

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

Introduction

This document may be considered as Part Two of a projected three document-long project begun with Origen's **Commentary on the Song of Songs** which is posted on this Lectio Divina Home Page.¹ Essentially what had been said in the Introduction to that commentary applies here. In other words, the method is the same: first the scriptural references are in green followed by the notations in blue and finally the **Song Commentary** itself in red. For the most part scriptural citations are from the RSV. On occasion Gregory of Nyssa doesn't quote each verse as it is but alludes to it or refers to a particular biblical example or phrase. Sometimes the verse he quotes differs from what we now have as the RSV. The text available to him was the (Greek) Septuagint.

It is the intent of this document as well as the one pertaining to Origen that the reader use the brief notations on the scriptural references to construct his own commentary on the Song of Songs. Who knows...it may even surpass both authors.

Gregory of Nyssa's commentary is written in Greek compared to Origen's which is in Latin. The critical edition of the Greek text is edited by Werner Jaeger and Hermann Langerbeck, **Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum Canticorum** (Leiden, 1960, vol. 6). J.P. Migne's edition is **Patrologia Graeca** (Paris, 1858, vol. 44). Within the homilies of the **Song Commentary** are found the capital letters 'J' and 'M.' J refers to the critical edition of the Greek text by Werner Jaeger (and page number) and M refers to J.P. Migne's edition (and column number).

Because Gregory repeats a good number of scriptural verses, the same notations or part of them will be inserted at the appropriate places simply to avoid unnecessary repetition. In some instances several consecutive scriptural references are alluded to or not quoted in full. In those instances a brief summary is put in parentheses. Keep in mind the two formats of the authors. Gregory of Nyssa's commentary comprises fifteen homilies whereas Origen's is comprised of three books. In the text at hand each scriptural verse is followed immediately by a brief notation. This differs from the document on Origen's **Commentary** where the scriptural verses and notations are in separate sections.

Most, not all verses, are commented upon, and at a later time they may be fleshed out along with the verses already having notations. You could insert notations endlessly, but it seems best to keep them to a minimum in order not to overburden the reader. All in all, the goal is to expand upon Gregory's **Commentary** and ideally enable the reader to construct his or her own text based on the information provided here. The type used is Nyala, twelve point. Easily it can be enlarged in the PDF format. All specific scriptural references within Gregory's commentary have been eliminated because they may be confused with the lists provided, some verses being inferred only.

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The Prologue

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

The first biblical quote that comes to Gregory's mind is from Proverbs with regard to the following four elements that will play a role in his commentary: "figure, words (of wise people) and riddles" or *mashal*, *melytsah*, *davar* and *chydah*. The first pertains to a making a similitude, the second to interpretation, the third to word as expression and the fourth to that which is twisted in the sense of being complicated.

Rom 7.14: We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.

¹Part three would pertain to Bernard of Clairvaux's **Song Commentary**, but as of now that is uncertain. The chief reason for this present uncertainty is that both Origen and Gregory are closer in time and in spirit whereas Bernard lived in the twelfth century. Bernard's commentary, the lengthiest of the three, may deserve treatment in and by itself.

“Law” or *nomos* (also applies to custom but here as Torah) is “spiritual” or *pneumatikos* compared to *sarkinos*, “carnal.”

Gal 4.21-31: (allegory of Hagar and Sarah).

Hagar and Sarah are compared to two mountains: Sinai and Sarah to the Jerusalem above. In Paul’s explanation Sarah is not mentioned by name.

1Cor 10.11: Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.

“End” or *telos* is the goal or completion of “ages,” *aion* meaning the perpetuity of time which corresponds to “warning” or *tupikos*, an adverb meaning by way of example which foretells the *telos*.

1Cor 9.9-10: You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain. Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake?

Reference to not muzzling an ox while treading grain is in the larger context of Deuteronomy’s precepts. Within the same context is the reference to a man not being permitted to take back a wife he had divorced. This has some shades of the Hagar-Sarah example.

Dt 24.4: Then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she had been defiled.

1Cor 13.12: For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

“Dimly” versus “face to face” or *aenigma* versus *prosopon pros prosopon*, a dark saying compared to the preposition *pros* which signifies direction towards-which. *Aenigma* corresponds to the “veil” or Moses, *masweh*.

Ex 34.34: But whenever Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

Mt 10.14: And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.

“Words” is *logos* which the disciples speak to people welcoming them and reflective of Christ as *Logos*. These disciples may be called “ministers” (*dikanos*) of a code proper to the “Spirit” or *Pneuma*. Thus there’s a distinction between this *Pneuma* and the “written code” *gramma* (letter, account).

2Cor 3.6: Who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hos 1.2: Go take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord.

“Harlotry and forsaking” which just has the verb *zanah* with “from after the Lord.” This example is not unlike Isaiah and the prophetess who bore the child named “the spoil speeds, the prey hastes.”

Is 8.3: And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz.”

2Kg 11: (usurpation of Athaliah in Judah).

Reference is made to Athaliah who destroyed the royal family out of vengeance for her dead son.

2Cor 3.6: (cf. above).

Ps 18.1-7: (glory of the heavens).

Dt 32.43: Praise his people, O you nations; for he avenges the blood of his servants, and takes vengeance on his adversaries, and makes expiation for the land of his people.

Qum is the verb for “avenges and takes vengeance” which fundamentally means to arise. “Expiation” or *kopher* literally means a covering not so much for the people but for the “land” (*‘adamah*).

Heb 1.6: Again, when he brings the first born into the world he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

“Worship” is *proskuneo* or literally, with the preposition *pros* as prefix indicating direction toward-which; taken from Ps 97.7. “World” is *oikoumene* indicates the inhabited world into which Christ “emptied” himself, *kenoo*.

A forerunner of this is the “serpent” in the wilderness, *saraph*.

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

“Emptied” himself (*kenoo*) to assume both a “form” and “likeness” or *morphe* and *homoiomata*. The former is more concrete and the latter suggests resemblance.

Jn 8.17-8: In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true; I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me.

“Testimony and bear witness” or *marturia* and *martureo*, the latter being used with the preposition *peri* (around, concerning) both “myself” and the Father. Compare with “witness” or *had* which will be “sustained,” the verb being *qum* (to stand, arise).

Dt 19.15: Only on the evidence of two witnesses shall a charge be sustained.

Jn 3.14: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up.

Ophis is the noun for “serpent” which is a general term for snake.

Num 21.8: Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.

Saraph is the noun for “serpent,” a species of venomous snakes related to the word seraphim.

Mt 13.34-6: (Jesus' use of parables).

Mt 16.6-12: (leaven of the Pharisees).

Jn 4.31-4: (Jesus bearing witness to truth).

Jesus speaks of opening his mouth in parables, quoting from Ps 72.8, the Pharisees' leaven and whose food is to do the Father's will.

Dt 19.15: (cf. above).

Jn 3.14: (cf. above).

Num 21.8: (cf. above).

Mt 13.34-6: (cf. above).

Mt 16.6-12: (cf. above).

Jn 4.31-4: (cf. above).

Jn 7.37-8: If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."

"In me" more literally reads "into (*eis*) me." *Koilia* is the noun for "heart" and refers to intestines or bowels.

Jn 4.13-4: Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Jesus quotes from both Prov 18.4 and Is 58.11, combining the two in reference to himself and "heart" or *koilia* (also as intestines or bowels). From this *koilia* within a person there will be a "spring" (*pege*) of water which will well up to eternal life, *hallomai* connoting a strong, continuous flow. In addition to this water Jesus gives himself as bread which, in turn, gives life to the "world" or *kosmos*, a term which fundamentally means decoration. I.e., the water is within a person whereas the bread comes from without.

Jn 6.33: For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.

Jn 2.19: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

"Destroy" as applied to the temple refers to Christ's body, the verb being *luo* which means to dissolve, almost as though to melt away. Christ-as-temple (*naos*) has, if you will, a way to it, consists of truth and life and finally, a door. Compare the sense of *luo* as dissolving with the rejection of the stone by the builders; it is now the 'head' or *kephale*, this noun used with the verb *eis*, literally as "into the head," *ro'sh* being the Hebrew.

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

Jn 10.9: I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

The verb *eiserchomai* means "enter" and is used with the preposition *dia* or "through me."

Acts 4.11: This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner.

Mt 21.42: The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

A quote from Ps 118.2.

Ps 118.22: The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

Lk 17.34: I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other left.

Two verses pertaining to end times: the taking of one man from bed and a woman at the mill. The two left behind seem to continue their daily lives while left wondering at what had just happened. Reference to the body and eagles as well as the fig tree are signs of this being taken, the verb *paralambano* being used with the preposition *para* (beside, alongside) prefaced to the common verb meaning to receive.

Mt 24.41: Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.

Mt 24.28: Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

Aetos as "eagle" can also mean vulture.

Mt 24.32: From the fig tree learn its lesson; as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.

"Lesson" is *parabole*, often translated as "parable."

Jn 5.39: You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me.

2Tm 3.14-6: (scripture inspired by God).

The verb for “search” relative the scriptures is *ereunao* which connotes making an investigation, this regarding eternal life. Compare this with “acquainted” (2Tm 3.115), the verb *eido* (to know as well as to see). 1Tm 4.13: Until I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching.

“Attend” is *prosecho*, the preposition *pros* (direction towards-which) prefaced to the verb *echo* (to have) or literally, to have towards.

Gen 2.16-7: You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in that day that you eat of it you shall die.

The tree is one of “knowledge” (*dahath*) with respect to good and evil, that is, having intimate knowledge of both.

Mk 7.15: There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him.

Compare what a man speaks as defilement with the warning about eating from the tree of “knowledge” (*dahath*) of good and evil. This tree is included among all that God had made as “very good” or *tov me’od*, the latter being an adverb suggesting excessiveness.

Mt 15.11: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

Gen 2.8-9: (tree of life in Eden).

Gn 1.31: And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

Mic 4.1: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it.

