bridegroom, desiring to be united to Him through the Word, so that she may conceive by Him and be saved through this chaste begetting of children, when they—conceived as they are indeed of the seed of the Word of God, and born and brought forth by the spotless Church, or by the soul that seeks nothing bodily, nothing material, but is aflame with the single love of the Word of God—shall have persevered in faith and holiness with sobriety.

These are the considerations that have occurred to us thus far regarding the love or charity that is set forth in this marriage-hymn that is the Song of Songs. But we must realize how many things there are that ought to be said about this charity, what great things also about God, since He is Charity Himself. For, as no one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him, so also no one knows Charity except the Son. In the same way also, no one knows the Son, since He Himself likewise is Charity, except the Father. Further and in like manner, because He is called Charity, it is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, who alone knows what is in God; just as the spirit of man knows what is in man. Wherefore this Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, goes about trying to find souls worthy and able to receive the greatness of this charity, that is of God, that He desires to reveal to them.

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Pro #3

1Kg 4.29-30: And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the west, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

Jn 16.25: I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father.

Prov 1.2-6 (a discussion on these vss.)

Ps 1.4: That prudence may be given to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth.

Prov 1.5: The wise man also may hear and increase in learning, and the man of understanding acquire skill.

Prov 1.6: To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

Ps 1.2: But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Ps 37.30: The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.

Col 4.3: And pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison.

1Cor 12.8: To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

Prov 1.24: Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded.

Sir 1.26: If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will supply it for you.

Ecl 1.2: Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Ex 3.6: And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Gen 12.1: Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

Gen 22.16: And said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son.

Gen 26.15: And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven.

Gen 32:29: Then Jacob asked him, "Tell me, I pray, your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?"
 Gen 32:3: And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.
 Gen 26:12: And Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him.
 Gen 28:17: And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.
 Gen 28:12: And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!
 Gen 12:7-8: Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. Thence he removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.
 Gn 32:2: and when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's army!" So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.
 Gen 22:9: When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.
 Gen 26:25: So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.
 Gen 33:20: There he erected an altar and called it El-El'oh'e-Israel.
 Gen 35:7: and there he built an altar, and called the place El-bethel because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother.
 Heb 11:9: By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, and in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.
 2Cor 4:18: Because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

This is a good time towards the beginning of his Commentary for Origen to introduce the person of King Solomon, author of the Song of Song. He was noted for wisdom or *chakmah*, a fact to keep in mind when reading the Song itself. *Paroimia* means "figures" or literally that which beside the road. Jesus says this manner of speaking is temporary after which he will speaking "plainly" or *parresia*, a noun which originally meant the right of a (Greek) citizen of a city-state to speaking in public without recrimination. And so *parresia* is characteristic of the soul or bride in the Song searching for her divine spouse and speaking freely with him.

The citations from Proverbs are crucial for preparing a person to read the Song of Songs, for traditionally it is the book required for this. The "wise man" of Proverbs (derived from the verbal root of *chakmah*) is described in the opening verses of Proverbs with the qualities necessary for reading the Song itself. 1Cor 12:8 develops this theme, also speaking of "wisdom" or *sophia*.

The injection of "vanity" is important in order for the "wise man" not to stumble.

Following the injunction to pursue *chakmah/sophia*, Origen presents a number of warnings, one of which is to be on guard against vanity and the refusal to listen. Origen gives as a starting point for this listening the revelation of God to Moses as well as the example of Abraham and Jacob. Jacob had dream of a ladder reaching into heaven with angels upon it, and the land on which this ladder rested was promised to him as an inheritance. Also, there are several instance of building an altar by these patriarchs. Despite living in the land promised by the Lord, the patriarchs were sojourners who looked not to what was "transient" but to what was eternal. *Proskairos* is the adjective for "transient" literally meaning towards this occasion or that which is available to sense perception here and now. The Song of Songs is not unlike this promised land: both one of exile due to lack of fulfilment and one where the Lord is encountered as bridegroom.

Despite the erection of an altar by Jacob, he (like his father Abraham) "sojourned" in the "land of promise," *paroikeo* being the verb which literally means to live or make one's home (*oikos*) beside, that is, beside (*para*) the native dwellers. The preposition *eis* (into) is used with regard to "land of promises," that is, "into" it as if always in the process of inhabiting that land.

Compare this sojourning with looking not "to the things that are seen" but to what are not seen, *blepo* meaning to have the power of sight. Ta *proskaira* vs. ta *aionia* or that which is toward (*pros-*) *kairos* but not achieving *kairos* (specific event) vs. what is eternal.

Now, therefore, calling upon God the Father, who is Charity, through that same charity that is of Him, let us pass on to discuss the other matters. And let us first investigate the reason why, when the churches of God have adopted three books from Solomon's pen, the Book of Proverbs has been put first, that which is called Ecclesiastes second, while the Song of Songs is found in the third place. The following are the suggestions that occur to us here.

The branches of learning by means of which men generally attain to knowledge of things are the three which the Greeks called Ethics, Physics and Enoptics; these we may call respectively moral, natural, and inspective. Some among the Greeks, of course, add a fourth branch, Logic, which we may describe as rational. fib Others have said that Logic does not stand by itself, but is connected and intertwined throughout with the three studies that we mentioned first. For this Logic is, as we say, rational, in that it deals with the meanings and proper significances and their opposites, the classes and kinds of words and expressions, and gives information as to the form of each and every saying; and this branch of learning certainly requires not so much to be separated from the others as to be mingled and inwoven with them. That study is called moral, on the other hand, which inculcates a seemly manner of life and gives a grounding in habits that incline to virtue. The study called natural is that in which the nature of each single thing is considered; so that nothing in life may be done which is contrary to nature, but everything is assigned to the uses for which the Creator brought it into being. The study called inspective is that by which we go beyond things seen and contemplate somewhat of things divine and heavenly, beholding them with the mind alone, for they are beyond the range of bodily sight.

It seems to me, then, that all the sages of the Greeks borrowed these ideas from Solomon, who had learnt them by the Spirit of God at an age and time long before their own; and that they then put them forward as their own inventions and, by including them in the books of their teachings, left them to be handed down also to those that came after. But, as we said, Solomon discovered and taught these things by the wisdom that he received from God, before anyone; as it is written: And God gave understanding to Solomon and wisdom exceeding much, and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the seashore. And wisdom was multiplied in him above all the sons of men that were of old, and above all the sages of Egypt. Wishing, therefore, to distinguish one from another those three branches of learning, which we called general just now—that is, the moral, the natural, and the inspective, and to differentiate between them, Solomon issued them in three books, arranged in their proper order. First, in Proverbs he taught the moral science, putting rules for living into the form of short and pithy maxims, as was fitting. Secondly, he covered the science known as natural in Ecclesiastes; in this, by discussing at length the things of nature, and by distinguishing the useless and vain from the profitable and essential, he counsels us to forsake vanity and cultivate things useful and upright. The inspective science likewise he has propounded in this little book that we have now in hand—that is, the Song of Songs. In this he instils into the soul the love of things divine and heavenly, using for his purpose the figure of the Bride and Bridegroom, and teaches us that communion with God must be attained by the paths of charity and love. But that in laying down these basic principles of true philosophy and establishing the order of the subjects to be learnt and taught, he was neither ignorant of the rational science nor refused to deal with it, he shows plainly right at the beginning of his Proverbs, primarily by the fact that he made Proverbs the title of his book; for the word pro-verb denotes that one thing is openly said, and another is inwardly meant. The ordinary use of proverbs shows us this, and John in his Gospel writes of the Savior saying: These things have I spoken to you in proverbs; the hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father.

So much in passing for the actual title. But Solomon goes on forthwith to discriminate between the meanings of words: he distinguishes knowledge from wisdom, and instruction from knowledge, and represents the understanding of words as something different again, and says that prudence consists in a persons ability to grasp the shades of meaning in words. He differentiates, moreover, between true justice and right judgement; but he mentions a certain perspicacity as being necessary for those whom he instructs—meaning, I believe, the astuteness of perception by which crooked and fallacious lines of thought may be seen for what they are, and shunned accordingly. And he says, therefore, that subtlety is given by wisdom to the innocent, doubtless lest they should be deceived in the Word of God by sophistic fraud. And in this also it seems to me that he has in mind the rational science, whereby the content of words and the meanings of expressions are discerned, and the proper significance of every utterance is reasonably defined. Children in particular are to be instructed in this science; he enjoins this when he says: to give perception and the faculty of thought to the younger child. And because he who is instructed in these matters inevitably rules himself reasonably, because of what he has learned, and preserves a better balance in his life, Solomon says further: He who understands shall acquire government.

But after all this, knowing that there are different modes of expression and sundry forms of speech in the divine words, whereby the order of living has been transmitted by the prophets to the human race, and realizing that among these there is one figure called a parable, another that is known as dark speech, others that have the name of riddles, and others again that are called the sayings of the wise, he writes: You shall also understand the parable, and dark speech, and the sayings of the wise, and riddles. Thus, by these several means, he expounds the rational science clearly and plainly; and, following the custom of the ancients, he unfolds immense and perfect truths in short and pithy phrases. And, if there is anyone who meditates day and night on the law of the Lord, if there is anyone who is as the mouth of the just that meditates wisdom, he will be able to investigate and discover these things more carefully; always provided that he have first sought and knocked at Wisdom's door, beseeching God to open to him and to make him worthy to receive the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge through the Holy Spirit, and to make him a partaker of that Wisdom who said: I stretched out my words and you did not hear.

And rightly does he speak of stretching out his words in the heart of him to whom God had given largeness of heart, as we said above. For the heart of a man is enlarged, when he is able, by taking statements from the Divine Books, to expand by fuller teaching the things that are said briefly and in enigmatic ways. According to this same doctrine of the most wise Solomon, therefore, it behooves him who desires to know wisdom to begin with moral instruction, and to understand the meaning of the text: You bast desired Wisdom: then keep the commandments, and God will give her to you. This, then, was the reason why this master, who was the first to teach men divine philosophy, put at the beginning of his work the Book of Proverbs, in which, as we said, the moral science is propounded—so that when a person has progressed in discernment and behavior he may pass on thence to train his natural intelligence and, by distinguishing the causes and natures of things, may recognize the vanity of vanities? that he must forsake, and the lasting and eternal things that he ought to pursue. And so from Proverbs he goes on to Ecclesiastes, who teaches, as we said, that all visible and corporeal things are fleeting and brittle; and surely once the seeker after wisdom has grasped that these things are so, he is bound to spurn and despise them; renouncing the world bag and baggage, if I may put it in that way, he will surely reach out for the things unseen and eternal which, with spiritual meaning verily but under certain secret metaphors of love, are taught in the Song of Songs.

This book comes last that a man may come to it when his manner of life has been purified, and he has learnt to know the difference between things corruptible and things incorruptible; so that nothing in the metaphors used to describe and represent the love of the Bride for her celestial Bridegroom—that is, of the perfect soul for the Word of God—may cause him to stumble. For, when the soul has completed these studies, by means of which it is cleansed in all its actions and habits and is led to discriminate between natural things, it is competent to proceed to dogmatic and mystical matters, and in this way advances to the contemplation of the Godhead

with pure and spiritual love.

I think, moreover, that this threefold structure of divine philosophy was prefigured in those holy and blessed men on account of whose most holy way of life the Most High God willed to be called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For Abraham sets forth moral philosophy through obedience; his obedience was indeed so great, his adherence to orders so strict that when he heard the command: Go forth out of your country, and from your kindred, and out of your fathers house, he did not delay, but did as he was told forthwith. And he did more even than that: even on hearing that he was to sacrifice his son, he does not hesitate, but complies with the command and, to give an example to those who should come after of the obedience in which moral philosophy consists, he spared not his only son. Isaac also is an exponent of natural philosophy, when he digs wells and searches out the roots of things. And Jacob practices the inspective science, in that he earned his name of Israel from his contemplation of the things of God, and saw the camps of heaven, and beheld the House of God and the angels paths—the ladders reaching up from earth to heaven.

We find, moreover, that for this reason those three blessed men made altars to God, as it was fitting that they should—that is to say, they hallowed the results of their philosophy, no doubt that they might teach us that these fruits must be ascribed, not to our human skills, but to the grace of God. Further, they lived in tents—to show thereby that he who applies himself to divine philosophy must have nothing of his own on earth and must be always moving on, not so much from place to place as from knowledge of inferior matters to that of perfect ones. And you will find that this order, which we have pointed out in regard to the books of Solomon, appears in just the same pattern in many other things in the Divine Scriptures too; but it would take too long for us to follow these up, with another matter on hand.

If, then, a man has completed his course in the first subject, as taught in Proverbs, by amending his behavior and keeping the commandments, and thereafter, having seen how empty is the world and realized the brittleness of transitory things, has come to renounce the world and all that is therein, he will follow on from that point to contemplate and to desire the things that are not seen, and that are eternal. To attain to these, however, we need Gods mercy; so that, having beheld the beauty of the Word of God, we may be kindled with a saving love for Him, and He Himself may deign to love the soul, whose longing for Himself He has perceived.