Latter days pertain to the future of Israel when the Lord’s mountain will dominate all others to which “people” will flow (the common verb *halak*, to go), *goyim* usually applicable to non-Israelites.

Is 11.1: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

Stump and roots pertaining to Jesse, father of King David; the former is above ground and has been cut off while the latter is under ground and still alive.

Ps 68.17: With mighty chariotry, twice then thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.

The Lord coming into the “holy place” (*qodesh*) from with a multitude of chariots can apply his coming from Mount Sinai to the Jerusalem temple. Two other verses from Ps 68 follow with regard to this victory parade. From the north Lebanon will rejoice and skip as a calf which can signify its reaction concerning this parade. The Lord’s entrance is preceded by the gathering of wheat into the granary which requires winnowing and the clearing of the threshing floor. Also, trees not bearing fruit will be cut down in preparation. En route from Sinai to Jerusalem stones will become children of Abraham to act as a road for the Lord’s multitude of chariots.

Ps 68.30: Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples.

Gahar is the verb for “rebuke” which suggests uttering with groans.

Ps 68.23: That you may bathe your feet in blood.

Ps 29.6: He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf.

Raqad is the verb for “skip” which connotes leaping as well as dancing.

Mt 3.12: His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor.

Mt 3.10: Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Lk 13.6-9: (parable of fig tree which bore no fruit).

Mt 3.9: “We have Abraham as our father;” for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

1Cor 3.8: He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor.

Planting and watering are “equal” (*hen*, meaning one) to which is given wages according to the “labor” put into them, *kopos* literally meaning a striking and can connote trouble.

Greetings in the Lord, to the most worthy Olympias, from Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.

J.3 & M.756² I have learned as befitting your noble life and pure soul your concern for the Song of Songs

²A note as to the letters 'J' and 'M.' J refers to the critical edition of the Greek text by Werner Jaeger (and page number) and M

which you have expressed to me both in person and by your letters. By an appropriate contemplation of the text, the philosophy hidden in its words J.4 becomes manifest, once the literal meaning has been purified by a correct understanding. Therefore, I have eagerly accepted your solicitude regarding this task. I do not offer you anything that would benefit your conduct, for I am persuaded that your soul's eye is pure from every passionate, unclean thought, and that it looks without hindrance at God's grace by means of these divine words of the Song. However, I hope that my commentary will be a guide for the more fleshly-minded, since the wisdom hidden [in the Song of Songs] leads to a spiritual state of the soul.

Because some members of the Church always think it right to follow the letter of holy scripture and do not take into account the symbolic and allegorical meanings, we must answer those who accuse us of doing so [that is, of using allegory]: there is nothing unusual in searching the divinely inspired scriptures with every means at our disposal. Thus if the literal J.5 sense, as it is called, should be of any use, we will readily M.757 have the object of our search. But if anything in the hidden, symbolic sense cannot be of use with regard to the literal sense, we will, as the Word teaches and as Proverbs says, understand the passage either as a parable, a dark saying, an utterance of wise men, or as a riddle. With regards to anagogy, it makes no difference what we call it--tropology or allegory--as long as we grasp the meaning of [scripture's] words.

The great Apostle [Paul] says that the Law is spiritual. He includes under the name of Law the historical narratives, since all the inspired scriptures is Law for those who read them. They teach not only through precepts but through the historical narratives: both lead to knowledge of the mysteries and to a pure way of life for those who have diligent minds. Paul uses exegesis with an eye to what is useful and best for him; he is not concerned about the word necessary to designate the form of his exposition. However, Paul says that the name changes when he is about to transfer the J.6 meaning of the historical sense for showing the dispensation of the two Testaments. After mentioning the two children of Abraham--one born of a slave woman and the other from a free woman--Paul calls his consideration of them allegory. In another place, after having related certain details of a story, he says, "These things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction.". And again, after using the expression "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain," he added, "God does not care about oxen," but "clearly it has been written for our benefit." Paul calls a mirror and a riddle that which is understood obscurely.

Yet Paul somewhere calls the shift from the corporeal to the spiritual "a turning to the Lord and the removal of a veil." In all these different expressions and names of contemplation Paul is teaching us an important lesson: we must pass to a spiritual and intelligent investigation of scripture so that considerations of the merely human element might be changed into something perceived by the mind once the more fleshly sense of the words has been shaken off like dust. J.7 For this reason Paul says, "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." If we stay only with the mere facts of the text, the historical narratives [of scripture] do not offer us examples of a good life. For what benefit to virtuous living can we obtain from the prophet Osee, or from Isaiah having intercourse with a prophetess, unless something M.760 else lies beyond the mere letter? Or how do the stories regarding David, his terrible act of adultery and murder, pertain to virtuous living. If anyone argues that these stories are reprehensible, then the saying of the Apostle will certainly be true:--"the letter kills"--for its examples of evil conduct, and "the spirit gives life." For the apparent, reprehensible sense is changed into something having a divine meaning.

We know that even the Word himself, who is adored by J.8 all creation, passed on the divine mysteries when he had assumed the likeness of a man. He reveals to us the meaning of the Law, saying that the two persons whose testimony is true consists of himself and of his Father. The bronze serpent elevated on high which protected the people from the serpent's deadly stings was transformed for us into the dispensation of the Cross. Christ trained his disciples' minds through sayings veiled and hidden in parables, images, obscure words, and terse sayings in riddles. Sometimes he gave an explanation which removed their obscurity. But if the disciples occasionally did not grasp the intent of his words, Christ rebuked their slowness and lack of understanding. For example, he ordered the disciples to stay away from the leaven of the Pharisees, yet they

refers to J.P. Migne's edition (and column number). Insertion of biblical references, present in the original translation, have been deleted.

were unhappy because their purses had no bread. Christ then upbraided them for failing to J.9 understand that leaven had symbolized their teaching. Again, when his disciples were preparing a table, Christ responded, " I have food to eat of which you do not know." When they supposed he was speaking of bodily food which had been brought to him from elsewhere, Christ explained his own words, that the food proper to him is the fulfillment of the Father's salvific will.

We can present many examples from the Gospel where the literal meaning differs from the text's intention. For example, the water he promised to the thirsty by which those who believe became springs of rivers; the bread that comes down from heaven; the temple which is destroyed and rebuilt after three days; the way; the gate; the stone rejected by the builders and fit as the capstone; the two people in one bed; the mill stone; the woman grinding with one taken and the one left behind; the body; the eagles; and the fig tree which becomes tender and puts forth buds. All these and similar examples should serve to remind us of the necessity of searching the J.10 & M.761 divine words, of reading them, and of tracing in every way possible how something more sublime might be found which leads us to that which is divine and incorporeal instead of the literal sense. Because of this, we believe that the tree from which it was prohibited to eat was not the fig tree as some have maintained, nor any other fruit trees. If the fig was then deadly, neither would it be edible now. At the same time, we have learned from our Lord, "It is not what goes into the mouth which can defile a man." But we seek another meaning in this statement which is worthy of the lawgiver's majesty. If we hear that paradise was planted by God and that the tree of life is in the center of paradise, we seek to learn from the One who reveals the hidden mysteries of which plants is the Father both the husbandman and the vine dresser, and how it is possible that there are two trees in the middle of paradise, one of salvation and the other of destruction. For the exact center as in the drawing of a circle has only one point. However, if another center is somehow placed beside or added to that first one, it is necessary that another circle be added for that center so that the former one is no longer in the middle.

J.11 There was only one paradise. How, then, does the text say that each tree is to be considered separately while both are in the middle? And the text, which reveals that all of God's works are exceedingly beautiful, implies that the deadly tree is different from God's. How is this so? Unless a person contemplates the truth through philosophy, what the text says here will be either inconsistent or a fable.

It would take a long time to recount what each of the prophets have uttered. With regard to the last days, Micah says that a mountain will become visible on the peaks of other mountains. He is referring to the mystery of piety which is being revealed for the destruction of the opposing powers. Other examples are as follows: The sublime Isaiah says that a rod will rise up [from Jesse] and a flower from the root, thus revealing the Lord's manifestation in the flesh; the mountain swollen with pride of which David speaks, whose meaning becomes clear in the letter of the text; the ten thousand chariots; the gathering of bulls with the heifers of the nations; the foot washed in blood; J.12 dogs' tongues and Lebanon of the cedars jumping like a calf. Many such examples could be gathered from other prophecies to teach us the necessity of contemplating the words according to their deeper meaning. If this contemplation is rejected as some would like to do, it seems to me that it would be like offering wheat for human consumption without having ground the corn; or having divided the seeds from the chaff by winnowing; or having cleaned the grain of husks for flour; or having prepared the bread in the proper way. Therefore, just as food not worked over is fit for beasts and not for man, so one could say that the inspired words, when not worked M.764 over by a more subtle contemplation, are food for irrational beasts rather than for rational men. And not only does this apply to the Old Testament, but also to many of the Gospel's teachings: the winnowing fan which cleanses the threshing floor; the chaff which is removed; the grain which remains on the feet of those winnowing it; the unquenchable fire; the good granary; the tree bearing bad fruit; the threat of the axe which shows its terrible edge to the tree; and stones used as metaphors for men.

J.13 Let what I have just mentioned stand as my defense against those who advise is to look for nothing more in the divine words than their literal meaning. Although Origen laboriously applied himself to the Song of Songs, we too have desired to publish our efforts. Let no one accuse us by referring to the Apostle's words, "Each one shall receive his wages according to his labor." To me, however, this treatise on the Song of Songs is not written for display, because out of love for knowledge, some of our associates have reported to us many of

the things said in the church. I have taken some and have added others where necessary. I have composed my commentary in the form of homilies following the text of the Song of Songs, insofar as the season and my occupation have allowed me leisure for this due to the days of the fast. We have zealously exerted ourselves so that the people might hear this treatise. If God, who dispenses us life, should grant enough life and a time of peace, perhaps we will pursue the rest of our task, for our investigation has proceeded up to the half-way point of the Song of Songs. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you forever and ever. Amen.

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The First Homily

Col 3.9: Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices.

Gregory's first homily begins with a warning, of not lying because the old man has been put off, the verb being *apekduomai* which contains two prepositions emphasizing this removal: *apo* and *ek* (away from and from). *Praxis* means "practices" or action, business, ability. In contrast to the old man we have Christ "transfigured" or *metamorphoo*, literally to change-after, to bring a form (*morphe*) after (*meta*), if you will, or brought into a new state which is dynamic, not static. Hence the new man must have garments which are always white in compliance with the marriage of the Lamb described towards the end of Revelation of which Christ's transfiguration is a prefiguration.

Mt 17.2: And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.

Metamorphoo: literally to change-after, to bring a form (*morphe*) after (*meta*), if you will, or into a new state, and that is an eternal dynamic, not static.

Rev 19.7-9: (marriage of the Lamb).

Ecc 9.8: Let your garments be always white.

Eph 5.32: This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church.

"Mystery" or *mysterion* implies that which is secret and requiring initiation, here as pertaining to the marriage between Christ and the church symbolized, as for Origen, in the Song of Songs. This is followed by two verses pertaining to love vs. the origin and practice of idolatry. The same applies to "fellowship" regarding Jesus, *koinonia* (also as participation).

1Tm 2.4: Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

"Desires" is the verb *etheleo* and "knowledge" is *epignosis*, literally as a knowing-upon (*epi*).

1Jn 4.18: There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

Agape is the noun for "love" which here is "perfect" or *teleios*, that which tends toward perfection.

Dt 6.5: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

"Heart and soul" or *lev* and *nesphesh*: heart and life principle that governs the body. Jesus quotes Dt 6.5 where the verb *agapao* is used for 'ahav or "love" regarding three uses of the preposition *b-* (in; same applies to the Greek text) which read "in all your heart, in all your soul and in all your excessiveness" (*me'od*).
Wisd 13.1-8: (origin and folly of idolatry).

Rom 1.25: Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

"Exchanged" with regard to truth for a lie is *metallasso*, the preposition *meta* (after) prefaced to the verbal root, literally as to change after.

1Cor 1.9: God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1Kg 3.12: Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.

"Wise and discerning" or *chakam* and *navon*. The former implies the ability to judge and the latter, to understand. Both are related to "mind" or *lev*, more properly as heart.

1Kg 5.9-14: (Solomon & building of temple).

1Kg 3.4: Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings upon that altar.

1Kg 3.6-9: (Solomon's plea for understanding).

Several verses pertain to King Solomon: the building of the temple, his sacrifices and especially his prayer for "understanding" or *lev shomehah* which translates literally as a "hearing heart."

Rom 1.3: The gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh.

“According to” the flesh or *kata* which intimates more than this such as the history or presentation of Jesus. Melchizedek as priest of God is a foreshadow of Jesus by reason of “translation” of his name, *hermeneuo* which suggests an interpretation of his name.

Heb 7.2: He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

Hermeneuo is the verb for “translation” which means to interpret.

Jn 1.49: Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!

Two exclamations: Jesus as Song of God and king of Israel. Despite both, Jesus makes clear his kingdom is not “of this world” or *enteuthen* which in the casual sense means from that source.

Jn 12.13: Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!

Jn 18.36: My kingship is not of this world.

1 Kg 7.12: The great court had three courses of hewn stone round about, and a course of cedar beams; so had the inner court of the house of the Lord, and the vestibule of the house.

Chatser is the noun for “court” and is used twice, usually a place surrounded by a wall and “vestibule” is *ulam* which also pertains to a porch.

1Kg 5.(18)19: So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the men of Gebel did the hewing and prepared the timber and the stone to build the house.

Ezk 40.3: Behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring reed in his hand.

Mar'eh is the noun for “appearance” which is derived from the common verb to see.

Mt 16.18: And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.

“Appearance” or *mar'eh* derives from the verbal root to see, here as bronze which means a slightly off-color reflection or one which is not especially bright though luminous.

1Pt 2.5: And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Oikodomeo is the verb for “built” and consists of two nouns as roots, *oikos* and *domos* or house proper and part of a house. The preposition *eis* is used with “holy priesthood” or literally “into a holy a priesthood.”

Mt 26.61: This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'

Two references to Solomon's temple: the two courts and preparation of the temple by King Hiram's workers. *Chatser* is the noun for “court” which applies to an enclosure before a building. When Jesus says to Peter that he will build his church (on him), perhaps he had in mind the construction of this temple as well as the later one by Herod. This temple will be comprised of living stones fashioned (*oikodomeo*: the noun *oikos* or house and the verb *demo* or to build) into a house which is “spiritual” or *pneumatikos*. Christ is able to destroy the temple and build it in three days, the verb being the same.

Mt 27.40: You who would destroy the temple and build it in three day, save yourself!

“Destroy” or *luo* pertaining to the temple means more to loosen, almost to melt away.

Jn 2.19: And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

Wisd 7.17-21: (power to know creation).

Prov 8.22-31: (creation of wisdom).

The lengthy verses for Wisdom and Proverbs deal with “certain knowledge” (*gnosis* which is *apseudos* or not-lying) and “wisdom” or *chakmah* which also pertains to skill and dexterity. Christ is both as “source” of our lives which is rendered as *ex autou* or “from him.”

1Cor 1.30: He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Sophia, *dikaiosune*, *hagiasmos* and *apolutrosis* or “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption,” all of which are from Christ as “source” which is rendered as *ex autou* or literally “from him.”

Prov 3.19: The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.

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

A person comes “to” the Father “through” me, the two prepositions being *pros* and *dia*: direction towards-which followed by a through-ness.

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.

When Paul was a “child” or *nepios*, literally he was not yet speaking. Two references to children follow: *pais* and *nepios*, the former usually older than the latter which often is a derogatory term. In contrast to both stands “mature” manhood, the adjective being *teleios* or pertaining to the end or completion of something. *Helikia* or “stature” applies to a certain stage of life which here pertains to *pleroma* (fulness) as belonging to Christ.

Jn 14.6: (cf. above).

1Cor 13.11: (cf. above).

1Cor 14.20: Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature.

“Children and babes:” *pais* and *nepiazō*, the latter a verb implying not yet speaking. *Teleios* is the adjective for “mature” which suggests tending toward completion or fulfilment. Compare with being a *nepios* (adjective) “in Christ,” next verse.

1Cor 3.1: But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ.

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.

Katantao as “attain” means to arrive with the preposition *kata* being suggestive of advancing with a plan or goal in mind. The preposition *eis* (into) is used with unity, “into the unity.”

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

“Unskilled” or *apeiros* literally means having no experience.

Prov 1.8: Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching.

“Instruction and teaching” or *musar* and *torah*. The former applies to correction and the latter to doctrine and law, intimating the Torah. Both work together to form a necklace of sorts.

Prov 1.9: For they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck.

Wisd 8.2: I loved her and sought her from my youth.

“Loved” or *phileo* means to show affection with regard to wisdom. The first Homily concludes with Wisdom being endowed with wealth and prosperity and fruit surpassing gold.

Wisd 8.14: I shall govern peoples, and nations will be subject to me.

“Govern” is the verb *doikeo* which is comprised of the verbal root for house prefaced with the preposition *dia* (through), i.e., through the house.

Prov 8.18-9: Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.

Hateq is the adjective for “enduring” which connotes brightness and handsomeness.

Wisd 8.2: (cf. above).

Wisd 8.9: Therefore I determined to take her to live with me, knowing that she would be a counselor of good things and a comfort in care and grief.

Krino is the verb for “determined” which fundamentally means to judge with respect to wisdom as “counselor” or *sumboulos* which literally means one which give *boule* or advice with (*sum-*).

Wisd 8.16-8: (friendship with wisdom).

Prov 6.22: When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.

Three pairs: walk = lead, lie down = watch over, awake = talk.

Prov 7.4: Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and call insight your intimate friend.

“Intimate friend” is comprised of two nouns, *modah* (derived from *yadah*, to know intimately) and *beynah* (understanding).

Prov 8.17: I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.

“Diligently” is rendered by a form of the verb *shachar* which means to break forth (as the dawn).

Wisd 4.6: For children born of unlawful unions are witnesses of evil against their parents when God examines them.

“Unions” or *hupnos* translates as sleep and thus intimating a bed.

Prov 3.16: Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

Nine verses from Proverbs follow which Gregory uses as a preparation for reading the Song of Songs. All deal with wisdom (*chakmah*, also as skill and dexterity) as a companion and is summed up by a verse towards the conclusion of Proverbs, namely, the description of a “faithful” wife, *chayl* being a noun meaning strength and connoting virtue. In contrast to this wife who is *chayl*, we have a man who has lived a long time and ends up as having done it as vain, *havel* being the noun which means a breath or exhalation. Compare

this *havel* with being one “spirit” with God, *pneuma*.

Prov 8.20: I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice.

The preposition “in” with regard to “paths” is rendered *betok* which fundamentally means in the midst of something.

Prov 3.18: She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

“Lay hold of and “hold fast” or *chazaq* and *tamak*. The former suggests tying or binding fast and the latter, acquiring.

Prov 3.19: The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.

“Founded and established” or *yasad* and *kun*. The former connotes setting up or placing and the latter, a preparation.

Prov 1.2-4: (invitation to wisdom).

Prov 4.6-9: (exhortation to keep wisdom).

Prov 6.22: When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. (cf. above).

Prov 8.17: I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. (cf. above).

Prov 31.10-31: (the good housewife).

Ecc 11.8: For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all...All is vanity.

1Cor 6.17: But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

Dt 6.5: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Compare loving God with all one’s faculties with loving (*’ahav*) one’s father who gives wisdom. Also compare it with loving and seeking from one’s youth, *phileo* and *exezeteo* (to show affection and literally to seek from, ex-).