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Pro #4

The Song of Songs which is of Solomon

Ex 30.9: You shall offer no unholy incense thereon, nor burnt offering, nor cereal offering; and you shall pour no libation thereon.

Num 4.47: From thirty years old up to fifty years old, every one that could enter to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tent of meeting.

Rom 16.27: To the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Gal 3.19: Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary.

Sg 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

Mt 7.12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Sg 6.8: My perfect dove is but one.

Ex 14.30-15.1: And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Dt 4.34: Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Dt 5.15: You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Ex 14.31: And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Ex 15.1: Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Ex 14.29: But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, and the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Ex 14.30: Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.

Dt 4.34: Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

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Ex 15:1: Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."

Num 21:12: From there they set out, and encamped in the Valley of Zered.

Numb 16-18: And from there they continued to Beer; that is the well of which the Lord said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! Sing to it! The well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved, with the scepter and with their staves." And from the wilderness they went on to Mattanah.

Dt 31:19: Now therefore write this song, and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel.

Dt 31:19: Now therefore write this song, and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel.

Dt 32:1-3: Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the gentle rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God!

Jdg 5:1-3: Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day: "That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the Lord! Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing, I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel."

Jdg 5:12: Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abinoam.

2Sam 22:1-3 (2Kg): And David spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you saved me from violence."

1Chr 16:8-9: O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works!

Ps 18:3: I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

1Chr 16:22: saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"

Ps 95: vss. 1-13.

Ps 42:4: These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Prov 1:1: The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

Ecc1.1:1: The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Sg 1:1: The Song of Songs which is Solomon's.

Mt 12:42: The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Mt 1:1: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Prov 1:1: The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

1Tm 6:15: And this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Phl 2:6: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

1Cor 1:30: He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Prov 1:1: The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

Ecc1.1:1: The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Gal 6:16: Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.

Heb 12:22-23: But you have come to Mt Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

Gal 4:26: But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

Col 1:20: And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

1Cor 15:24-6: Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Cor 15:28: When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone.

2Cor 5:16: From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer.

Sg 1:1: The Song of Songs which is of Solomon.

Lk 2:52: He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.

Heb 12:22: But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering.

Heb 4:14: Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Sg 6:9: My dove, my perfect one, is only one, the darling of her mother, flawless to her that bore her. The maidens saw her and called her happy; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

Sg 8:5: Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

1Cor 6:17: But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

Jn 13:36: Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward."

Num 1.49: Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, and you shall not take a census of them among the people of Israel.

Num 2.32-3: These are the people of Israel as numbered by their fathers' houses; all in the camps who were numbered by their companies were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. But the Levites were not numbered among the people of Israel, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Num 3.5-6: And the Lord said to Moses, "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him.

Mt 10.24: He said, "Depart; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him.

1Cor 15.24: Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

Sg 1.1: The Song of Songs which is of Solomon.

1Kg 4.29-32: And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.

Prov 22.28: Remove not the ancient landmark which your fathers have set.

Sg 1.1: The Song of Songs which is of Solomon.

The opening verse comes with a warning with regard to the altar of incense: not to offer anything unholy on it, *zur*, or that which literally has turned aside and is strange or alien in the sense of being an enemy.

Now begins the actual **Commentary** on the Song with its title. The age of "thirty years old up to fifty" is significant insofar as those within that age bracket are in the best position to appreciate the Song itself without any lustful connotations. Also we have the injunction not to make improper offerings which is applicable to reading the Song. The same applies to the law "because of transgressions." All this is quite remarkable for such an early commentator as Origen, but it follows closely Jewish tradition concerning the sacredness of the Song text.

Origen refers to the song of Moses after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. Obviously it speaks of the Lord as triumphant over the Egyptians but lacks any marital imagery as does the Song. Still, it is important to keep in mind as a kind of preparation for Solomon's canticle. The two quote from Deuteronomy flesh out this theme by referring not just to the deliverance at the Red Sea but to the need for continuous recollection of the servitude Israel experienced in Egypt.

Origen uses the somewhat rhetorical statement as to a "god" working wonders as great as the God of Israel in conjunction with the "Sabbath day" or the mentality to be brought to a reading of the Song of Songs. Coupled with this emphasis upon the Sabbath or day of rest is the command to keep it which, in turn, leads to a proper keeping or reading of the Song. The verb for "keep" is *hasah* which more properly means to do, to accomplish... "to do the Sabbath," if you will.

Israel's obedience to Moses is a type, if you will, of the reader's obedience to the Song or better, the (divine) bridegroom of the Song. Just before his death, Moses is to do three things with regard to a song: write, teach and put in the mouths of the people, the last injunction effected in a vivid, physical manner. Once done, a person will be able to speak, allowing the earth to hear one's "words." *Emer* is the noun used in the sense of discourse which comes from Moses speaking, *davar*.

Origen to continue stressing Israel's deliverance and Moses' song of triumph already noted. The Deuteronomy song referred to is in Chapter 32.

Two further songs to which Origen refers are those of Deborah in Chapter 5 of Judges and Chapter 22 of Second Samuel (David).

By going through these songs a person can not only prepare himself for the dialogue between spouses in the Song of Songs. However, to that composition only belongs the title Song of Songs meaning that it surpasses all these.

As for the song of Deborah, the command "awake" is used, *hur* meaning to be ardent as well as to arise. This is significant in that it is essential for appreciation of the Song of Songs.

This section as well as the next conclude Origen's remarks as to the Song's title and its authorship attributable to King Solomon. Please note that the Song Commentary excerpt below is relatively long compared to the lesser amount of scriptural references contained within it.

The first two verses have to do with giving thanks and singing praise to the Lord, something Origen wishes to get straight as he begins his actual commentary. He is aware that his reflections will be read by others, that is, by many new to the Christian faith, and is conscious of being an exegete which is why he says "how I went with the throng and led them in procession to the house of God."

Origen is careful to cite the first words of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: "the proverbs" of Solomon" and the "words of the Preacher." He does so with the genealogy of Christ in mind which opens Matthew's Gospel. The queen of Sheba may be taken as an example for a Christian learning about the Song through these two books: "she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." That which will be "manifested" (*epiphaneia*) is Christ's "appearing" or literally bringing light upon, Christ being the bridegroom in the Song of Songs as well as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Reading the Song is equivalent to approaching Mt Zion, "city of the living God" because Jerusalem is "our mother" where Christ resides in order to "reconcile to himself all things" (*apokatalasso*) where the verb has two prepositions: *apo* and *kata* (from and according to).

The "end" or *telos* concerns the Son's "subjection" to the Father or *hupotasso* or literally a placing under which can be taken as the bride's relation to her spouse in the Song. This placing-under empowers a person to view others in the Song's context as opposed to a "human point of view" or *kata sarka* or according to the flesh.

Origen quote from the Virgin Mary's Magnificat as to exalting the lowly, those qualified to read the Song as being outlined

here, and that involves a coming to Zion along with angels in “festal gathering” or *paneguris* which originally meant an assembly to worship a national god.

Jesus as the bridegroom is a “great high priest,” the first time he is associated with that office relative to the biblical Song.

The bride’s friends, along with the queens and concubines, call the bride “happy” or *’ashar* which fundamentally means to be straight. From it derives the relative pronouns “who, which, that” which suggest that happiness is transitional, if you will, that it moves constantly from one position to another and never is static.

Compare the bridegroom coming up from the wilderness with Peter’s question to Jesus, “Where are you going?”

Mention is made of a census among the Israelites with the exception of the Levites who were exempt. This is done just before the Israelites set out on their march from Sinai.

Origen mentions a second time in this section “the end” or *telos* so as to emphasize the necessity to interpret the Song of Songs in a spiritual manner. He uses an extensive quote from 1 Kings to back this up with respect to Solomon’s wisdom and understanding which he as traditional author of the Song, brings to bear upon this work of his.

The injunction to keep the “ancient landmark” in place is this spiritual understanding of the Song through the influence of King Solomon. *Gevul* is the noun for “landmark” which more specifically applies to a border area.

We must now pass on to our next point, and discuss the actual title of The Song of Songs. You find a similar phrase in what were called the holies of holies in the Tent of the Testimony, and again in the works of works mentioned in the Book of Numbers, and in what Paul calls the ages of ages. In other treatises we have, as far as we were able, considered the difference between holies and holies of holies in Exodus, and between works and works of works in the Book of Numbers; neither did we pass over the expression ages of ages in the passages where it occurs. Rather than repeat ourselves, therefore, we will let those comments suffice.

But we must now enquire for the first time what are the songs in relation to which this song is called The Song of Songs. I think they are the songs that were sung of old by prophets or by angels. For the Law is said to have been ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. All those, then, that were uttered by them, were the introductory songs sung by the Bridegroom’s friends; but this unique song is that which the Bridegroom Himself was to sing as His marriage-hymn, when about to take His Bride; in which same song the Bride no longer wants the Bridegroom’s friends to sing to her, but longs to hear her Spouse who now is with her, speak with His own lips; wherefore she says: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. Rightly, then, is this song preferred before all songs. The other songs that the Law and the prophets sang, were sung to the Bride while she was still a little child and had not yet attained maturity. But this song is sung to her, now that she is grown up, and very strong, and ready for a husband’s power and the perfect mystery. It is said of her for this reason: My perfect dove is but one.

As the perfect Bride of the perfect Husband, then, she has received the words of perfect doctrine. Moses and the children of Israel sang the first song to God, when they saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore, and when they saw the strong hand and the high arm of the Lord, and believed in God and Moses His servant. Then they sang, therefore, saying: Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified. And I think myself that nobody can attain to that perfect and mystical song and to the perfection of the Bride which this Scripture contains, unless he first marches through the midst of the sea upon dry land and, with the water becoming to him as a wall on the right hand and on the left, so makes his escape from the hands of the Egyptians that he beholds them dead on the seashore and, seeing the strong hand with which the Lord has acted against the Egyptians, believes in the Lord and in His servant Moses. In Moses, I say—in the Law, and in the Gospels, and in all the Divine Scriptures; for then he will have good cause to sing and say: Let us sing unto the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified.

A man will sing this song, however, only when he has first been freed from bondage to the Egyptians; but after that, when he has traversed all those things that are written in Exodus and in Leviticus, and has come to be admitted to the divine Numbers, then he will sing another, a second song, when he has emerged from the valley of Zared, which means Strange Descent, and has come to the well of which it is written: And the Lord said to Moses: Gather the people together, and I will give them water to drink from the well. For there he will sing and say: Consecrate the well to Him. The princes dug it, the kings of the Gentiles hewed it out in their kingdom, when they had the rule over them. But we have already treated more fully of these matters, as far as the Lord gave us, in treating of the Book of Numbers. We must proceed, then, to the well which has been dug by princes and hewn out by kings, on which no common person labors, but all are princes, all are kings—royal and princely souls, that is to say, who search to its depths the well that holds the living water.

After this song we come to that in Deuteronomy, of which the Lord says: And now write you the words of this song and teach it to the children of Israel, and get them to know it by heart; that this song may be unto me for a testimony among the children of Israel. And see how great a song and of what sort it is, for which it is not enough that it be sung on earth alone, but heaven too is called upon to listen to it! For it says: Hear, O heaven, and I will speak: and let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth! Observe what great and what momentous things are said. Let my speech, it says, be looked for as the rain, and let it come down as the dew upon the grass and as falling snow on the hay; because I have invoked the Name of the Lord, and so forth.

The fourth song is in the Book of Judges. Of it Scripture says that Debbora and Barac son of Abinoem sang it in that day, saying: Bless you the Lord for that which the princes undertook, and that which the people purposed. Hear, O you kings, give ear, you governors, and so forth. But he who sings these words must be himself a bee, whose work is such that kings and commoners alike make use of it for purposes of health. For Debbora means bee, and it is she who sings this song; but Barac sings it with her, and his name means a flash. And this song is sung after a victory, because no one can sing of perfect things until he has conquered his foes. That is why we sing in this same song: Arise, arise, O Debbora, rouse up the people in their thousands. Arise, arise, sing a song; arise,

O Barac. But you will find further discussion of these questions too in the little addresses that we published on the Book of Judges.

Following these, the fifth song is in the Second Book of Kings, when David spoke to the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul, and he said: The Lord is to me as a rock and a defense and my deliverer; my God will be my keeper. If, then, you also have been able to reflect as to who are these enemies whom David vanquishes and overthrows in the First and Second Books of Kings, and how he became worthy to receive the help of the Lord and to be delivered from enemies like that, then you yourself also will be able to sing this fifth song.

The sixth song is in the First Book of Paralipomenon, when David has just appointed Asaph and his brethren to sing the praises of the Lord; and the song begins like this: Praise ye the Lord and confess Him, and call upon Him by His name; make known His will among the peoples. Sing ye to Him and chant a hymn, relate all His wondrous doings that the Lord has done, etc. You must know, however, that the song in the Second Book of Kings is very much like the seventeenth Psalm; and the first part of the song in the First Book of Paralipomenon, as far as the place where it says: And do no evil to my prophets, resembles Psalm 104, while the latter part of it, after this passage, shows a likeness to the opening verses of Psalm 95, where we read: Sing to the Lord, all the earth, down to the place where the psalmist says, because He comes to judge the earth.