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

“Keep and guard” or *shamar* and *natsar*. The former is often used with keeping the divine Torah as in Ps 119 and the latter, to defend.

Wisd 8.2: I loved her and sought her from my youth. (cf. above).

Sg 1.2: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your breasts are better than wine.

For the first time Gregory inserts a verse from the Song of Songs, namely, the bride desiring to be kissed by her spouse.

Eph 1.7: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

“In him” results in “redemption and “forgiveness” or *apolutrosis* and *aphesis* or a ransoming and letting go.

Gen 3.23: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.

2Ths 1.5: That you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

Being “worthy” of the divine kingdom or *kataxioo* has the preposition *kata* (according to) which implies being worthy according to a given plan or forethought. Such was in God’s mind when he had expelled the man from Eden where he tilled the “ground” from which he was taken, that is, Adam or *’Adam* and *’adamah*.

Ps 16.11: You show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of you.

“Path” or *derek* is with regard to life which the Lord shows, the verb being *yadah*, to know in the intimate sense.

Jn 3.29: He who has the bride is the bridegroom.

The Baptist’s statement about the bridegroom having the bride fits in well with this first homily which is equivalent to being “united” to the Lord, the verb being *kollao*, to glue, to cement.

1Cor 6.17: But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

2Cor 2.16: To one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

“Fragrance:” or *osme* used with two prepositions concerning death and life: *ek-eis* or from-into. The latter use of *osme* can apply to healing the psalmist’s wounds.

Ps 38.5: My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness.

2Cor 12.2-4: (rapture of Paul).

St. Paul’s rapture or *harpazo* (to snatch away quickly) is *eis* or into paradise.

Lk 16.29: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

Such hearing consists in reading, of *shamar* or keeping noted several verses above.

Ex 19.10-4: (people prepare for God's descent, Mt. Sinai).

The six verses from Exodus concern God's presence on Mount Sinai which consist of the following: not to break through, not to gaze, being stoned and the covering of Sinai along with a loud trumpet blast. These verses are interspersed with Jesus saying that even today the people have Moses to whom they can listen which consists in reading or hearing the Torah being read. As for the fire on Sinai, Jesus claims that he has come to do the same.

Ex 19.15: Be ready by the third day; do not go near a woman.

Kun is the verb for "be ready" which fundamentally means to stand upright as well as to establish.

Ex 19.21: Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to gaze and many of them perish.

Hud is the verb for "warn" which means to turn back, to take as a witness.

Ex 19.13: No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot.

Ex 19.16: On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

Kaved is the adjective for "thick" and is derived from a verbal root meaning to be heavy as well as to be glorious.

Ex 19.18: And Mt. Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire.

Kalal is the verb for "wrapped" and means to complete, to finish.

Lk 12.49: I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!

1Kg 3.12: Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.

"Mind" is *lev* or more specifically, heart (belonging to Solomon, the Song's author), which is both "wise and discerning" or *chakam* and *navon*. These two qualities are to be looked in the text of the Song of Songs.

1Kg 5.9-14: (Hiram supplies Solomon with wood for the temple).

King Hiram provides King Solomon with material for building the temple...applicable to the Song of Songs...which is "of Solomon" or literally "to (*L*) Solomon." To do this, a reader must mortify what is "earthly" or literally, one's limbs upon the earth which is equivalent to not being "conformed" or *suschematizomai* to fold or mold after something (*sus* being 'with'). Once so molded-with, a person can respond to Jesus' question "Who do men say that I am?"

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

1Kg 5.10: (cf. above).

Col 3.5: Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.

"Earthly" is rendered as *ta mele ta epi tes ges* or "limbs upon the earth."

Rom 12.2: Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

The verb *suschematizomai* is used in two verses ('conformed' and 'transformed') which literally means to have a schema or figure with (*sus*-).

Mk 8.27: Who do men say that I am?

Mk 8.29: But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."

Eph 2.19: So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

"Fellow citizens" or *sumpolites* or originally a person who belongs to a *politeia*, a Greek city state (*polis*) which is equivalent to the "household" of God, *oikeioos*, an adjective meaning as proper or belonging to a home.

1Cor 15.42-50: (the first and second Adams).

First and Second Adam: the first was a "man" or *anthropos* with a "life giving spirit" (a *psuche* which is *zoopoieo*, literally to make to life) whereas Jesus is a *pneuma* which also is *zoopoieo*.

Jn 5.24: Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life.

Hearing and believing are synonymous: the first pertains to Jesus and the second to the Father.

Lk 20.35: But those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.

"Age" or *aiion* which here is a specific length of time equivalent to the resurrection, both of which could be considered a higher level where emphasis is more upon time than space, a *kairos*, if you will.

1Cor 15.42: (cf. above).

Phl 3.21: Who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.

“Change” or *metaschematizo* or literally, to put a *schema* (form, figure, appearance) *meta* or after. Compare with *suschematizomai* just above. This is effected by the “Spirit” or *Pneuma* who raised Jesus from the dead dwelling within a person, *enoikizo* (the preposition *en* or in prefaced to the verb with another *en*, ‘you’).

Rom 8.11: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

Enoikeo is the verb for “dwells” which has the preposition *en* (in) prefaced to the verbal root and used with another use of the same preposition, “in you.”

Rom 7.23: But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.

Two types of laws (*nomos* also as custom): “another” (*heteros*) and one proper to “mind” or *noos*. Thus these two customs, if you will, are in conflict within one person.

Eph 2.16: And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.

“Reconcile” or *apokatallasso*: two prepositions, *apo* and *kata* or from and according to which brings an end to “hostility” or *echthra* (enemy). Then a person can claim Christ living in him which contrasts with living in the “world” or *sarx*, literally as flesh used with the preposition *kata*, in accord with.

Gal 2.20: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

2Cor 10.3: For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war.

Perpateo is the verb for “live” and means literally to walk around. “Worldly” is rendered literally as *kata sarka*, “according to the flesh.”

Rom 8.9: But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit.

Two types of “in:” the flesh and Spirit. The “will” (*thelema*) of God is equivalent to the in-ness of the Spirit. This notion of “in” is carried over to having our “hearts and minds” (*nous* and *kardia*, the former meaning perception) in Christ Jesus.

1Pt 4.2: So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but by the will of God.

Epithumia is the noun for “passion” which literally means a desire upon (*epi*).

Phl 4.7: And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

“Hearts and minds” or *kardia* and *noema*, the latter also meaning perception or thought. Divine peace will watch over both because it “pass” them, *huperecho* or literally to have-beyond (*huper*-).

Ex 33.11: Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

“Friend” or *rehev* derives from a verbal root which fundamentally means to pasture, delight where the words “face to face” are used in two consecutive verses.

Dt 34.10: And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

Ex 33.13: I pray you, if I have found favor in your sight, show me now your ways that I may know you and find favor in your sight.

Chen is the noun for “favor” used twice here and implies acceptability.

Ex 33.18: I pray thee, show me your glory.

“Pray” is the particle *na’*, short and to the point as indicative of an exclamation and wish with regard to the Lord’s “ways and glory,” *derek* and *kavod*.

Jn 6.63: It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.

The flesh is “of no avail” or the verb *opheleo* (to be profitable) which contrasts with being one “spirit” with the Lord, *pneuma*, the equivalent of having life eternal and the “words” belonging to it (*rhema*, subject of speech compared with *logos* or expression) and no longer thirsting. The mouth must be open to quench this thirst which is why the psalmist pants and longs, *pahar* and *sha’aph* (to open the mouth and to breathe hard). Such is what the bride does in the Song when asking to be kissed with her divine spouse’s mouth, also characterized by this *pahar* and *sha’aph*. Both verbs also apply to newborn babes in their “longing” for spiritual milk, *epipotheo*, where the preposition *epi* (upon) literally reads as longing-upon. Such milk is “spiritual” or *logikos*, ultimately pertaining to the *Logos*. Two verse compare milk with solid food.

1Cor 6.17: But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

Kollao is the verb for “united” which means to glue, to cement.

Jn 5.24: Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life.

Jn 4.14: But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give me will never thirst.

Jn 6.68: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

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

“Pant and long for” or *pahar* and *sha'aph*. The former means to open the mouth and the latter, to breathe hard.

Jn 7.37: If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

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

1Tm 2.4: Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

“Desires” is the verb *etheleo* and “knowledge” is *epignosis*, literally as a knowing-upon (*epi*).

Lk 7.45: You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.

The sinful woman kissing Jesus' feet is reminiscent of the Song's bride wishing to be kissed.

Mt 26.6: Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper.

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

“Treasures” or *thesauros* (cf. next verse) suggest that which had been laid up and kept under guard but now is made available through wisdom and knowledge.

1Pt 2.2: Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk.

Logikos is the adjective for “spiritual” fundamentally as agreeable to reason.

1Cor 3.2: I fed you with milk, not solid food.

Stereos as “solid” can apply to anything hard or harsh.

Heb 5.12: You need milk, not solid food.

Prov 2.3-5: (seeking wisdom as for silver).

Prov 2.10: For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

“Wisdom and knowledge” or *sophia* and *gnosis*, both of which are hidden and implies that a person must seek them out. This verse is quoted later on. Wisdom is to be sought and searched for as silver, *baqash* and *chaphas* (the former connotes touching and the latter also means to hide oneself with the intent to be found).

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

Pselaphao as “touched” means to grope about as a blind man.

2Cor 2.15: For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

Apostles as “aroma” are applicable in two ways: people being saved and people perishing, both in the present tense which means a certain insight into their condition, both of which can change. Christ is an offering which is “fragrant” *euodia* or a noun meaning a pleasant (*eu*-) scent. Compare with an odor which is “pleasing” in Ezekiel, *nuach* meaning to sit down, rest.

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

“Walk” or *peripateo* means literally to walk about or around (*peri*-) with regard to *agape*.

Ezk 20.41: As a pleasing odor I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations.

Puts is the verb for “will manifest” which also means to disperse, to scatter.