If, therefore, we are to finish our enumeration of the songs, it will be obvious that the book of the Song of Songs must be put in the seventh place. But, if anyone thinks that the song of Isaiah should be numbered with the others—though it does not seem very suitable that the song of Isaiah should be put before the Song of Songs, seeing that Isaiah wrote much later—if, notwithstanding, anyone is of opinion that the prophetic utterances are to be adjudged according to their content rather than their date, he will then add that song as well, and say that this song that Solomon sang is the Song of Songs not only in relation to those that were sung before it, but also in respect of those that followed it in time. Whereas if anyone opines further that we ought to add from the Book of Psalms whatever is there called a song, or a song of a psalm, he will gather together a multitude of psalms that are older in time. For he will add to the others the fifteen Gradual Songs and, by assessing the virtue of each song separately and collecting from them the grades of the souls advance, and putting together the order and sequence of things with spiritual understanding, he will be able to show with what stately steps the Bride, as she makes her entrance, attains by way of all these to the nuptial chamber of the Bridegroom, passing into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the House of God with the voice of joy and praise, the noise of one feasting. So she comes, as we said, even to the Bridegrooms chamber, that she may hear and speak all these things that are contained in the Song of Songs.

Before we come to the actual text of the book, we may make this further enquiry. Why is it that Solomon, who served the will of the Holy Spirit in these three books, is called Solomon, son of David, who reigned in Israel in Proverbs, while in the second book the name Solomon does not appear and he says merely: The words of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, king of Israel in Jerusalem, calling himself son of David and king of Israel as in the first book, but writing words here in place of proverbs, and calling himself Ecclesiastes, where formerly he gave his name Solomon? And whereas in the former he mentioned only the nation over which he reigned, here he mentions both the nation and the seat of government, Jerusalem. But in the Song of Songs he writes neither the name of the nation, nor the place where he reigns, nor even that he is the king at all, nor yet that he had David for his father; he only says the Song of Songs that is Solomon's own. And although it is difficult for me both to be able to examine the differences in these books and arrive at any explanation of them, and also to expound them clearly and commit them to writing when they have been thus searched out, nevertheless, as far as our own intelligence and our readers apprehension allow, we will try to unfold these matters briefly.

It is, I think, unquestionable that Solomon is in many respects a type of Christ, first in that he is called the Peaceable, and also because the queen of the south...came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Christ is thus called the Son of David, and reigns in Israel; He reigns also over those kings from whom He gets the title King of kings. Again, He who, being in the form of God...emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, that He might gather the Church into one flock, is Himself the true Ecclesiast; for an ecclesiast takes his title from his function of assembling the ecclesia. And then again, who is so truly Solomon—that is, Peaceable, as Our Lord Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom and justice and peace? Therefore in the first book, Proverbs, where he grounds us in ethical teaching, Solomon is called king in Israel—not in Jerusalem, as yet; because, although we be called Israel by reason of faith, we have not yet got so far as to reach the heavenly Jerusalem. When, however, we have made further progress, and have attained to fellowship with the Church of the firstborn that is in heaven and, having rid ourselves more thoroughly of our old natural concerns, have come to recognize the heavenly Jerusalem as our celestial Mother, then Christ becomes our Ecclesiast too, and is said to reign not in Israel only, but also in Jerusalem. And when the perfection of all things has been achieved and the Bride, who has been perfected—in other words, the whole rational creation—is united with Him, because He has made peace through His blood, not only as to the things that are on earth, but also as to the things that are in heaven, then He is called Solomon only, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when He shall have brought to nought all principality and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet and death, the last enemy, is destroyed. Thus, when all things have been pacified and subjected to the Father, and God is all in all, then He will be called Solomon and nothing else—that is, the Peaceable, only.

Fittingly, therefore, and for the same reason as before, we find in this little book that was to be written about the love of the Bridegroom and the Bride, neither Son of David, nor king, nor any other term patent of a corporeal connotation; thus the Bride now perfected may say of Him with reason: And if we have known Christ after the flesh for a while, but now we know Him so no longer. Let no one think that she loves anything belonging to the body or pertaining to the flesh, and let no stain be thought of in

connection with her love. So the Song of Songs is simply Solomon's; it belongs neither to the Son of David, nor to Israel's king, and there is no suggestion of anything carnal about it. And let it not surprise you, seeing that Our Lord and Savior is One and the Same, that we should speak of Him first as a beginner, in Proverbs; then as advancing, in Ecclesiastes; and lastly as more perfect in the Song of Songs, when you see the same things written in the Gospels where He is said, for us and among us, to advance. Jesus advanced, it is written, in age and wisdom with God and men.

It is, I think, because of all these things that neither Son of David nor King of Israel is written; and also for this further reason that in the Song of Songs the Bride had progressed to the point where there was something greater than the kingdom of Jerusalem. For the Apostle says there is a heavenly Jerusalem, and speaks of believers coming thither; but the same Paul calls this Bridegroom, to whom the Bride now hastens, the High Priest, and writes of Him not as being in heaven, but as passing into and beyond all the heavens; whither also His perfected Bride follows Him; cleaving to Him and joined to Him, she has ascended thither, for she has been made one spirit with Him.

Hence too it seems to me that this was the reason why, when He said to Peter, who could not follow Him at first: Whither you, you cannot come now, He added: but you shall follow hereafter. And we gather from the Book of Numbers that there may be something greater than Israel too. For there the whole of Israel is numbered and reckoned in twelve tribes, as under a fixed number; but the tribe of Levi, being of greater eminence than the others, is accounted extra to this number and never thought of as being one of Israel's number; for the writer says: This is the visit of inspection in which the children of Israel were reckoned according to their households; the whole visitation of them yielded a total of six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty. And the Levites were not included in this number, as the Lord commanded Moses. You see how the Levites are set apart from the children of Israel, as being of greater eminence, and are not reckoned among their number.

Further, the priests are described as being more eminent than the Levites; for this same Scripture tells us that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Bring the tribe of Levi and make them stand in the sight of Aaron the priest, to minister to him. Do you see how here too he both speaks of the priests as superior to the Levites, and once more makes the Levites appear as more eminent than the children of Israel?

We have thought fit to discuss these matters rather more carefully, because we wanted by their means to demonstrate the reason why, in the very titles of his books, Solomon differentiated as necessity required, and signified one thing in Proverbs, another in Ecclesiastes, and yet another in the Song of Songs, as the title in each case shows. And the fact that in the Song of Songs, where now perfection is shown forth, he describes himself neither as son of David, nor as king, enables us to say further that, since the servant has been made the lord, and the disciple as the master, the servant obviously is such no longer: he has become as the lord. Neither does the disciple figure as a disciple when he has been made as the master; rather, the sometime disciple is in truth as the master now, and the sometime servant as the lord. This line of thought may be applied also to the case of the king and those over whom he reigns, when the kingdom will be delivered up to God and the Father.

But let us not overlook the further fact that some people write the title of this little book as Songs of Songs. That is, however, incorrect; it is called the Song of Songs in the singular, not in the plural.

Let these remarks on the actual heading or tide of the book suffice for introduction. Now, with Our Lords help, let us go on to consider the beginning of the work itself; yet—not to leave anything out—there is one other point about the title and heading of the book that seems to some people to require investigation. For The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's own, is taken by these persons as meaning the Song of the Songs of Solomon, as though he signalized this one song among his many songs. But how shall we accept an interpretation like this when, in the first place, the Church of God has not adopted any further songs of Solomon to be read; and, in the second place, the Hebrews, by whom Gods utterances were transmitted to us, have in their canon no other than these three books of Solomon that we also have in ours? Those who advance this view, however, urge in its support that in the Third Book of Kings we are told that Solomon's songs were many; they cite this to prove that this song is one of many. The passage in question runs: And God gave to Solomon understanding and wisdom exceeding much and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon became exceeding wise, surpassing the wisdom of all the ancients and of all the sages of Egypt, and surpassing Gethan the Zarite and Henan and Chalcat and Darala; and Solomon spoke three thousand parables, and his songs were five thousand. They would, therefore, reckon this Song, of which we are treating, as of the number of these five thousand songs; but as to when or where those songs were sung, the churches of God have no experience, nor have they even any knowledge of them.

It would be toilsome and irrelevant to the matter in hand for us to enquire how many books are mentioned in the Divine Scriptures, of which nothing whatever has been handed down for us to read. Nor do we find that the Jews made use of lections of this kind; for either the Holy Spirit saw fit to remove them from our midst, because they contained some matters beyond human understanding; or else—in the case of those scriptures that are called apocrypha—because many things were found in them that were corrupt and contrary to the true faith, our predecessors did not see fit for them to be given a place, or admitted among those reckoned as authoritative.

It is beyond us to pass judgement on such matters. But it is common knowledge that the apostles and evangelists borrowed and put into the New Testament many things that we read nowhere in the Scriptures that we account canonical, but that are found none the less in the apocryphal writings, and are quite obviously taken from them. Not that the apocryphal writings are to be given a place in this way: we must not overpass the everlasting limits which our fathers have set. But it may be that the apostles and evangelists,

being filled with the Holy Spirit, knew what was to be taken out of those writings and what must be rejected; whereas we, who have not such abundance of the Spirit, cannot without danger presume so to select.

In regard to the text before us, therefore, we keep to the statement which we explained above, especially as the writer himself makes a clear distinction by saying: The Song of Songs that is Solomon's own. For, if he had meant us to understand that this is the Song of Solomon's Songs, he would surely have said: The Song of the Songs that are Solomon's, or A Song from among the Songs of Solomon. But now his saying that is Solomon's shows that this Song, which we have in hand and which he was about to sing, is Solomon's, and for that reason has the title that he gave to it.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the things that follow.

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Book One

Bk 1 #1

Sg. 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

1Tm 2.8: I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.

1Tm 2.9: Also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel.

Sg 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

1Cor 14.23: If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?

Col 1.15: He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

Gal 3.19: Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary.

Gen 28.12: And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!

Sg 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

Is 63.9: In all their affliction he as afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Sg 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

Prov 1.6: To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

Ps 119.131: With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments.

Sg 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

Now Origen begins in earnest commenting on the opening verse of the Song of Songs, the bride's desire to be kissed by her spouse. Again he issues a caution both to men and to women with respect to worship which here applies to reading the Song in a spiritual, not carnal, fashion. By mentioning the gift of tongues, Origen seems to imply that while fine, that gift is not necessary for interpreting the Song. Christ is the "image" or *eikon* of the invisible God or the bridegroom. This is contrasted with the Law (*Torah*) which, as with St. Paul, acted as a guardian until the "offspring" or *sperma* (literally, that which is sown) arrives. Thus the Torah achieves fulness with Christ enabling a full interpretation of the Song, using both to effect this.

Jacob's "ladder" or *sulam* with the ascending and descending angels can be taken as signifying the up-down, give-and-take, between the two spouses which gets underway with a desire for a kiss, hence the first verse being repeated here. The quote from Isaiah makes it clear that the initiative comes from the (divine) bridegroom despite the bride's words and desire for a kiss which open the Song.

"Proverb, figure and riddle" or *mashal* (a similitude), *melytsah* (also means a mocking song, an enigma) and *chydah* (literally, that which is twisted and involved). All three are important means to keep in mind for later understanding of the Song's imagery, etc. They are a kind of "panting," if you will, a *sha'aph* (implies having one's mouth open all the time) in imitation of the bride's desire kiss. Again, the first verse is inserted and wisely so to keep all this on track here at the beginning of the Song itself. We have it mentioned shortly afterwards which testifies to its extreme importance.

(On Cant. 1.2-4—Vg. 1.1—3)

Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. (1.2a—Vg. 1.3 a)

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. It behooves us to remember the fact to which we drew attention in our introduction—namely, that this little book which has the semblance of a marriage-song is written in dramatic form. And we defined a drama as something in which certain characters are introduced who speak; and from time to time some of them arrive upon the scene, while others go or come, so that the whole action consists in interchange between the characters. This book, therefore, will be like that all through; and, reading it along those lines, we shall get from it according to our powers a simple record of events. And the spiritual interpretation too is equally in line with that which we pointed out in our prologue; the appellations of Bride and Bridegroom denote either the Church in her relation to Christ, or the soul in her union with the Word of God.

Reading it as a simple story, then, we see a bride appearing on the stage, having received for her betrothal and by way of dowry most

fitting gifts from a most noble bridegroom; but, because the bridegroom delays his coming for so long, she, grieved with longing for his love, is pining at home and doing all she can to bring herself at last to see her spouse, and to enjoy his kisses. We understand further that the bride, seeing that she can neither be quit of her love, nor yet achieve what she desires, betakes herself to prayer and makes supplication to God, whom she knows to be her Bridegrooms Father. After this manner, then, let us consider her, lifting up holy hands without anger or contention...in decent apparel with modesty and sobriety, adorned with the worthiest of ornaments, such as befit a noble bride, and aflame with longing for her Spouse, vexed by the inward wound of love, pouring out her prayer to God, as we have said, and saying concerning her Spouse: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.

This is the content of the actual story, presented in dramatic form. But let us see if the inner meaning also can be fittingly supplied along these lines. Let it be the Church who longs for union with Christ; but the Church, you must observe, is the whole assembly of the saints. So it must be the Church as a corporate personality who speaks and says: I am sated with the gifts which I received as betrothal presents or as dowry before my marriage. For of old, while I was being prepared for my wedding with the Kings Son and the Firstborn of all creation, His holy angels put themselves at my service and ministered to me, bringing me the Law as a betrothal gift; for the Law, it is said, was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. The prophets also ministered to me. For they it was who uttered all the things that were to tell me and to show me about the Son of God, to whom they were desiring to betroth me, when all these so-called betrothal gifts and dowry presents should have been taken away. Moreover, in order to enkindle me with love and longing for Him, they with prophetic voice proclaimed to me about His coming; filled with the Holy Spirit, they foretold His countless acts of power and His mighty works. His beauty also they described, His charm and gentleness, that I might be inflamed beyond all bearing with the love of Him by all these things. But, since the age is almost ended and His own presence is not granted me, and I see only His ministers ascending and descending upon me, because of this I pour out my petition to Thee, the Father of my Spouse, beseeching Thee to have compassion at last upon my love, and to send Him, that He may now no longer speak to me only by His servants the angels and the prophets, but may come Himself, directly, and kiss me with the kisses of His mouth—that is to say, may pour the words of His mouth into mine, that I may hear Him speak Himself, and see Him teaching. The kisses are Christ's, which He bestowed on His Church when at His coming, being present in the flesh, He in His own person spoke to her the words of faith and love and peace, according to the promise of Isaiahs who, when sent beforehand to the Bride, had said: Not a messenger, nor an angel, but the Lord Himself shall save us.

As the third point in our exposition, let us bring in the soul whose only desire is to be united to the Word of God and to be in fellowship with Him, and to enter into the mysteries of His wisdom and knowledge as into the chambers of her heavenly Bridegroom; which soul has already received His gifts—that is to say, her dowry. For, just as the Church's dowry was the volumes of the Law and the Prophets, so let us regard natural law and reason and free will as the souls betrothal gifts. And let the teaching, which comes down to her from her masters and teachers, following on these gifts of her natural endowment, be to her for her earliest instruction. But, since she does not find in these the full and perfect satisfaction of her desire and love, let her pray that her pure and virginal mind may be enlightened by the illumination and the visitation of the Word of God Himself. For, when her mind is filled with divine perception and understanding without the agency of human or angelic ministration, then she may believe she has received the kisses of the Word of God Himself.

For this reason, then, and for the sake of these kisses, let the soul say in her prayer to Go: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. For as long as she was incapable of receiving the solid and unadulterated doctrine of the Word of God Himself, of necessity she received kisses, that is, interpretations, from the mouth of teachers. But, when she has begun to discern for herself what was obscure, to unravel what was tangled, to unfold what was involved, to interpret parables and riddles and the sayings of the wise along the lines of her own expert thinking, then let her believe that she has now received the kisses of the Spouse Himself, that is, the Word of God.

Moreover, the plural, kisses, is used in order that we may understand that the lighting up of every obscure meaning is a kiss of the Word of God bestowed on the perfected soul. And it was perhaps with reference to this that the prophetic and perfected soul declared: I opened my mouth and drew breath.

And let us understand that by the mouth of the Bridegroom is meant the power by which He enlightens the mind and, as by some word of love addressed to her—if so she deserve to experience the presence of power so great—makes plain whatever is unknown and dark to her. And this is the truer, closer, holier kiss, which is said to be granted by the Bridegroom-Word of God to the Bride—that is to say, to the pure and perfect soul; it is of this happening that the kiss, which we give one to another in church at the holy mysteries, is a figure.

As often, therefore, as we find some problem pertaining to the divine teachings and meanings revealed in our heart without instructors help, so often may we believe that kisses have been given to us by the Bridegroom-Word of God. But, when we seek the meaning of something of this sort and cannot find it, then let us make this prayer our own and beg from God the visitation of His Word, saying: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. For the Father knows each single souls capacity and understands the right time for a soul to receive the kisses of the Word in lights and insights of this sort.

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1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Sg 1.2-3: O that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth! For your love is better than wine; your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

Sg 1.1: O that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth!

Mt 5.8: Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.

Rom 10.10: For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.

Jn 13.32: If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

Jn 13.25: So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jn 13.24: So Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks."

Jn 13.25: So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, Lord, who is it?

1 Kg 10.1: Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with her questions.

1Kg 10.4-5: And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings which he offered at the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.

Mt 12.42: The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Jer 35.5: Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine."

Jer 35.14: The command which Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons, to drink no wine, has been kept; and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their father's command. I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me.

Dt 32.32-3: For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of asps.

Ps 105.33: He smote their vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country.

Sg 1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Mt 7.12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Sg 1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Mt 13.44: The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.

Mt 7.12: And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Col 2.3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Heb 5.13: For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child.

Heb 9.14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Num 6.2: Say to the people of Israel, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord.

Lk 1.15: For he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

Col 2.3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Sg 1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Col 2.3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Lev 10.14: But the breast that is waved and the thigh that is offered you shall eat in any clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you; for they are given as your due and your sons' due, from the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the people of Israel.

Ps 104.15: And wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

Mt 5.8: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Col 2.3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Mt 7.12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Gen 9.20: Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard.

Is 5.1: Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

Sg 1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Ecc 2.1: I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

Ecc 2.4-5: I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself; I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

Ecc 2.8: I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, man's delight.

Lk 2.46-7: After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Mt 5.1: Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him.

Mt 5.21-2: You have heard that it was said to the men of old, "you shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, "You fool!" shall be liable to the hell of fire.

Mt 5.27-8: You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Sg 1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Mt 11.19: The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and

sinner!" Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.

Jn 2.1: On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jn 2.10: And said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.

The beatitude "pure in heart" (*kardia*) pertains to seeing (*horao*) God. Compare use of this more distant sense, if you will (sight) to the intimacy of touch as through the bride's desire for a kiss.

Origen uses three verses from John 13 with regard to Judas who shortly will betray Jesus. Note that John refers to himself as "close to the breast" of Jesus, *epi to stethos* (literally, upon) which conveys the intimacy and directness of touch.

The queen of Sheba is re-introduced with regard to Solomon, traditional author of the Song of Songs. She probes Solomon with "questions" or *chydah* already noted as "riddle." Perhaps when composing the Song, Solomon had in mind this anonymous queen as the bride asking for a kiss. Jesus himself uses her as participating in judgment.

The quote concerning Jonadab with regard to not drinking wine ties in with the bridegroom's love as "better than wine." To caution the reader, Origen cites the "vine of Sodom" and grapes coming from Gomorrah which, in the words of Ps 105.33, are smitten.

The treasures within the Song are to be compared with fine pearls as well as treasures of "wisdom and knowledge" or *sophia* and *gnosis*. To obtain these, a person must move beyond the nourishment of milk proper to a "child" or *nepios* (literally, not yet speaking) who is "unskilled" (*apeiros*, without experience). This milk may be contrast with Christ's blood which purifies one's "conscience" or *suneidesis* or the capacity to know-with.

Origen takes care to speak of the hiddenness of *sophia* and *gnosis*, the adjective being *apokruphos* which implies a certain secretness. That applies to the kiss which the bride wishes from her spouse in the Song, that is it not done in public. This is reference to again shortly in order to stress its importance.

Note the reference to a breast and thigh of an offering which is waved, bodily parts of a sacrifice which are made public. Origen makes two references to a vineyard: the first one planted by Noah and Isaiah's song, the latter planted and cared for by "my beloved."

The cautionary note as to the testing of pleasure applies to the opening words of the Song, for if the reader seeks pleasure (*simchah* usually pertains to joy and gladness as well as banquets), disappoint will ensue resulting in "vanity." For this reason the Preacher speaks of his pursuit of pleasure and riches, vain pursuits.

Reference to the vow of a Nazarite applies to Jesus as foretold at his birth, again, in whom are hidden *sophia* and *gnosis*. Both are to grow, like Jesus, which is an apt image here at the first verse of the Song of Songs.

Jesus is found in the temple sitting, listening and asking questions: *kathizo*, *akouo* and *eperotao*. The sitting is itself a gesture of teaching which involves not only listening but inquiring, the preposition *epi* (upon) prefaced to *eperotao* being suggestive of intense questioning. *Existemi* is the verb for "amazed" which literally means to stand outside and is used with the noun *sunesis* (understanding), a coming together or with (*sun-*). Later Jesus sits on the mountain where he teaches the crowds and disciples, that is to say, the beatitudes. Such is the mentality and spirit one is to read the Song. The injunction against adultery makes better sense now, for to commit adultery means to misinterpret the Song, of not seeing the bridegroom as Jesus Christ.

Christ eating with tax collectors, etc, intimates his presence at a wedding banquet. If such persons can partake of it, they can partake of the Song. The wedding at Cana is an of what transpires in the Song of Songs where there is an issue over the lack of wine which makes one recall "your love is better than wine."

For Your breasts are better than wine. (1.2b—Vg. 1. 1 b)

For your breasts are better than wine, and the fragrance of thine ointments is above all spices. Taking the story that is being acted first, you must understand that the Bride has poured out her petition with hands uplifted to God the Father, and has prayed that the Bridegroom might come to her now and bestow on her the kisses of His own mouth. While she is thus praying to the Father, she is ready to add to this very prayer in which she said: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, some further words of prayer, and to say that, even as she began to utter those words, the Bridegroom was present and standing by her as she prayed, and that He revealed His breasts to her, and appeared as Himself anointed with splendid ointments, possessed of fragrance such as befits a Spouse. The Bride, having seen that He, for whose coming she was praying, was already present, and that even as she spoke He offered her the thing for which she asked, and that the kisses that she had demanded had been given her, is rendered thereby glad indeed; and, moved deeply by the beauty of His breasts and by the fragrant odor of Himself, she alters the form of her prayer from that which she intended, in order to adapt it to the fact of her Spouse's presence. Whereas she had said before: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, she now continues, speaking to the Bridegroom's present Self: Your breasts are better than wine, and the fragrance of Your ointments is above all spices.

So much in passing for the literal meaning which, as we said before, is woven in form of a play.

And now let us enquire what the inner meaning holds. We find the ground principle of the heart described in the Divine Scriptures by different words according to the cases and circumstances that are being discussed. Sometimes it is simply called the heart, as, for example: Blessed are the clean of heart, and: With the heart we believe unto justice. But if the occasion be that of a meal, and the appearance and order of those reclining at table are being described, it is called the bosom or breast; as, for instance, where John speaks in the Gospel about the certain disciple whom Jesus loved, that he reclined in His bosom or on His breast; he indeed to whom Simon Peter beckoned and said: Ask who it is of whom He speaks. And after that, leaning on Jesus breast he saith to Him, Lord, who is it? We are undoubtedly given to understand that John on this occasion reposed on the ground of Jesus heart and amid the inward

meanings of His teaching, there seeking and searching the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hid in Christ Jesus. And indeed I think the term the bosom of Christ is not unfitting, if it be taken as denoting the place of holy teachings.

The ground of the heart is, then, as we had begun to say, denoted in the Holy Scripture by a variety of terms. There is a further instance in Leviticus, where the little breast of separation and the shoulder are set aside for the priests out of the sacrifices; for here too the intention in thus passing over other men is that the little breast that is set apart, and the shoulder, should be the ground of the heart and the glory of works among the priests. We have explained this more fully in dealing with the Book of Leviticus, as far as the Lord deigned to give us power so to do.

On the analogy of the foregoing, therefore, let us understand the ground of the heart as being denoted by the breasts in the passage before us, since it is evidently a drama of love; the words spoken will then mean: Your heart, O Bridegroom, and Your mind—that is, the teachings that are within You, or the grace of teaching—surpass all the wine that is wont to gladden a mans heart. For just as it seems fitting to speak of their heart with regard to those of whom the Lord says that they shall see God, while with reference to those reclining at table bosom or breast is used, doubtless because of the behavior of those persons and the nature of the meal, and again in respect of the priests the words little breast and shoulder are used with mystical meaning; so in this present passage, where the behavior and conversation of lovers is described, I think that this same seat of the heart is very happily called breasts.

The Bridegroom's breasts are good, therefore, because treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed in them. The Bride, moreover, compares these breasts to wine, and that in such a way as to point the breasts superiority. By wine is meant the ordinances and teachings which the Bride had been wont to receive through the Law and Prophets before the Bridegroom came. But when she now reflects upon the teaching that flows forth from the Bridegroom's breasts, she is amazed and marvels: she sees that it is far superior to that with which she had been gladdened as with spiritual wine served to her by the holy fathers and prophets, before the Bridegroom came; for they also had planted vineyards of this sort and cultivated them—Noe, for example, first, and Isaiahs on a hill, in a fruitful place. So, realizing now that the instructions and the knowledge that are to be found in the Bridegroom are of high eminence, and that a much more perfect teaching than that of the ancients issues from His breasts, she says: Your breasts are better than wine —better, that is to say, than were the teaching with which she was gladdened by them that were of old.