1Cor 1.25: For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

“Foolishness and weakness” (adjectives): *moros* and *asthenes* or dull, stupid and lacking (alpha privative) strength.

Hab 3.3: God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mt. Paran. His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise.

Teman and Paran are located in the Sinai region of where the Israelites had wandered forty years after leaving Egypt and before entering the promised land.

Sg 1.3: Your name is as ointment poured out.

Sg 1.3: Therefore, the young maidens have loved you and have drawn you.

Eph 4.14: So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.

“Doctrine, cunning, craftiness and wiles:” *didaskalia* (teaching), *kubeia* (literally, dice playing), *panourgia* (knavery, roguery) and *plane* (wandering).

Heb 8.13: In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete.

“New and obsolete with regard to covenant:” *kainos* and *palaioo* (old or ancient), this verse being noted below.

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.

“Present” or *paristemi* which literally means to stand around (*peri-*), this verb intimating Jesus making the bride stand around him as opposed to the customary father of the bride.

Mt 22.37-8: 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.

“Heart and soul” or *lev* and *nesphesh*: heart and life principle that governs the body. Jesus quotes Dt 6.5 where the verb *agapao* is used for *’ahav* or “love” regarding three uses of the preposition *b-* (in; same applies to the Greek text) which read “in all your heart, in all your soul and in all your excessiveness” (*me’od*). *’Ahav* is also used in the two Proverbs verses.

Dt 6.5: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and with all your might.

’Ahav is the verb for “love” and connotes a longing or sighing after, here with respect to God or literally “in” one’s heart, soul and mind, the last reading literally “in all your excessiveness” (*me’od*).

Prov 8.17: I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.

“Diligently” is the verb *shachar* which means to break forth as the dawn.

Prov 8.21: Endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasures.

“Endowing” is the verb *nachal* which means to possess.

Hos 11.10: The shall go after the Lord, he will roar like a lion.

“Lion” is used in the Septuagint Hosea text. The verb “roar” is *ereugomai*, literally to spew or vomit.

Phl 3.13: Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

“Made it my own” or *katalambano*, the verbal root “to receive” prefaced with the preposition *kata* (in accord with), suggesting to possess fully. It is used with regard to Christ who has done this, with Paul attempting to replicate this *katalambano*.

Sg 1.4: We shall run after you toward the scent of your perfumes.

The bride’s exhortation to run after her spouse (i.e., to her companions) means that she is not doing this alone. Such running is a “forgetting” of what lies in the past, *epilanthano* (the verbal root with *epi* or upon prefaced to it and intensifies the meaning).

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

Sg 1.2: The king has brought me into his chamber.

Prov 8.34: Happy is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.

The man waiting at Wisdom’s gates is pronounced “happy” or *’ashry*; from a verbal root meaning to be straight and related to the relative pronoun. This to be *’ashry* means to be transitional, of moving from one state to another without being able to nail this process down completely.

Rom 8.23: And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Having the “first fruits” of the Spirit or *aparche* (pertains to a sacrifice) makes a person “groan” inwardly, *stenazo* (also as to moan) with regard to *en heautois* (‘in ourselves’) It counters waiting for “adoption” or literally son-placing, *huiiothesia*.

1Cor 2.10: God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Revelation (the verb *apokalupto*) occurs through the “Spirit” or *Pneuma*. Because *Pneuma* is wind, if you will, such revelation requires being like the wind to perceive it, for the task of this wind is to uncover, the verb’s meaning. This difficult to perceive reality is not unlike the way *Pneuma* “searches” or *eraunao* the depths of God.

2Cor 12.4: He heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

“Things” or *rhema* means word as subject of speech which here are unutterable, *arretos* being an adjective which often applies to sacred mysteries as well as things that are horrible to utter.

Lk 1.2: Just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.

“Eyewitnesses and ministers” or *autoptes* and *huperetes*. The former is a seeing oneself (*autos-*) and the latter, literally an under-rower.

1Cor 3.1-2: (Paul feeds with milk, not solid food).

Paul feeds with milk which comes from the breast, that term used with regard to Jesus, *stethos*. Later Peter speaks of John on the *stethos* of Jesus in a spirit of jealousy.

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

Stethos is the noun for "breast" which can apply to the seat of feeling.

Jn 21.20: Lord, who is that is going to betray you?

1Cor 14.20: Brethren, do not be children in your thinking, be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature.

"Children and babes:" *pais* and *nepiazō*, the latter a verb implying not yet speaking. *Teleios* is the adjective for "mature" which suggests tending toward completion or fulfilment.

Eccl 11.10: Remove vexation from your mind, and put away pain from your body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

"Vexation and pain" or *kahas* (also as grief) and *rahaḥ* (fundamentally as evil) which are similar to spot, wrinkle and no blemish.

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.

"Present" or *paristemi* which literally means to stand around (*peri-*), this verb intimating Jesus making the bride stand around him as opposed to the customary father of the bride.

Heb 8.13: In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

"Becoming obsolete and vanishing away" or *geraskos* and *aphanismos*. The former suggests growing old and the latter, passing into invisibility, of no longer being seen.

Jn 21.20: (cf. above).

Ps 92.15: To show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

"To show" is the verb *nagad*, more as to tell or recount.

Lk 3.5: Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight.

A quote from Is 40.3-5. "Crooked and "straight" or *skolios* (curved, winding) and *eutheia* (literally, a placing which is done in a good manner, *eu-*; with the preposition *eis* or into).

The Song of Songs, 1.1-4

The Song of Songs which is Solomon's. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your breasts are better than wine. And the scent of your ointments is better than all spices. Your name is ointment poured forth. Therefore have the young maidens loved you. They have drawn you. We will run after you toward the scent of your ointments. The king has brought me into his chamber. Let us rejoice and be glad in you. Let us love your breasts more than wine. Righteousness has loved you.

J.14 Those of you who, according to the advice of St. Paul, M.764 have stripped off the old man with his deeds and desires as you would a filthy garment and have wrapped yourselves by the purity of your lives in the bright garments of the Lord which he displayed upon the mount of transfiguration; you who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ with his holy robe J.15 and have been transformed with him into a state which is free M.765 from passion and more divine, listen to the mysteries of the Song of Songs. Enter the inner chamber of the chaste bridegroom and clothe yourselves with the white garments of pure, chaste thoughts. Let no one bring passionate, fleshly thoughts or a garment of conscience unsuitable for the divine nuptials. Let no one be bound up in his own thoughts or drag the pure words of the bridegroom and the bride down into earthly, irrational passions. Anyone who entertains such shameful illusions should be cast out from the company of those who share the nuptial joys to the place of weeping. I issue this warning before entering upon the mystical contemplation of the Song of Songs. Through the words of the Song the soul is escorted to an incorporeal, spiritual, and pure union with God. For God, who "wishes all to be saved and to come to the recognition of the truth," shows the most perfect and blessed way of salvation here—I mean the way of love. For some there is salvation by fear: we contemplate J.16 the threat of punishment in hell and so avoid evil. Further, there are those who, because of the hope of the reward held out for a life piously lived, conduct themselves virtuously. They do not possess the good out of love but by the expectation of a recompense. On the other hand, the person who is hastening to spiritual perfection rejects fear. (Such a disposition is servile, and the person with

this disposition does not remain with the master out of love. He does not run away out of fear of being scourged.) Rather, the person seeking perfection disdains even rewards: he does not want to give the impression that he prefers the gift to the one who bestows it. He loves “with his whole heart and soul and strength,” not any of the things that come from God, but him who is the source of all good things. This, then, is the attitude which he commands to the souls of all who listen to him, for he summons to us to share his own life.

The one who establishes this law is Solomon. According to the divine testimony, his wisdom has no measure. It has no comparison with respect to both all who proceeded him and all who are to come after him. Nothing escapes his notice. Do not suppose that I mean the same Solomon from Bersabee who offered upon the mountains the sacrifice of a thousand victims who sinned by following the counsel of a Sidonian woman J.17. No, another Solomon [Christ] is signified here: one who is also descended from the seed of David according to the flesh, one whose name means peace, the true king of Israel and builder of God’s temple. This other Solomon comprehends the knowledge of all things. His wisdom is infinite and his very essence is wisdom, truth, as well as every exalted, divine name and thought. [Christ] used Solomon as an instrument and speaks to us through his voice first in Proverbs and then in Ecclesiastes. After these two books he speaks in the philosophy set forth in the Song of Songs and shows us the ascent to perfection in an orderly fashion.

M.768 Not all periods of life according to the flesh are capable of every natural operation nor do our lives advance in the J.18 same way at different periods. (The infant has no share of adult activities, nor is an adult taken up in its nurse’s arms, but each time of life has its own proper activity.) So too one can see in the soul an analogy to the body’s growth where there is a certain order and sequence leading to a life in accord with virtue.

For this reason, Proverbs teaches in one way and Ecclesiastes in another; the philosophy of the Song of Songs transcends both by its loftier teaching. The instruction in Proverbs provides words fit for the person who is still young, adapting its words of admonition to that period of life. “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and reject not your mother’s teaching.” You see here that the soul is at a stage of life where it is tender and easily formed. Moreover, it still needs maternal instruction and paternal admonition. In order that the infant may listen more willingly to his parents and be more careful in his lessons, he is promised childish trinkets. Such trinkets are the gold chain shining around J.19 his neck and the crown entwined with pretty flowers. It is necessary to understand these things fully if the symbol’s intent is to point to something better. Thus Proverbs begins the description of wisdom to the child in several different ways and expounds the ineffable beauty so as not to inspire any fear or constraint; rather, it draws the child by yearning and desire to participate in the good. The description of beauty somehow attracts the desire of the young to what is shown, fanning their desire for a participation in beauty.