For we must understand Ecclesiastes as referring to this wine of the ancients when he says: I said in my heart, Come, and I will stir you with gladness, and look you on that which is good. And the same Ecclesiastes says in another place concerning the same vineyards: I enlarged my work: I built me houses, I planted me vineyards; I made myself gardens and orchards, and so forth. And there are certain ministers of this mystical wine who are called wine-pourers; for again the same person says: I made me singing men and singing women and, in the gladness of the sons of men, men that pour out the wine, and women too.

Let us then see if in this matter, as in others, we can perceive the Savior mingling the new things that flow from His own breasts with the wine of the ancients, on the occasion when Mary and Joseph searching found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, and all . . . were astonished at His answers. But perhaps the glory of this figure is fulfilled in the place where, going up into a mountain, He taught the people and said: It was said to them of old, You shall not kill. . . . But I say to you, whosoever is angry with his brother without reason shall be held guilty and, It was said to them of old, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

In so far, therefore, as this teaching of His surpasses that which was given of old, thus far also does the Bride perceive and declare that His breasts are better than wine. But the fact that the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine-drinker, is no less relevant to this. And it was the same, I think, with that wine that was drunk at Cana at the wedding feast; for when that ran short, He Himself made another wine of which the chief steward testified that it was very good and far superior to that which had been used up, when he said: Every man at first sets forth good wine; and, when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. But you you kept the good wine until now.

And there is also the case of Solomon, who for the wisdom that he had received of God earned the admiration of the queen of Sheba. She had come to try him with questions. Listen to what Scripture says about the things at which that same queen marveled in regard to him. And the queen of Sheba, it says, . . . saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house which he had built, and the magnificence of his entertainment, and the apartments of his servants, and the order of his ministers, and his raiment, and his wine-pourers, and his burnt offerings that he offered in the House of the Lord; and she was dumbfounded, and so forth. Now mark here how she, who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, among other things wonders at the meats of his table and his wine-pourers, and is said to have been dumbfounded at them. I doubt if we may think that the queen, who had come from the ends of the earth with the intention of hearing Solomon's wisdom, was so lacking in sense as to marvel at bodily meats and that ordinary wine and the cup-bearers in the kings employment. For what was there in those things, which almost all men have, that the queen should consider worthy of admiration? It seems to me that she marveled rather at the meats of his teaching and the wine of the judgements which were uttered by him through the divine wisdom.

The same thing surely appears in the story that Jeremias tells about the sons of jonadab, the son of Rechab, who, on being summoned to drink wine at the time when the sins of the people were prevailing and the captivity was threatening because of the national iniquity, said that their father Jonadab had commanded them not to drink wine, neither they nor their children for ever, and not to build houses either, nor to sow seed, not to plant vineyards, but to live in tents all the days of their life. And the Lord looks on

them with favor because they kept their fathers commandment and refused to drink wine. For because of the peoples sins and iniquities their vine was of the vine of Sodom and their vine-shoots of Gomorrha; their grapes were grapes of gall and their cluster bitter; their wine was the poison of asps and the frenzy of dragons.

The sons of Jonadab, then, are accounted worthy of praise because they refused to drink and take such wine—that is to say, teachings poisonous and alien to the faith of God. And perhaps the reason why God destroyed the vineyards of the Egyptians was, as it is written in the Psalm, in order that they might not produce that kind of wine.

If, therefore, we have understood the different sorts of wine and have perceived that they correspond to the diversity of teachings, we must take what the Bride says here, Your breasts are better than wine, as referring to good wine, not to bad. For the Bridegroom's teachings are preferred in comparison not with bad ones, but with good. She had tasted good wine before, in the Law and the Prophets, in that by musing upon them the Bride had prepared herself, as it were, to receive gladness of heart, and had made herself ready and able to receive also that more excellent and all-surpassing doctrine that was to come to her hereafter through the breasts of the Bridegroom Himself. That, therefore, is why she says: Your breasts are better than wine.

See now if we can fit into this pattern that Gospel parable which says: The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. This, treasure, then, is hidden, not in some desert place, nor in the woods, but in a field. And it is certainly possible that the field has in it vineyards to produce wine, that it has the treasure for the sake of which the finder spent all that he possessed and bought that field. He, then, who bought that field, can say that the treasure which is in the field is better than the wine which is in it. And in the same way also the Bridegroom is good, and the breasts of the Bridegroom, who is hidden like a treasure in the Law and the Prophets, are better than the wine that those contain—that is to say, the teaching in them that is open and rejoices all who hear. The breasts of the Bridegroom, therefore, are good, because treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him; and these, when they have been opened and revealed to the eyes of the Bride, will seem to her much more excellent than was that wine of the Law and the teaching of the Prophets, which she had before.

But if we ought to understand these things according to a third interpretation, with reference to the perfect soul and the Word of God, then we may say in this connection that as long as a person is a child and has not yet offered himself wholly to God, he drinks the wine which that field produces, which holds within itself the hidden treasure too; and he is gladdened by the wine he drinks. But, when he has offered and vowed himself to God and has been made a Nazirite, and has found the hidden treasure and come to the very breasts and fountains of the Word of God, then he will no longer drink wine or spirit, but with reference to these treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in the Word of God, he will say to Him: Your breasts are better than wine.

+ + +

Bk 1 #3

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

Mt 7.12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Gal 4.1-2: I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father.

Gal 3.25: But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian.

Gal 3.24: So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 4.4: But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law.

1Jn 4.9: In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

Acts 10.38: Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him "Please come to us without delay."

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

Heb 7.17: Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people.

1Tm 2.5: For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

1Jn 2.2: And he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Eph 5.2: And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Eph 5.27: That he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Ex 30.26: And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony.

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

Ex 30.22-5: Moreover, the Lord said to Moses, "Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred and fifty, and of aromatic cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; a holy anointing oil it shall be.

Col 1.18: He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Rom 6.5: For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Eph 5.26-7: That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Ps 45.1: My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

Phl 2.7: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

1Tm 2.5: For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Ps 45.7: You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

Acts 10.38: How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Gal 5.25: If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Ps 45.7: You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

1Cor 2.6: Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

Col 1.26: The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints.

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

Sg 1.2: For your breasts are better than wine.

1Jn 1.1: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

Rom 7.22: For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self.

Sg 1.3: He will run in the scent of your ointments.

2Cor 2.16: To one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

Sg 1.3: He will run in the scent of your ointments.

Jn 3.16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Phl 2.6-7: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Jn 1.16: And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

Sg 1.4: He will run in the scent of your ointments.

Phl 2.8: And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Phl 2.6-7: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Jn 1.16: And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

1Cor 9.22: To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

References to Ps 45 are key to understanding this section which pertains to a royal wedding. Also it has frequent references to anointing.

Action shifts to the bridegroom's "anointing oils" which can be viewed as the law (i.e., *Torah*) and the prophets which are similarly poured out and contain anointing properties. Still, these belong to the Old Testament and act as "guardians and trustees" until the arrival of faith. *Paidagogos* is the noun for "guardian" which means a person responsible for both the education and upbringing of a *paidos* or child. Now with Christ having come, we are justified by faith. In other words, while reading the Song a person must pay close attention to the actual transition time, if you will, between the two dispensations. With that in mind, you can switch freely between them both. As for the Song's maidens, they can be viewed as assistants in this back-and-forth.

Homoioo is the verb for "to be made like" with regard not to just everybody but to "brethren" (*adelphos*, brother) which means those who subscribe to the new dispensation but who can transit in between it and the old noted in the last paragraph. "In every way" is rendered literally "according to all" (*kata panta*) or in accord with all, "all" not being specified but presumably human nature in its entirety. This total identification (*homoioo*) means that Christ can fulfil completely his role as priest; without *homoioo* it would be impossible also to become our "expiation" or *hilasmos* which means a way of making appeasement.

The likeness (*homoioo*) at hand centers around the notion of sacrifice by Christ of himself with emphasis upon him as a "fragrant offering and "sacrifice" or *prospora* and *thusia*. The former pertains to that which is brought to or in the direction towards-which (*pros*) and the latter, more specifically to something offered. This takes place in the "tent of meeting" containing the "ark of testimony" or *mohed* and *heduth*, the former meaning a set time or assembly and the latter, a precept and revelation. The same Exodus passage continues with the enumeration of several aromatic ingredients for an offering.

The sacrifice depicted in Exodus is fulfilled in Christ, "first-born" from the dead or *prototokos* who is "preeminent" or *proteuo*, a verb meaning to be first. I.e., two words prefaced with *pro* signifying before-ness.

Rhema or "word" (that which is said or the subject of speech; compare with *logos* as expression) is associated with washing to make the church-as-bride pure which is why the psalmist's heart "overflows with a goodly theme," the verb being *rachash* which connotes a bubbling up used with *davar* or the common noun for "word." I.e., compared *rhema* as subject of speech with *davar*, the equivalent of *logos*.

Christ's emptying (*kenoo*) ends up, if you will, by the "form" or *morphe* of a slave, a kind of pouring out of himself as ointment. This *morphe* is a man who is "one mediator" or *mesites* or arbitrator. Note the further references to anointing as Jesus

with the Spirit in “power” or *dunamis* which represents the force or capacity to do something.

Teleios is the adjective for “mature” which fundamentally pertains to that which is complete or has attained a goal and is used with *sophia* or “wisdom.” It is used to perceive the “mystery” or *musterion* which had been hidden but is now “made manifest.” *Musterion* refers to that which is secret but usually made known through introductory rites. *Phaneroo* means to make evident, make something so visible that you cannot miss it. As for those who are *teleioi*, they are the persons now trained to read the Song of Songs in a spiritual, not carnal, fashion.

Origen concludes this section with reference to the bridegroom’s breasts being “better than wine,” the breasts themselves being source of wine.

The servant is “good and faithful” over or *epi* (upon) little which means this *epi* will be transferred to “much.” “Enter into:” *eiserchomai* with the preposition *eis*; i.e., two uses of *eis* (into).

Running in the scent of the bridegroom’s ointments is what the psalmist seeks or *baqash* which implies interrogating or the asking of questions to receive an answer. In actuality the “one thing” at issue consists of three: “dwell, behold and inquire.” *Shavat* (to cease, desist, to be still), *chazah* (to behold as often used in prophetic visions) and *baqar* (to inquire, to cleave open).

Reference to the garden of Eden can apply to the Song of Songs in which the reader can “take delight” or *hanag* (to live a delicate, soft life). The verb *sunedumi* or “delight” (sun intimates with-ness) is used with reference to the Torah of God which is in one’s “inmost self.” That phrase (*kata ton eso anthropon*) is rendered literally “in accord with the inner man.”

“Fear” as pertaining to the Lord (*yir’ath*) implies reverence as well as admiration and “knowledge” (*dahath*) often applies to one of the intimate, experiential kind.

On two more occasions in quick succession Origen mentions “solid food” because the reading of the Song of Songs is not done just with the eyes but can be taken as a form of ingestion or eating. Closely aligned with this emphasis upon food (i.e., eating) is the sense of smell: “aroma of Christ” as well as “fragrance,” *euodia* and *osme*. The former is more a sweet smell (*eu-* means ‘well’) and the latter, a scent whether good or bad.

Psuchikos or “unspiritual,” more accurately as pertaining to the soul or life, that which is purely natural. It’s equivalent is “folly” or *moria* which implies being dull or sluggish.

“Clean” or *bar* which can apply to the moral sense; from a verbal root meaning to cleanse, to polish.

The Father’s giving of his “only Son” is a type of scent poured forth in which the Song’s maidens are to run. The preposition *eis* (into) is used for “believes in him,” that the scent has penetrated him thoroughly.

As for the above mentioned senses of taste (solid food) and scent (aroma and fragrance) are the other senses working in harmony regarding “that which was from the beginning” (*arche*, first principle): heard, seen (*horaō*, to see in the sense of looking, of having sight), looked upon (*theaomai*, to behold in the sense of taking in a sight all at once) and touched (*pselaphao*, to feel or grope about as a blind man).

Sunedomai as “I delight” means literally to rejoice together (*sun-*), this *sun* or with-ness being *eso* (inmost self). This rejoice-with is equivalent to running in the bridegroom’s scent.

Two uses of *morphe*: of God and of a servant which is contrasted by “grasped and emptied,” *harpagmos* (the seizing of booty) and *kenoo* (to be deprived, for example, of power or of *dunamis*). The *kenoo* of Christ enables us to receive from (*ek*) Christ’s “fulness” or *pleroma*, *charis anti charitos*. *Anti* connotes in the place of, instead of, meaning that once *charis* is received, it is displaced, as it were, for more *charis*. This emptying plays an important part in this section of Origen’s comments where the Song’s pouring out of oil is the equivalent. Paul imitates this by become “weak” to win those who are the same, *asthenes* meaning feeble as well as small.