In order that our affections may be further intensified after having changed our material inclinations to an immaterial state, Solomon adorns the beauty of wisdom with praise. Not only does he present its loveliness with words, but he also states the wealth contained in wisdom, whose Lord will surely dwell with us. The wealth is then seen in the showy adornments of wisdom. The adornment of her right hand is all the ages, since the Word says: “Length of existence and J.20 years of life are in her right hand.” And on her left hand she wears the precious wealth of the virtues together with the splendor of glory; “ And on her left hand are wealth and glory.” Then Solomon speaks of the fragrance from the bride’s mouth which breathes the good odor of righteousness: “From her mouth comes forth righteousness.”

In place of the natural redness of the bride’s lips, he says, law and mercy blossom. In order that beauty might be fully attributed to such a bride, her gait is also praised: “In the M.769 paths of righteousness she walks.” In praising her beauty, Solomon also praises her great size which equals that of a flourishing plant shooting up into full bloom. This plant to which her height is compared, he says, is the tree of life which nourishes those who lay hold of her, a firm and stable column to those who lean upon her. I think that both examples refer to the Lord: He is our life and support. Thus the text reads: “She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her” and for those who lean upon her as upon the Lord she is firm. Strength is included along with the remaining praises, that the praise of wisdom’s beauty might be completely filled with all good things. “For God founded

the earth by wisdom and prepared the heavens by prudence.” J.21 All the elements in creation Solomon attributes to the power of wisdom and adorns her with many names, for he means the same thing by wisdom, prudence, sense perception, knowledge, apprehension, and the like.

Solomon next escorts the youth to a special dwelling and exhorts him to gaze at the divine bridal chamber. “Do not let her go, and she will cleave to you. Love her and she will guard you. Secure her and she will exult you. Honor her in order that she may embrace you, that she may give to your head a crown of graces, and may cover you with a crown of delight.” The youth now adorned with these nuptial crowns as a bridegroom is exhorted not to depart from wisdom: “Whenever you walk, bring her and let her be with you. Whenever you sleep, let her guard you in order that when you wake she may converse with you. With these and other such exhortations Solomon has inflamed the desire of the one still young according to the inner man,” and has shown Wisdom describing herself. In this way Solomon elicits the love of those listening to him. Besides this, Wisdom says: “I J.22 love those who love me”—for the hope of being loved in return disposes the lover to a more intense desire. Along with these words Solomon added other counsels by clear and easily grasped utterances. He leads the youth to a more perfect state in the final verses of Proverbs where he calls “blessed” the union of love in that section pertaining to the praises of the brave woman. Then Solomon adds the philosophy contained in Ecclesiastes for the person who has been sufficiently introduced by proverbial training to desire virtue. After having reproached in that book men’s attitudes towards external appearances, and after having said that everything unstable is vain and passing (“everything which passes is vanity”). Solomon elevates above everything grasped by sense the loving movement of our soul towards invisible beauty. Having thus cleansed the heart with respect to external matters, Solomon then initiates the soul into the divine sanctuary M.772 by means of the Song of Songs. What is described there is a marriage; but what is understood is the union of the human a marriage; but what is the union of the human soul with God.

J.23 Because of this, the son in Proverbs is named a bride, and Wisdom is changed into the role of a bridegroom so that a person might be espoused to God by becoming a pure virgin instead of a bridegroom. By clinging to the Lord he might become one spirit through a union with what is pure and free from passion and have a pure mind instead of burdened with the flesh’s weight. Since it is Wisdom speaking, love as much as you can with your whole heart and strength; desire as much as you can. I boldly add to these words: “Be passionate about it.” This affection for incorporeal things is beyond reproach and free from lust as wisdom states in Proverbs when she prescribes passionate love wisdom states in Proverbs when she prescribes passionate love (*eros*) for the divine beauty.

But the text now before us gives the same exhortation. It does not merely offer advice regarding love, but through ineffable mysteries it philosophizes and offers an image of the pleasures of life as a preparation for its instruction. The image is one of marriage where the desire for beauty acts as intermediary. The bridegroom does not initiate the desire according to normal human custom, but the virgin anticipates the bridegroom without shame, openly makes her passion J.24 known and prays that she may enjoy the bridegroom’s kiss.

Those attending the betrothed virgin are the patriarchs, prophets, and givers of the Law. They bring divine gifts to the bride, her wedding gifts, as it were. (Some examples of these gifts are forgiveness of trespasses, forgetfulness of evil deeds, the cleansing of sins, transformation of nature, the exchange of corruptibility for incorruptibility, enjoyment of paradise, the dignity of God’s kingdom, and joy without end.) When the virgin receives all these divine gifts from the noble bearers who bring them through their prophetic teaching, she both confesses her desire and hastens to enjoy the favor of the beauty of the One she so eagerly desires. The virgin’s attendants and associates hear her and spurn her on to an even greater desire. The bridegroom then arrives leading a chorus of his friends and well-wishers. These represent either the ministering spirits by whom men are saved or the holy prophets. Hearing the bride’s voice, they exult and rejoice at the consummation of the pure union by which the soul J.25 that clings to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him, as the Apostle says.

I will take up again what I said at the start of this homily: let no one who is passionate, fleshly and still smelling of the foul odor of the old man drag down the significance of the divine thoughts and words to beastly, irrational thoughts. Rather, let each person go out of himself and out of the material world. Let him ascend M.773 into paradise through detachment, having become like God through purity. Then let him enter

into the inner sanctuary of the mysteries revealed in this book (the Song of Songs). If the soul is unprepared to hear this, let it listen to Moses who forbids us to ascend the spiritual mountain before washing the garments of our hearts and before purifying our souls with the fitting aspersions of our thoughts. As we apply ourselves to this contemplation, we must put aside thoughts of marriage as Moses commanded when he ordered those being initiated to cleanse themselves from J.26 marriage. We must follow his prescriptions when we are about to approach the spiritual mountain of the knowledge of God: thoughts about women, along with material goods, are left with the life below. If any irrational notion should be seen around this mountain, it is destroyed with firmer thoughts as by stones. Otherwise, we would hardly be able to hear the sound of that trumpet reverberating with a great and awesome sound which is beyond the capacity of those who hear it. This sound comes from the dark obscurity where God is and who burns with fire every material thing upon this mountain.

Now let us enter the Holy of Holies, Song of Songs. In the expression “Holy of Holies” we are taught a certain super-abundance and exaggeration of holiness. Through the title Song of Songs the noble text also promises to teach us the mystery of mysteries. To be sure, there are many songs in the divinely inspired teaching by which we acquire great knowledge about God from David, Isaiah, Moses and many J.27 others. However, we learn from the title Song of Songs that just as the songs of the saints surpass the wisdom of profane songs, so does the mystery contained here surpass the songs of the saints. Indeed, human understanding left to its own resources could neither discover nor absorb the Song’s mystery. The most acute physical pleasure (I mean erotic passion) is used as a symbol in the exposition of this doctrine on love. It teaches us of the need for the soul to reach out to the divine nature’s invisible beauty and to love it as much as the body is inclined to love what is akin to itself. The soul must transform passion into passionlessness so that when every corporeal affection has been quenched, our mind may seethe with passion for the spirit alone and be warmed by that fire which the Lord came to cast upon the earth.

I have said enough about how those who hear these mystical words should have their souls disposed. Now the time has come to begin our interpretation of the divine words of the Song of Songs. First let us consider the significance of the title. M.776 It is not accidental, I think, that the book is ascribed to J.28 Solomon. This serves as an indication to readers to expect something great and divine. Solomon’s reputation for wisdom is unexcelled, and everyone is impressed by it. Therefore, the mention of his name at the outset raises the reader’s expectation to find something great and worthy of such a reputation.

In the art of painting different colors combine to represent the subject portrayed. However, the person looking at the image created by the skillful use of colors does not linger over the colors painted on the tablet; he beholds instead only the form which the artist has shown. Thus it is with the present scripture: we should not look at the material of the colors [i.e. the words]; rather, we should consider the image of the king expressed by them in the chaste concepts. For white, yellow, black, red, blue or any other color, are these words in their obvious meanings—mouth, kiss, myrrh, wine, bodily limbs, bed, maidens and so forth. The form constituted by these terms is blessedness, detachment, union with God, alienation from evil and likeness to what is truly beautiful and J.29 good. These concepts testify that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the boundaries of human wisdom. What could be more paradoxical than to make nature purify itself of its own passions and teach detachment (*apatheia*) in words normally suggesting passion (*pathos*)? Solomon does not speak of the necessity of being outside the flesh’s impulses or of mortifying our bodily limbs on earth, or of cleansing our mouths of talk of passion; rather, he disposes the soul to be attentive to purity through words which seem to indicate the complete opposite, and he indicates a pure meaning through the use of sensuous language.

The text should teach us one thing by its introductory words: those introduced into the hidden mysteries of this book are no longer men, but they have been transformed in their nature through the Lord’s teaching into something more divine. The Word testified to his disciples that they were more than men. He differentiated them from other men when he said to them: “Who do men say that I am?” The J.30 Song’s text readily employs words whose obvious meaning indicates the enjoyment of carnal passion, yet it does not fall into any improper meaning; instead, the Song leads us to the philosophy of divine things by means of chaste concepts. It shows that we are no longer to be men with a nature of flesh and blood; rather, it points to the life we hope for at the resurrection M.777 of the saints, an angelic life free from all passion.

After the resurrection, the body which has been transformed into incorruptibility will again be joined to the soul. The passions now disturbing us because of the flesh will not be restored with those bodies; rather, we shall become tranquil. No longer will the flesh's prudence dispute with the soul. No longer will there be civil war with the passions set against the mind's law, where the soul is overcome and taken captive by sin. Nature will then be cleansed from all such things, and one spirit will be in both. (I mean both in the flesh and in the spirit), and every corporeal disposition will be banished from human nature. Thus the text of the Song exhorts us, J.31 even if we now live in the flesh, not to turn to it in our thoughts; rather we should only regard the soul and attribute all manifestations of affection in the text to the surpassing goodness of God as pure, undefiled offerings. For God alone is truly sweet, desirable and worthy of love. The present enjoyment of God is the starting point for a greater share of his goodness, and it increases our desire for him. Thus, in Moses the bride loved the bridegroom. As the virgin says in the Song: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Moses conversed with God face to face, as scripture testifies Moses conversed with God face to face, as scripture testifies, and he thereby acquired a still greater desire J.32 for these kisses after the theophanies. He sought God as if he had never seen him. So it is with all others in whom the desire for God is deeply embedded: they never cease to desire, but every enjoyment of God they turn into the kindling of a still more intense desire.