The fragrance of Your ointments is above all spices. (1.3 a—Vg. 1.2a)

The Bridegroom has, however, certain ointments also, and with their fragrance the Bride has been delighted; so she says: The fragrance of your ointments is above all spices. Spices are a species of medicament. The Bride had the use and the knowledge of spices—that is, of the words of the Law and the Prophets, by which, though only to a moderate extent, she was instructed and practiced in the service of God before the Bridegroom came, she being then as yet a little child and under tutors, governors, and pedagogues; for, says the Scripture, the Law was our pedagogue to Christ. All these things, then, were the spices with which, as we have seen, she was nourished and made ready for her Spouse. But when the fullness of the time was come, and the Bride was grown up, and the Father had sent His Only-begotten Son into this world, anointed with the Holy Spirit, then, having perceived the fragrance of the divine ointment and realizing that all the spices she employed before are vastly inferior when set beside the sweetness of this new and heavenly ointment, she says: The fragrance of Your ointments is above all spices.

And since the same Christ is called Priest as well as Bridegroom—Priest indeed, because He is the Mediator of God and men and all creation, on whose behalf, moreover, He was made the propitiation, in that He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world; but Bridegroom because He is united to the Church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—because of this, you must consider whether perhaps the priestly ointment, that is commanded in Exodus to be compounded by the perfumers art, may not contain the meaning of this ointment, of which the Bride perceives the fragrance here, and at which she marvels; and you must consider whether it is not because those spices, that made up the ointment with which Aaron is said to have been anointed, were earthly and of material substance, whereas this ointment, with which the Bride beheld her Spouse anointed, is spiritual and heavenly, that she says: The fragrance of Your ointments is above all spices.

Let us see, then, how that ointment was made up. And the Lord, the Scripture says, spoke to Moses, saying: Take you five hundred shekels weight of flower of chosen myrrh, and two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet cinnamon, and two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet reed, and five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the holy shekel, and a hin of olive oil; and you shall make of that oil by

the perfumers art the ointment for the holy unction.

The Bride had of course heard these things mentioned in the Law; but now she grasps their meaning and their truth. For she sees that those four ingredients of that ointment symbolized the Incarnation of the Word of God, who assumed a body compacted out of the four elements; in which body myrrh signifies the death He underwent, alike as Priest for the people and as Bridegroom for the Bride. But the fact that what was written was not simply myrrh, but flower of myrrh, and chosen myrrh too, foreshadowed not His death alone, but also that He was to be the Firstborn from the dead, and that those who had been planted together in the likeness of His death should be not only called, but chosen too. The spotless cinnamon is doubtless mentioned on account of the Church, which He cleansed by the laver of water and made to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Reed is taken too because His tongue is as the reed of a scrivener that writes swiftly; and the smoothness of the pigment denotes the graciousness of His teaching. And the kind of cassia employed is one that is very hot and burning, so we are informed; and that either denotes the fervor of the Holy Spirit, or else is a type of the judgement by fire that is yet to come.

And the number five hundred, or two hundred and fifty, either contains the mystery of the five senses perfected a hundredfold in Him; or else, as being the pardonable number fifty multiplied five times, it signifies the remission of sins that is bestowed through Him.

But all these things are blended together with pure oil; and that shows us either that the cause of the only mercy was that He, being in the form of God, took the form of a servant; or else that the things of a material nature, which had been assumed in Christ, were through the Holy Spirit reduced to one, and made to be all of a single kind, namely the Person of the Mediator. That material oil, therefore, could not possibly be called the oil of gladness. But this oil—that is to say, the ointment of the Holy Spirit with which Christ was anointed, and at the fragrance of which the Bride, when she perceives it, marvels, this oil is fitly called the oil of gladness; because joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and with it God anointed Him who loved justice and hated iniquity. For therefore, Scripture says, bath the Lord His God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And for this reason the fragrance of His ointments is above all spices.

We shall make use of a like interpretation whenever we transfer these words to every individual soul that is fixed in the love of the Word of God and in desire for Him; a soul that will have traversed in order all the sorts of instruction in which she was exercised and taught before she attained to the knowledge of the Word of God, whether those teachings be based on ethics or on natural philosophy. For all those things were so many spices for that soul, in that by their means an agreeable disposition and improvement of behavior are acquired, and because in them the vanity of the world is discovered and the deceitful marvels of perishable things are rejected.

All these things were, then, as spices and perfumes, cosmetics as it were of the soul. But when she has come to knowledge of the mysteries and the divine judgements, when she has reached the gates of wisdom itself, of the wisdom that is not of this world, neither of the princes of this world who come to nought, but is the very wisdom of God which is discoursed upon among the perfect, and when the mystery that was not made known to former generations has been revealed to the sons of men—when, I say, the soul ascends to recognition of this so great secret, she has cause to say: The fragrance of Your ointments — that is, the spiritual and mystical meaning— is above all spices of moral and natural philosophy.

We must not, however, overlook the fact that in certain versions we find written For your sayings are better than wine, where we read For Your breasts are better than wine. But although it may seem that this gives a plainer meaning in regard to the things about which we have discoursed in the spiritual interpretation, we ourselves keep to what the Seventy interpreters wrote in every case. For we are certain that the Holy Spirit willed that the figures of the mysteries should be roofed over in the Divine Scriptures, and should not be displayed publicly, and in the open air.

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Bk 1 #4

Sg. 1.3-4: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you. We will run in the scent of your ointments.

2Cor 2.15-16: For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

Eph 4.22: Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts.

Eph 5.27: That he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy an without blemish.

2Cor 4.16: So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, your inner nature is being renewed every day.

Eph 4.24: And put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Phl 2.7: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

1Tm 6.16: Who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Jn 1.14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Phl 2.8: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.
1Cor 9.24: Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize?
Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out. We will run in the scent of your ointments.
Mt 18.20: For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.
1Cor 6.17: But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.
Jn 17.24: Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world.
Sg 6.8: There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number.
1 Cor 9.20-1: To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law--though not being myself under the law--that I might will those under the law.
Jn 1.14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.
Acts 13.26: Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.
Heb 6.5: And have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come.
Jn 6.33: For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world. Vs 51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.
1Pt 1.23: You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.
1Pt 2.2: So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander.
Rom 14.2: One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables.
Heb 5.14: But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.
Ex 13.21-2: And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night; the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.
Ex 16.1: They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the 15th day of the 2nd month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.
Ex 16.14: And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground.
Ps 78.25: Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance.
Job 10.11: You did cloth me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews.
Phl 1.23: I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.
Mt 25.21 His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master."
Ps 27.4: One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.
Gen 2.8: And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.
Ezk 28.13: You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering...
Ps 37.4: Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Sg 1.4: He will run in the scent of your ointments.
Rom 7.22: For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self.
Prov 2.5: Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.
Heb 5.14: But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.
Rom 7.22: For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self.
Heb 5.14: But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.
Rom 7.22: For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self.
2Cor 2.15-6: For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
1Cor 2.14: The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
Ps 19.9: The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.
Mt 11.15: He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
2Cor 2.15: For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.
Ps 34.8: O taste and see that the Lord is good!
1Jn 1.1: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.
Rom 7.22: For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self. Sg 1.3: He will run in the scent of your ointments.
2Cor 2.16: To one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
Sg 1.3: He will run in the scent of your ointments.
Jn 3.16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
Phl 2.6-7: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

In 1.16: And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

Sg 1.4: He will run in the scent of your ointments.

Phl 2.8: And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Phl 2.6-7: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Jn 1.16: And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

Sg 1.3: Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore the maidens love you.

1Cor 9.22: To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Now the “maidens” are introduced, *halmah* meaning a young woman of marriageable age. They form the “aroma of Christ” which has two different scents: a favorable one for persons being saved and an unfavorable one for those who are perishing. The preposition *en* or “in” is used to indicate full presence within both of this aroma. The aroma is also intended to enable a person to “put off” one’s old nature (*apothemi*). The preposition *kata* is used (literally) as “according to the first turning upside down (*anastrophe*) or better, mode of life. Once this has been accomplished, Christ can “present” the church in “splendor” to himself, the verb being *paristemi* which literally means to place beside or nearby (*para-*).

A contrast between two natures belonging to us: “outer and inner” (*exo* and *eso*). The words “day by day” apply to the latter whereas not to the former. Implied is that the former ends up totally corrupt (*diaphteiro*), the preposition *dia* (through) indicative of such thoroughness.

Kenoo as “emptied” (himself) suggests being deprived of all power. At the same time Christ “dwells” (*oikeo*, to make one’s home) in light which is “unapproachable” or *aprositos*. The “Word” or *Logos* becoming flesh counters this unapproachability, if you will, especially by “dwelling among us” or literally “pitched his tent (*skene*, noun) beside (*para*) us” or in our vicinity.

The image of a “race” or *stadion* is more along the lines of a race course which, in the context of this section, the maidens of the Song run in the fragrance of the bridegroom.

The place where Jesus is (*hopou eimi ego*, ‘where I am’) is the goal of the *stadion* where the so-called runners are “one spirit” (*pneuma*) with Jesus as bridegroom. Here also are the “sixty queens” and “eighty concubines” of the Song.

The sense of taste (*geuomai*) is associated both with the “word” (*rhema*, that which has been uttered, the subject of speech) of God” and with the “powers” (*dunamis*) to come. Such is the “bread of life” (*zoe*, living, substance). Compare *rhema* with *logos* as “living and abiding word of God.”

Teleios as “mature” with respect to solid food which comes to a person who engages in “practice” (*gumnazo*: to train, usually while naked) to “distinguish” or *diakrisis*, a separation effected by a choosing-through (*dia-*).

The *logos* of God causes a person to be “born anew” or *anagennao* because it is both living and “abiding” or *meno* (to remain). In other words, two births: the former is physical and the latter spiritual which becomes characterized by the divine *logos* as *meno*, not moving.

After words about eating, Origen brings in the image of a pillar of cloud and fire which guides the Israelites in the desert. This leads to them eating the “bread of angels” in the desert (manna).

The Song itself echos Paul’s desire to “depart and be with Christ” as it speaks of running in the scent of the bridegroom’s ointments.

The servant is “good and faithful” over or *epi* (upon) little which means this *epi* will be transferred to “much.” “Enter into:” *eiserchomai* with the preposition *eis*; i.e., two uses of *eis* (into).

The running in the scent of the bridegroom’s ointments is what the psalmist seeks or *baqash* which implies interrogating or the asking of questions to receive an answer. In actuality the “one thing” at issue consists of three: “dwell, behold and inquire.” *Shavat* (to cease, desist, to be still), *chazah* (to behold as often used in prophetic visions) and *baqar* (to inquire, to cleave open).

Reference to the garden of Eden can apply to the Song of Songs in which the reader can “take delight” or *hanag* (to live a delicate, soft life). The verb *sunedumi* or “delight” (sun intimates with-ness) is used with reference to the Torah of God which is in one’s “inmost self.” That phrase (*kata ton eso anthropon*) is rendered literally “in accord with the inner man.”

“Fear” as pertaining to the Lord (*yirath*) implies reverence as well as admiration and “knowledge” (*dahath*) often applies to one of the intimate, experiential kind.

On two more occasions in quick succession Origen mentions “solid food” because the reading of the Song of Songs is not done just with the eyes but can be taken as a form of ingestion or eating. Closely aligned with this emphasis upon food (i.e., eating) is the sense of smell: “aroma of Christ” as well as “fragrance,” *euodia* and *osme*. The former is more a sweet smell (*eu-* means ‘well’) and the latter, a scent whether good or bad.

Psuchikos or “unspiritual,” more accurately as pertaining to the soul or life, that which is purely natural. It’s equivalent is “folly” or *moria* which implies being dull or sluggish.

“Clean” or *bar* which can apply to the moral sense; from a verbal root meaning to cleanse, to polish.

The Father’s giving of his “only Son” is a type of scent poured forth in which the Song’s maidens are to run. The preposition *eis* (into) is used for “believes in him,” that the scent has penetrated him thoroughly.

As for the above mentioned senses of taste (solid food) and scent (aroma and fragrance) are the other senses working in harmony regarding “that which was from the beginning” (*arche*, first principle): heard, seen (*horaio*, to see in the sense of looking, of having sight), looked upon (*theaomai*, to behold in the sense of taking in a sight all at once) and touched (*pselaphao*, to feel or grope about as a blind man).

Sunedomai as “I delight” means literally to rejoice together (*sun-*), this *sun* or with-ness being *eso* (‘inmost self’). This rejoice-with is equivalent to running in the bridegroom’s scent.

Two uses of *morphe*: of God and of a servant which is contrasted by “grasped and emptied,” *harpagmos* (the seizing of

booty) and *kenoo* (to be deprived, for example, of power or of *dunamis*). The *kenoo* of Christ enables us to receive from (*ek*) Christ's "fulness" or pleroma, *charis anti charitos*. *Anti* connotes in the place of, instead of, meaning that once *charis* is received, it is displaced, as it were, for more *charis*. This emptying plays an important part in this section of Origen's comments where the Song's pouring out of oil is the equivalent. Paul imitates this by become "weak" to win those who are the same, *asthenes* meaning feeble as well as small.

Your name is as ointment emptied out. Therefore have the maidens loved You, have they drawn You. We will run after You into the fragrance of Your ointments. (1.3b and 4ab—Vg. 1.2b and 3 ab)

Your name is as ointment emptied out. Therefore have the maidens loved you, have they drawn you. We will run after you into the fragrance of your ointments. The literal interpretation, which we followed in treating the foregoing passages, holds good also for that which is before us now, until some change occurs between the characters; the dramatic sequence, which we accepted in this interpretation, in fact requires this. We may well see in these words a certain prophecy, uttered by the Bride herself concerning Christ, to the effect that at Our Lord and Savior's coming it should come to pass that His name should be so spread abroad throughout the globe and over the whole world, as to make it an odor of sweetness in every place; as the Apostle also says: We are the good odor of Christ in every place; to the one indeed the odor of death unto death, but to the others the odor of life unto life.

For, had it been the odor of life unto life for all men, we should surely have read in this place too: They have all loved You and have drawn You. But now it says that when Your name has been emptied out as ointment, have they loved You, not those little old souls clothed in the old man, nor yet the spotted and wrinkled, but that the maidens have done so—that is to say, the young souls growing up in years and beauty, who are always being made new and renewed from day to day, as they put on the new man, who is created according to God.

For the sake of these young souls, therefore, in their growing and abundant life, He who was in the form of God emptied Himself, that His name might be as ointment emptied out, that He might no longer dwell only in light unapproachable and abide in the form of God; but that the Word might be made flesh, and so these maiden souls at the beginning of their progress might not only love Him, but might draw Him to themselves. For every soul draws and receives to itself the Word of God according to the measure of its capacity and faith. But when souls have thus drawn the Word of God to themselves, and have ingrafted Him into their minds and understandings, and have experienced the pleasantness of His sweetness and odor, when they have received the fragrance of His ointments and have grasped at last the reason for His coming, the motives of the Redemption and Passion, and the love whereby He, the Immortal, went even to the death of the cross for the salvation of all men, then these maiden souls, attracted by all this as by the odors of a divine and ineffable perfume and being filled with vigor and complete alacrity, run after Him and hasten to the odor of His sweetness, not at a slow pace, nor with lagging steps, but swiftly and with all the speed they can; even as did he who said: so run, that I may obtain.

But that which is said here: Your name is as ointment emptied out. Therefore have the maidens loved You, have they drawn You. We will run after You into the fragrance of Your ointments—the maidens, namely, draw Christ to themselves—this surely must be taken as referring to the churches, which are one Church when perfected, but many maidens while they are still under instruction and advancing on their way. These, then, draw Christ to themselves through faith; for, when Christ sees two or three gathered together in the faith of His name, He goes thither, and is in their midst, drawn by their faith and called forth by their unity of mind.

If, however, on the third interpretation it behooves us to take this passage as referring to the soul that is following the Word of God, to every soul that has been first instructed in ethics and then practiced in natural philosophy, then the Word of God is drawn by means of all those things which, as we showed just now, are taught in the aforesaid studies—namely, amendment of manners, knowledge of affairs, and uprightness of conduct. And He is willing to be drawn, and comes very gladly to instructed souls; and He accepts their drawing of Him courteously, and kindly yields thereto.

But let me ask you this: if His Name only, that became as ointment emptied out, had such effect and stirred the maidens so, that first they drew Him to themselves and then, when they had got Him with them, perceived the fragrance of His ointments and ran after Him forthwith; if all these things, I say, were brought about by virtue of His Name alone, what do you think His very Self will do? What strength, what vigor will these maidens get from it, if ever they are able by some means to attain to His actual, incomprehensible, unutterable Self? I think myself that if they ever did attain to this, they would no longer walk or run, but, bound as it were by the bands of His love, they would cleave to Him, and would have no further power ever to move again. For they would be one spirit with Him, and that which is written: As You, Father, in me and I in You are one, so may these also be one in Us, would be fulfilled in them.

In the meantime, apparently, the Bride, who has associated with herself the many maidens—they are said to be numberless a little further on—relates that she is running towards the fragrance of the Bridegroom's ointments under the compulsion of one single sense, the sense of smell alone. This may be because she herself still needs to run and to advance; or it may be that, though she herself is perfected, she is admitting that for the sake of these maidens who do still need to run and to take forward steps, she herself also runs even as did he who, though not himself under the Law, became under the Law that he might gain those who were under the Law; who also, though he was in the Law of Christ, became without the Law to them that were without the Law, that He might save them that were without the Law.

This comes about, as we have seen, when as yet they have received only the scent of Him. What, do you think, will they do when the Word of God takes possession of their hearing, their sight, their touch, and their taste as well, and offers excellences from Himself that match each single sense according to its nature and capacity; so that the eye, if it have seen His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father, desires to see nothing evermore but that, nor would the hearing hear aught else except the Word of life and of salvation?

And the one whose hands have handled of the Word of life will nevermore handle anything material, nor anything that breaks and perishes; nor will his palate suffer any other taste, when it has tasted the good Word of God, and His Flesh, and the Bread that comes down from heaven. Because He tastes so sweet and so delightful, all other flavors will seem harsh and bitter to him now; and therefore he will feed on Him alone. For he will find in Him all the sweetness that ever he desired; for He adapts and fits Himself to all requirements. Again, to those who are being born again of incorruptible seed, He is made the rational and guileless milk; while to those who are weak in some respect He offers Himself like healing herbs in friendly and gracious hospitality. And again, to them who, as they are able, have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil, He presents Himself as solid food. But if there are some who have come out of Egypt and, following the pillar of fire and cloud, are entering the wilderness, then He comes down from heaven to them and offers them a small, thin Food, like to the food of angels; so that man eats the bread of angels.

He has in Himself many other and indeed innumerable sorts of food besides, the which a man still clothed in skin and flesh and bones and sinews cannot at present take. But he who shall have merited to return and be with Christ, he who, having been found faithful in a little, is placed over many things, that man will be brought to a certain place which, because of the abundance and variety of foods that it contains, is called the Place of Delights; and there he will taste and see the satisfaction of the Lord. That is why he is said to be put in Eden, which means Delights; for there they will say to him: Delight in the Lord.

His delighting will not, however, be restricted to the single sense of eating and tasting; he will be delighted in his hearing too, and he will be delighted in seeing, and touching, and smelling. For he will run towards the odor of His ointment. And in this way he who has reached the peak of perfection and beatitude will be delighted by the Word of God in all his senses.

Wherefore we also, from the position where we find ourselves, earnestly beg the hearers of these things to mortify their carnal senses. They must not take anything of what has been said with reference to bodily functions, but rather employ them for grasping those divine senses of the inner man; as Solomon himself teaches us, saying: You shall find the divine meaning, and as Paul also writes to the Hebrews, as we remarked before, about the perfect who have their senses trained to discern good and evil. He points out that there are other senses in man besides these five bodily senses; these other senses are acquired by training, and are said to be trained when they examine the meaning of things with more acute perception. For what the Apostle says about the perfect having their senses trained to discern good and evil must not be taken carelessly and in any sense one likes.

To make its meaning clearer, therefore, let us if you like take an example from these bodily senses, and thus we shall come at length to those divine senses which Scripture calls those of the inner man. If, then, the bodily eye has the faculty of sight and there is no obstacle in the way, it will perceive the colors and sizes and qualities of bodies in their entirety and without any deception; for if the power of sight be hindered either by dimness or by any other weakness, so that it thinks a white thing to be red or a black one green, or that a crooked, twisted thing is straight, the mental judgement undoubtedly will be disturbed, and one thing will be done in place of another. And in the same way, if the interior vision, instead of being trained by learning and diligence so as to acquire the power of discerning good and evil through much experience, gets its eyes misted as it were by ignorance and inexperience, or bleary as from the feebleness induced by some disease, it cannot manage to discern good from evil by any means at all. And so it happens that it does bad things instead of good, and rejects the good in favor of the bad. And if you apply this analogy, of which we have treated in regard to the sight of body and soul, to hearing, and taste, and smell, and touch also, and work out the parallel between all the several powers of the bodily senses according to their kind and the corresponding powers of the soul, you will then clearly perceive what training should be undertaken in each case, and what correction ought to be set going.

We have digressed somewhat over this, because we wished to show that the sense of smell, by which the Bride and the maidens perceived the fragrance of the Bridegroom's ointments, denotes not a bodily faculty, but that divine sense of scent which is called the sense of the interior man. This power of perception, therefore, having once picked up the scent of Christ, in so far as it is sound and healthy leads on thenceforward from life unto life. But if, on picking up the scent of Christ, it be not healthy, it casts a man down from death unto death, according to him who said: For we are the good odor of Christ, to some from life to life, but to others the odor of death unto death.

Lastly, those too whose business it is to understand the properties of herbs and medicaments, say that there are certain medicaments at the smell of which some animals die instantly; whereas others by the same odor are refreshed and given life. And it seems to be a matter of life unto life for some, and of death unto death for others, with these same discourses and expositions that we now have in hand. For, if the sensual man, as he is called, the man who cannot perceive and understand the things of the Spirit of God, were to hear these matters so interpreted, he would doubtless mock and pronounce them foolish and empty, telling us we are discussing dreams, rather than the causes of things and the divine teachings. For such men, therefore, the effect of this odor of the Song of Songs is from death unto death—from the death of unbelief, that is to say, unto the death of judgement and condemnation. But to those who follow the leading of their subtle spiritual sense and perceive that there is greater truth in the things that are not seen, than there is in those that are seen, and that the things invisible and spiritual are closer to God than are the bodily and visible, this kind of interpretation will doubtless commend itself as that which they should follow and embrace; for they recognize that this is the way of understanding truth that leads to God.

It is small wonder that a man should adjudge these things as foolish and ridiculous, if he be an alien from the faith; but if among those who profess to believe and to accept the authority of the Scriptures, there should be anyone who none the less does not accept a spiritual exegesis on these lines, but scorns and disparages it, let us try to instruct and persuade him from other passages of Scripture, in the hope that perhaps he may return to his senses. Let us talk to him along the following lines.

Scripture says: The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. Let him then tell us what sort of eyes these are, that are enlightened by the light of the commandment! And again: He that has ears to hear, let him hear! What ears are these, whose possessor alone is said to hear the words of Christ? And again: For we are the good odor of Christ unto God; and, among other passages: O taste and see that the Lord is sweet! And what else does it say? And our hands have handled of the Word of life. Will a man of this sort, do you think, unless he is actuated by the vice of contention and boasting, fail to be moved by all this evidence, and to see that these things were not spoken about the senses of the body, but about those which, as we have taught you, reside in everyone according to the inner man?

Since by these vices of contention and boasting not only is the inward vision blinded, but the sense of smell also is closed up and the power of hearing stopped, there is good reason for his inability either to hear and see things that are spiritual, or to perceive the odor of Christ which these maidens, in whom this sense of smell was very healthy and vigorous, perceived, who are now running after Him towards the odor of His ointments and, as they run, faint not nor toil, because they are continually renewed and strengthened by the sweetness of the smell of Him who is from life unto life.

There is yet another interpretation of these words, Your name is as ointment emptied out; therefore have the maidens loved You. The Only-begotten Son, being in the form of God...emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. The emptying out was surely out of the fullness in the which He was. So those who say: Of His fullness we all have received, are the maidens who, receiving of that fullness of which He emptied Himself and thereby made His name as ointment emptied out, declare: We will run after You towards the fragrance of Your ointments. For, if He had not emptied out the ointment—that is, the fullness of the Divine Spirit—and humbled Himself even to a servants form, no one would have been able to receive Him in that plenitude of Godhead, unless perhaps it were the Bride alone; because she seems to indicate that the ointment emptied out furnished cause of love, not for herself, but for the maidens. For her saying: Your name is as ointment emptied out; therefore have the maidens loved You, is as much as to say: The maidens indeed have loved You, because You did empty Yourself of the form of God, and Your name became as ointment emptied out; but I have loved You, not for the ointment emptied out, but for the ointments very plenitude. Her saying: The fragrance of Your ointments is above all spices, points to this. But, as we explained before, the reason why she herself runs with the maidens after Him is that the perfect always become all things to all men, that they may gain all.

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Bk 1 #5⁵

Sg 1.4: The king has brought me into his chambers.

1Ths 1.6-7: And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

1Cor 2.16: For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 2.12: Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

1Cor 2.9: But as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him."

Sg 1.4: The king has brought me into his chambers.

Col 2.3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2Cor 12.2-4: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

Mt 10.22: And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Is 45.3: I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

Sg 1.3: Therefore the maidens run in the scent of your ointments.

1Cor 9.24: Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

Sg 1.4: We will run in the scent of your ointments.

Ps 45.9: Daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Ps 45.1N many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train. With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.

Mt 6.6: But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Mt 25.29: For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

16: We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; righteousness has loved you.

⁵The Sources Cretiennes translation has a section six.