Even now the soul united to God never has its fill of enjoyment. The more it enjoys his beauty, the more its desire for him increases. The words of the bridegroom are spirit and life, and everyone who clings to the Spirit becomes spirit. He who attaches himself to life passes from death into life as the Lord has said. Thus the virginal soul desires to draw M.780 near to the fountain of spiritual life. The fountain is the bridegroom's mouth from which the words of eternal life well forth. It fills the mouth drawn to it, just as with the prophet when he drew in the spirit through his mouth. Since it is necessary for the person drawing water from a fountain to apply his mouth to his mouth, and since the Lord himself is a fountain as he says: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink," so the thirsting soul wishes J.33 to bring its mouth to the mouth that springs up with life and says: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." He who wells up with life for all and wishes all to be saved desires every person to share this kiss, for this kiss purges away all filth.

It seems to me that the Lord was reproaching Simon the Leper when he said: "You gave me no kiss." He meant by these words that you would have been cleansed of disease if you had drawn purity with your mouth. But in all likelihood Simon was unworthy of love since he had an excess growth of flesh through his illness and remained unmoved in desire for God by reason of his disease. But once the soul has been cleansed and is no longer hindered by the leprosy of the flesh, it looks to the treasure house of all good things. A name for this treasure house is the heart. From it there comes to the breasts the wealth of divine milk by which the soul is nourished and draws grace in proportion to its faith. Therefore the soul exclaims: "Your breasts are better than vine," signifying by the breasts the heart. Nobody will err if he understands by the heart the hidden, secret power of God. One would rightly suppose that the breasts are the activities of God's power for us by which he nourishes each one's life and bestows appropriate nourishment.

J.34 We are indirectly taught another lesson through the philosophy of this book, namely that perception within us is two-fold—bodily and divine. As the Word says in Proverbs, "You will find perception of God." A certain analogy exists between the activities of the soul and the sense organs of the body. This we learn from the present text. Wine and milk are distinguished by taste, while the intellectual and apprehending capacity of the soul grasps spiritual realities. A kiss is effected through the sense of touch; the lips of two persons make contact in a kiss. On the other hand, there is a certain sense of touch in the soul which takes hold of the Word and works in an incorporeal, spiritual way. As John says: "Our hands have handled the word of life." Similarly, the scent of the divine perfumes is not perceived (by the nose, but by a certain spiritual and immaterial power drawing all the good odor of Christ by an inhalation of the Spirit. Thus, the next part of the virgin's prayer in the Song's J.35 first words says: "Your breasts are better than wine, and the scent of your perfumes is beyond all ointments."

M.781 What is signified by these words is, in our opinion, neither trivial nor unimportant. Through the comparison of milk from the divine breasts with the enjoyment obtained from wine we learn, I think, that all human wisdom, science, power of observation and comprehension of imagination cannot match the simple nourishment of the divine teaching. Milk, the food of infants, comes from the breasts. On the other hand, wine,

with its strength and warming capacity, is enjoyment for the more perfect. However, the perfection of the wisdom of the world is less than the childlike teaching of the divine world. Hence the divine breasts are better than human wine, and the scent of divine perfumes is lovelier than any fragrance.

The meaning seems to me to be as follows: We understand the perfumes as virtues—wisdom, justice, temperance, fortitude, and so forth. If we anoint ourselves with these aromas, each of us, according to our own capacity and choice, has a good odor. Each of us has his respective odor—one has J.36 wisdom or temperance, another has fortitude or justice, or anything else pertaining to virtue. Another person may have a good odor within himself compounded from all these perfumes. However, all of them together could not compare with that perfect virtue which the heavens contain. As the prophet Habakkuk says: “His virtue covered the heavens.” This is God’s absolute wisdom, justice, truth, and all the rest. Therefore, the odor of the heavenly ointments, he says, holds a delight which is incomparable to any aroma known by us.

In what immediately follows the soul-spouse again touches on a more sublime philosophy and shows that the divine power is both utterly transcendent and unable to be contained by human conceptions. The text says: “Your name is ointment poured forth.” To me something like the following is poured forth.” To me something like the following is signified through this verse: the unlimited [divine] nature cannot be accurately contained by a name; rather, every capacity seem to contain something great and befitting God’s glory, are unable to grasp his reality. But starting from certain traces and sparks, as it were, J.37 our words aim at the unknown, and from what we can grasp we make conjectures by a kind of analogy about the ungraspable. Whatever name we may adopt to signify the perfume of divinity, it is not the perfume itself which we signify by our expressions; rather, we reveal just the slightest trace of the divine odor by means of our theological terms. As in the case of jars from which perfume has been poured out, the perfume’s own nature is not M.784 known. But from the slight traces left from the vapors in the jar we get some idea about the perfume that has been emptied out. Hence we learn that the perfume of divinity, whatever it is in its essence, transcends every name and thought. However, the wonders visible in the universe give material for the theological terms by which we call God wise, powerful, good, holy, blessed, eternal, judge, savior and so forth. All these give some small indication of the divine perfume’s J.38 quality. Creation retains the traces of this divine perfume through its visible wonders as in the example of a perfume jar. “Therefore, the young maidens have loved you and have drawn you.” The bridegroom states here the cause of their noble yearning and loving disposition. Who can help but love such a beauty provided that he has an eye capable of reaching out to its loveliness? The beauty grasped is great; but infinitely greater is the beauty of which we get a glimpse from the appearances.

Passion does not touch those who are still infants, for an infant is incapable of passion; neither is it a problem for those in extreme old age. So too with regard to the divine beauty: both the person who is still an infant tossed about by every wind of doctrine and the aged person approaching death are incapable of desire. The invisible beauty does not touch such people, but only the soul which has passed the state of infancy and has attained the flower of spiritual maturity. Such a soul the text calls young; it has no spot or wrinkle or the like; it is neither lacking in perception because of infancy nor enfeebled by old age. This soul obeys the greatest and first commandment of the Law—to love that divine beauty with all its heart and strength. The human mind is unable to find any description, example or adequate expression of that beauty.

J.39 Therefore, such maidens have grown through their virtues and at the proper time have entered the bridal chamber of the divine mysteries. Now they love the bridegroom’s beauty, and through love they draw him to themselves. For he is a bridegroom who repays the desire of those who love and says in the person of Wisdom “I love those who love me,” and “I will give substance to those who love me.” (The bridegroom himself is this substance.) “And I will fill their treasuries with good things.” The souls, therefore, draw to themselves a desire for their immortal bridegroom and follow the Lord God, as it is written. The cause of their love is the scent of the perfume to which they eternally run; they stretch out to what is in front, forgetting what is behind. “We shall run after you toward the scent of your perfumes.”

Those who are not yet perfect in virtue and who are still young promise to run towards the goal which the scent of M.785 perfumes represents, for they say, “We shall run toward the scent of your perfumes.” But the more perfect soul, having stretched forward more earnestly, has already obtained the goal for which the course

is undertaken, and it is worthy of J.40 the treasures in the storehouse, for she says, "The king has brought me into his chamber." She desired to touch the good with the very tip of her lips and touched the beauty only as much as the power of her prayer could reach. (She prayed to become worthy of a kiss through the illumination of the Word.) Now, through what she has already achieved, she has passed to a more interior part of the mysteries with her mind, and she cries out that her passage has brought her only to the vestibule of goodness. By the first fruits of the Spirit of which she was made worthy by the kiss of her spouse she says that she searches the depths of God within the innermost says that she searches the depths of God within the innermost unseen and hears words not to be spoken.

The discourse now reveals an ecclesiastical concern, for those who were first instructed by grace and who became eye witnesses of the Word did not keep the good just for themselves. They passed on the same grace to those who came after them. Because of this the maidens say to the bride who was the first to be filled with good things by coming face to face with the Word and who was made worthy of the hidden J.41 mysteries: "Let us rejoice and be glad in you," for your joy is our common rejoicing. Because you love the Word's breasts more than wine, we shall imitate you and love your breasts more than human wine, for through them you feed those who are infants in Christ.

To make the intention of the passage even clearer, consider the following: John, who reclined upon the Lord's chest, loved the Word's breasts; and having placed his heart like a sponge, as it were, beside the fountain of life, he was filled by an ineffable transmission of the mysteries hidden in the heart of the Lord. John offers us the teat filled by the Word and fills us with the good things he got from the fountain of goodness, loudly proclaiming the Word who exists eternally. Thus we may now rightly say, "We will love your breasts more than wine," if we have become like the maidens and are no longer infants in mind, yoked to an infantile kind of vanity, and if we are not soiled through sin in J.42 an old age unto death. Therefore, let us love the flow of your teaching, for "righteousness has loved you." This is the disciple whom Jesus loved, and Jesus is righteousness. The text applies a more beautiful and fitting name to the Lord than the prophet David did, for David says that "The Lord is M.788 righteous." This text, however, calls him righteousness. Whatever is crooked he makes straight. May all our crookedness he made straight and all our roughness, smooth by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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The Second Homily

Acts 7.44: Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen.

The Second Homily begins with a number of references, chiefly from Exodus, about the tent in which the Lord dwelt during Israel's forty year wandering in the Sinai wilderness which Acts properly calls one of "witness" or *marturion*. *Tupos* or "pattern" originally meant worked in relief. *Harak* as "tend" means to arrange in order which is from evening to dawn or during the entire night.

Ex 27.21: In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord.

Harak is the verb for "tend" which means to set, to spread out.

Ex 26.7: You shall also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle.