Sg 1.4: (various parts of the same verse quoted here).

Sg 1.2: For your love is better than wine.

Bar 3.12: You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom.

Col 2.3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Sg 1.4: We will love your breasts more than wine.

Gal 4.2: But is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father.

Gal 3.25: But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian.

Gal 4.4: but when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law.

Lk 2.52: And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

Mt 7.12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Sg 1.4: Righteousness has loved you.

Col 3.14: And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Jn 14.15: If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Sg 1.4: Righteousness has loved you.

1Cor 1.30: Therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."

Eph 2.14: For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.

Jn 14.6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

Ps 85.10: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Mt 9.15: And Jesus said to them, "can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from the, and then they will fast.

Is 61.10: As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

The bride enters the king's (bridegroom's) "chambers" or *cheder* meaning an inner apartment whether of a tent or a house which can be taken, if you will, as fulfillment of being an "imitator" not only of "us" but of "the Lord," *mimetes*.

Closely bound up with being a *mimetes* is knowing the Lord's "mind" our *nous* which means perception, to have sense. "Having" this is therefore is not a kind of possession but gained through being such a *mimetes*.

Two types of "spirits" or *pneuma*: of the world and of God, the latter being associated with *charis*, the verb "gifts bestowed" *charizomai*. Some of the latter belong to what we have not seen, heard nor "conceived," the last verb being *anabaino*, literally to ascend, to go up.

Again, the "chambers" (*cheder*) are mentioned which can be taken as the person of Christ who contains "treasures of wisdom and knowledge," *sophia* and *gnosis*. Note that they are hidden just like *cheder*. Achieving that *cheder* requires that one be "caught up" or *harpazo*, a verb which connotes being snatched away quickly as by a thief. *Harpazo* is used in reference to Paradise where one hears *arreta rhema* or word as subject of speech which cannot be uttered or perhaps better, cannot be repeated in human terms.

"Treasures and secret places:" *'otsar* (provisions as well as wealth) and *mistor* (places which are hidden) which are equivalent to the Song's *cheder*. Within both—and they seem to operate together—a person knows (*yadah*, intimate knowing) that the Lord is calling him by name, that is, to enter both places.

Origen mentions that the bride and her companions will "run" in the bridegroom's ointments, *ruts* signifying a rushing upon, sometimes in a hostile manner. Some of those accompanying both parties are daughters of kings and the queen of Ophir. I.e., all are woman.

The example of a "race" (*stadion*) suggests a course as in a public arena usually consisting of several laps. The bride, her companions, daughters of kings and queen of Ophir all must run to "obtain" (*katalambano* suggests a seizure by force) to lay hold of the divine bridegroom. They are mentioned a second time in quick succession to stress the royal nature of the participants, presumably the bride being the same. Emphasis is put upon the queen, subject of Psalm 45, which should be read along with the Song of Songs.

The injunction to pray is done with regard to one's "room" or *tameion* (usually a treasury). "Secret" or *kruptos* is mentioned twice with regard to the Father's seeing. This awareness of being watched means receiving "abundance" or the verb *perisseuo* which also means having an advantage or being superior. Lack of this awareness means that anything in a person's possession "will be take away" (*airo*, literally, to take or to lift up).

Gyl and *samach*: "exult and rejoice" or literally to dance in a circle and to leap for joy. *Zakar* is the verb for "extol" which means to remember.

Sophia or "wisdom" is presented as a fountain in which presumably are kept hidden the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (*sophia* and *gnosis*). The "guardians" or *epitropos* can be taken as being responsible for maintaining this hiddenness; *epi* (upon) prefaced to *trepo* (to turn, to direct).

Pleroma or "fulness" is used with respect to "time" (*chronos*) which suggests that this hiddenness will become manifest once *chronos* is filled up, if you will. The Song of Songs may be considered a prototype of such fullness. The phrase "under the law" (*Torah*) is a type of this hiddenness. Jesus' growth in "wisdom and stature" (*sophia* and *helikia*) is a *chronos*-related fulfillment of this *pleroma*, *helikia* being a time of life whether of youth or otherwise.

The *Torah* and prophets as doing to people what you wish done to you is a sign of the *pleroma* just noted. While the *Torah* is acknowledged often, examining the prophets is just as crucial, having more guidelines for this injunction by Jesus.

Meisharym or "righteousness" as loving the bridegroom is also found in vs. 9: "your kisses like the best wine that goes down smoothly"

Agape or "love" is presented as a kind of garment one puts on and "binds" everything (*sundesmos*) in "perfect harmony" or *teleiotes* which signifies accomplishment.

Christ as “peace” (*eirene*) has a kind of violent side to it, as braking down a wall, the verb being *luo*, more properly as loosening the material of which this wall is composed.

Chesed and *‘emeth* (‘steadfast love and faithfulness’) meet or *pagash*, a verb connoting a rushing upon or the making of an attack. *Tsedeq* and *shalom* (‘righteousness and peace’) are marked by a kiss, *nashaq*. The two pairs take place on the *hodos* or “way” which Christ calls himself (plus truth and life).

Jesus warns about the bridegroom being taken away which can happen, as it were, if a person fails to read the Song of Songs appropriately. On the other hand, the bridegroom remains present as decked out with a garland, the verb being *kahan* (to adjust, to minister) which also is the root for the noun “priest.” Similarly, the bride *kahan* herself with “jewels” or *kely*, also a vessel, tool or arms.

The King has brought me into His chamber. Let us rejoice and be glad in You. We will love Your breasts more than wine. Equity has loved You. (1.4c-f—Vg. 1.3c-f)

The king has brought me into his chamber. Let us rejoice and be glad in you.

The Bride had drawn her Bridegroom’s attention to the fact that the maidens, attracted by His fragrance, were running after Him, and that she herself likewise was going to run with them; so that in all things she might set them an example. But now, as though she has already attained the reward of her labor in thus running with the runners, she tells us that the King has brought her into His chamber, that she may see there all the royal riches. And this gives her good reason for gladness and rejoicing, in that she has now beheld the secrets of the King and hidden mysteries. This is the literal interpretation, taking the thing as a story told in dramatic form.

But since the reference is either to the Church who conies to Christ, or to the soul that cleaves to the Word of God, how should we understand Christ’s chamber and the storehouse of the Word of God into which He brings the Church or the soul thus cleaving to Him—you can take it either way—except as Christ’s own secret and mysterious mind? Of this Paul also said: We have the mind of Christ, that we may know the things that are given us from God. These are those that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for them that love Him. So, when Christ leads a soul to understand His mind, she is said to be brought into the Kings chamber, in which are hid the treasures of His wisdom and knowledge.

It seems to me, however, not without significance that instead of saying I was brought in by my Spouse, or by my Nephew, or using some other of her wonted terms, in this place, because she was about to mention the chamber, she says it is the Kings chamber, and does not use some other appellation, such as might perhaps be taken to mean some ordinary person. She named the King in this connection, I believe, to emphasize how very rich this chamber was, being thus royal and filled full with many and vast riches. I think that the man who said he had been rapt to the third heaven, and thence to Paradise, and had heard unspeakable words that it is not lawful for a man to utter, had been close to this King, or following Him. For what words do you think he heard, unless he heard them from the King, and heard them either in the chamber or from just outside? And those words, I believe, were such as to encourage him to press on yet further, and to promise him that if he persevered until the end, he would himself be able to enter the Kings chamber, according to the promise that the prophet also gave: I will give you dark treasures and hidden ones; I will open to you things unseen, that you may know that I am the Lord your God, who call you by your name., the God of Israel.

The maidens, then, run after Him and into His fragrance, each one of them according to her powers, one faster, one somewhat more slowly, while another runs behind the rest and brings up the rear. They all run, certainly; but she alone is perfect who so ran as to obtain, and alone to receive the prize. This only one is she who says: The King has brought me into His chamber, whereas formerly, speaking not of herself only, but of many, she had said: We will run after You into the fragrance of Your ointments. She, then, is brought into the chamber, and is made the queen; and she it is of whom it is said: The queen stood on Your right hand, in gilded clothing, girt about with divers colors. But of the maidens who had run behind her and stayed some distance from her as they ran, it is said: After her shall virgins be brought to the King; her neighbors shall be brought to You, they shall be brought with gladness and re-joking, they shall be led into the temple of the King.

But we must note in this connection the further fact that, just as the King has a certain chamber into which He brings His queen or bride, so also has the Bride her chamber, the door whereof the Word of God enjoins her, when she has entered it, to shut, and so, with all those riches of hers shut away inside that chamber, to pray to the Father, who sees in secret and perceives what valuables—what virtues of the soul, that is—the Bride has gathered there; so that, seeing her riches, He may grant her prayers. For to everyone that has it shall be given.

The words, Let us rejoice and be glad in You, however, seem to be spoken by the maidens, who in them beg and pray the Bridegroom that as the Bride has obtained the things that are perfect and rejoices therefor, so may they likewise merit to fulfil their course and come even to the Kings chamber; that, having there beheld and looked on all these things of which she speaks with pride, they also may rejoice as she rejoices, and be glad in Him.

Moreover, the words, We will love your breasts more than wine, may also be taken as addressed by the maidens to the Bride; they rejoice with her, because they look forward to becoming partakers of her joy and gladness. The Bride herself, after she has been found worthy to receive kisses from the Bridegroom’s own mouth, and to enjoy His breasts, says to Him: Your breasts are above wine. But the maidens, who had not yet reached that degree of blessedness, nor attained the summit of perfection, nor yet had so produced the fruits of perfect charity in conduct and works as to enable them to say from experience that His breasts are good,

these, I say, seeing the Bride delighted and refreshed by the Bridegroom's breasts—that is to say, by the springs of wisdom and knowledge that proceed from them—seeing her drink the cups of heavenly teaching, promise and say, as those who copy her perfection and desire to follow in her steps: We will love your breasts more than wine. That is: We indeed are not yet so perfect as to love your breasts more than wine now—or your breasts that are above wine, either sense will do— yet, just because we are maidens, we cherish the hope that we shall reach the age at which we can not only feed from the breasts of the Word of God, and be nourished thereby, but also love Him who thus nourishes.

As we have often said before, these maidens represent souls who, like little children, have received the elements and first fruits of instruction, and are gladdened, as with a sort of wine, by the schooling only of tutors and governors and of a pedagogue; they are such as have it in their power to love wine, but are not yet of an age to be moved and stirred by love for the Bridegroom's breasts. They promise, nonetheless, that when the fullness of the times has come and Christ in them has advanced in age and wisdom, and they have begun to perceive what the breasts of the Bridegroom are, and what perfection of the Word of God and what fullness of spiritual teaching is denoted by them, they will then love the Bridegroom's breasts, which now they love after the manner of children, more than wine—that is, they will be apter students of Christ's full and perfect teachings than ever they were of their ordinary studies, or of the teachings of the Law and the Prophets.

Equity has love you. I think this, too, is spoken by the maidens, by way of compensation for the fact that they had only promised to love the Bridegroom's breasts more than wine, and do not so love them at present, nor do they display the full force of charity. The words imply self-blame: the maidens have not yet so cast away iniquity and come to equity, as to be able to love the Bridegroom's breasts more than wine now; and they know that it is wholly unfitting for any trace of iniquity to remain in a person who has reached the perfection of spiritual and mystical teaching. Therefore, because the height of perfection consists in charity, and charity allows nothing of iniquity—and where there is no iniquity, there surely is equity—it is rightly said to be Equity that loves the Bridegroom.

And see if this saying of the Savior in the Gospel does not come to the same thing: If you love me, keep my commandments. For if he who loves Christ keeps His commandments, and in him who keeps the commandments there is no iniquity, but equity abides in him, equity then is that which both keeps the commandments and loves Christ. And again, if the person who keeps the commandments is also the person who loves Christ, and it is by equity that the commandments are kept, and equity that loves Christ, then the person who does anything iniquitous neither keeps the commandments, nor loves Christ.

It follows, therefore, that as far as there is any iniquity in us, to that extent precisely are we far from loving Christ, and to that extent also is there in us transgression of His commandments. Let us, therefore, make equity into a sort of straight-edge; so that if there be anything of iniquity in us, by using this ruler and adding thereto the rule of Gods commandments, anything crooked or twisted that there may be in us may be put straight by this rulers edge; so that it may be said of us also: Equity has loved You.

We can also take what it says here, Equity has loved You, as being a similar statement to: Justice has loved You, and Truth, and Wisdom, and Modesty, and all the virtues in turn. And do not be surprised that we speak of the virtues loving Christ, since in other cases we are wont to regard Christ as Himself the substance of those very virtues. You will find this often in the Divine Scriptures, adapted to the context and conditions; we find Him, for example, called not only Justice, but also Peace and Truth. And again, it is written in the Psalms: Justice and Peace have kissed; and Truth is sprung out of the earth, and Justice has looked down from heaven. All of which things are both said to be Himself, and to embrace Him. Moreover, He is both called Bridegroom and named Bride, as it is written in the prophet: As a bridegroom bath He decked inc with a crown, and as a bride bath He adorned me with jewels.

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