Ex 26.1: Moreover, you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet stuff; with cherubim skillfully worked shall you make them.

Chashav is the verb for "skillfully worked" or to think, meditate, compose.

Ex 26.7: (cf. above).

Ex 25.4-5: Blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood.

Heb 9.2-5: (the tent of meeting).

Hebrews describes the tent which we cannot now speak "in detail" or *kata meros*, literally according to part.

Ex 26.33: And the veil shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy.

Parak means to "separate" intimating a breaking down or crushing.

Ex 26.31: (same vs. as Ex 26.1 above).

Heb 8.2: A minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.

“Minister” or *leitourgos*, literally as a public servant.

Ex 29.36-7: (atonement for the altar).

Num 19.6-10: (rites for purification).

Numbers describes the rite for purification as it pertains to a person defiled by a corpse. Clean “place” or *maqom* which is outside the camp, indicative that the Israelites were moving from place to place and were not yet stable. Most likely when they moved on this *maqom* was left abandoned.

Heb 9.13: For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh.

“Purification” or *katharotes* with regard to the flesh, the preposition *pros* being used, direct action towards which.

Baptism is this purification which “corresponds” to this or the flood of Noah, the word being *antitupos*, literally a type (*tupos*) which is over and against (*anti-*). Also it is an “appeal” or *eperotema*, alternately as pledge or inquiry.

1Pt 3.21: Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Num 19.11: He who touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days.

The verb “touches” is *nagah* with the preposition *b-* (in) concerning a dead body.

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.

“How much more” (*posos*) which sets up a contrast between animal sacrifices and the blood of Christ.

Suneidesis means “conscience,” literally a knowing-with (*sun-*).

Sg 1.5: I am black and beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the skins of Solomon.

The bride describes herself as both black and “beautiful” (*na'veh*, from the verbal root meaning to sit, to dwell) which mirrors her divine spouse as the suffering servant in Isaiah. This servant (Jesus) “emptied” (*kenoo*) himself to assume both a “form” and “likeness” or *morphe* and *homoionoma*. The former is more concrete and the latter suggests resemblance.

Is 53.2-3: (suffering servant despised).

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

Eph 5.25-7: (Christ head of church as a man head of his wife).

Two types of love (*agapao*) joined with “as” or *kathos* which sets up a comparison: a wife and the church. Two similar comparisons with “as:” 1) *hos*: Paul and his listeners, the Galatians. 2) *hotos* with respect to Paul-Christ.

Gal 4.12: Brethren, I beseech you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.

1Cor 11.1: Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Is 65.17: For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.

“Create” or *bara'*, the same verb used at the beginning of Genesis, the one of Isaiah being “new” or *chadash*, the verbal root of which suggests polishing or cutting. Compare *chadash* with *kainos* as “new” creation in Christ. *Chadash* may be contrasted with “former things” and “things of old,” *ri'shon* and *qadmony* (the first suggestive of that which is of the beginning and the second as head).

Is 43.18: Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

Byn is the verb for “consider” which means to understand or to be perspective.

2Cor 5.17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

1Pt 4.8: Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.

“Unfailing” is the adjective *ektenes* suggestive of that which is extended or held in tension.

2Cor 3.18: And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.

A “Beholding” divine glory or *katoptrizo* means to show in a mirror, and such mirrors were of polished metal not giving an exact reflection as with modern ones. The nature of change is hidden or *metamorphoo*, literally to change-after, to bring a form (*morphe*) after (*meta*), if you will, or into a new state, and that is an eternal dynamic, not static. Such *metamorphoo* can apply to the transition from darkness to light, but a light in the Lord.

Eph 5.8: For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Phl 3.21: Who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

“Change” or *metaschematizo* or literally, to put a *schema* (form, figure, appearance) *meta* or after. Compare with *suschematizomai* just above. This is effected by the “Spirit” or *Pneuma* who raised Jesus from the dead dwelling within a person, *enoikizo* (the preposition *en* or in prefaced to the verb with another *en*, ‘you’).

Ijn 3.2: Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Two uses of the verb “appear” or *phaneroo* which suggests making known: impersonally or generally and the as yet one with regard to Jesus.

Eph 2.2: In which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

“Walked” or *peripateo*, literally as to walk around (*peri-*). “Following” is the preposition *kata* (also as according to).

Col 1.13: He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

“Delivered and “transferred” or *rhuomai* and *methistemi*: the former connotes rescuing from danger and the latter is the root *histemi* (to stand, to place) prefaced with the preposition *meta* (after), literally as to stand-after.

ICor 3.16: Do you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Note the two words “temple and dwells:” *naos* and *oikeo*, where the noun “house” is derived from the latter.

Rom 5.8: But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

“Shows” or *sunistao* also is spelled as *sunistemi*, literally as a standing-with (*sun-*).

ITm 1.13: Though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him.

“Blasphemed, persecuted and insulted” (*blasphemios*, *dioktes* and *hubristes*) are nouns; the third applies to wanton violence, more powerful than the English noun *hubris*.

ITm 1.15: The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

“Saying” or *logos* (word) is “sure” or *pistos* (faithful, worthy of faith).

Lk 5.32: I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

“Repentance” or *metanoia*, literally as mind, heart or perception (*nous*) being after (*meta-*) and prefaced with the preposition *eis* (into) or into repentance.

Tit 3.5: He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

“Regeneration and renewal” or *paliggenesia* and *anakainosis*. The first literally is birth again and the second, a making new on or upon (*ana-*); both are through “washing” or *loutron* (also as bath).

Phl 2.15: That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

“Blameless and innocent” vs. “crooked and perverse.” *Amemptos* and *akeraios* (unmixed, unadulterated) vs. *skolios* (curved) and *diatrepho* (a verb meaning to twist, distort).

Ps 87.3-4: Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia--“this one was born there,” they say.

“Glorious things” or the verb *kavad* (literally, to be heavy) used with the preposition *b-* or “in you.”

Ps 87.5: And of Zion it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her.”

Rom 5.8: But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

“Shows” or *sunistemi*, literally as a standing-with.

Mt 13.3-7: (seed on various types of soil).

Lk 8.12: The ones along the path are those who have heard.

Compare “along” the path or *para* which connotes being parallel with but not on it.

Gen 1.27: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.

“Image and likeness” or *tselem* and *demoth*. The former intimates as shadow or unsubstantial entity whereas the latter implies appearance, model or similitude.

Rom 5.19: For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be

made righteous.

“Disobedience and obedience” or *parakoe* and *hupakoe*: the root *akouo* (to hear) prefaced with the prepositions *para* and *hupo* or beside and under.

Ps 121.2: My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Ps 121.6: The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.

Is 60.4: Lift up your eyes around about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you.

Four verses from Isaiah are grouped together about the return of inhabitants to Jerusalem when it is restored. The “help” from the Lord may be put in terms of both sun and moon not causing harm, *hezer*. The lifting up of (Jerusalem’s) eyes to see people coming suggests that previously that city had been withdrawn and preoccupied with itself. Associated with this verse is the coming of sons and daughters, i.e., those who are very young. Finally, all nations will become an “offering” or *minchah* which implies a gift or even tribute.

Is 49.22: And they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

“Bosom” is the noun *chetsen* which can apply to the folds of a garment for carrying objects, etc.

Is 66.12: Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream.

Is 66.20: And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord.

Zach 8.12: For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

The sowing of “peace” is one of *shalom* which will enable people to “possess” what comes from it, the verb being *nachal*, suggestive of receiving an inheritance.

Hos 14.6: His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon.

Shoots, beauty and fragrance: words related to a plant, an image of Israel.

Sir 18.16: Eat as it becomes a man those things which are set before you and devour not lest you be hated.

Eat as it “becomes” a man, *parakeimai* meaning close (*para* as beside) at hand.

Is 4.5-6: (cloud and fire to protect Mt. Zion).

Isaiah speaks of a cloud, smoke and fire which are equivalent to a “canopy and pavilion” or *sekah* and *machseh*, alternately as a booth and a place of refuge or covering.

Sg 1.6: The sons of my mother have fought in me; they have placed me as a guard in the vineyards. I have not guarded my own vineyard.

The bride reproaches herself for not having “guarded” her own vineyard, *natar* being the verb which connotes being on guard.

Sir: The Prologue: (translation from Hebrew to Greek).

The Prologue to Wisdom of Sirach referred to here speaks of reading with “good will and attention” or *eunoia* and *prosoche* (*eu-* or that which pertains to being well and *nous* or mind plus a having or *echo* towards-which or *pros-*).

1Cor 8.6: 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.

God and Jesus are “one” (*heis*). Note the use of prepositions: to the former “from” whom and to the latter, “through” whom or *ex* and *dia*. Regarding Jesus, the prepositions *ex* and *dia* are used, “from and through” with regard to *ta panta* or “all things.” Compare this to Genesis’ “very good” or *tov me’od*, literally “good excessively” or in an excessive fashion.

Rom 11.36: For from him and through him and to him are all things.

Jn 1.3: All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

Gen 1.31: And saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Ps 104.24: O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Chakmah is the noun for “wisdom” which implies having a certain skill.

Rom 1.30: Slanders, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents.

Those mentioned here “did not see fit to acknowledge God,” the verb for “acknowledge” being *epignosis*, literally as a knowledge-upon.

Jn 8.44: When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

“According to his own nature:” regarding the devil is rendered *ek ton idion* or literally from those of his own.

Rom 7.23: But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.

Two types of laws (*nomos* also as custom): “another” (*heteros*) and one proper to “mind” or *noos*. Thus these two customs, if you will, are in conflict within one person.

Gen 2.15: The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

“Till and keep” with regard to the garden, *havad* and *shamar*. The former is the common verb meaning to work and the latter is used often with regard to keeping the divine Torah as in Ps 119. This verse is mentioned several lines below.

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.

Ps 68.4: Lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds.

“Lift up and ride” are similar: the former being human and the latter divine.

Jn 1.5: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

“Overcome” with respect to darkness over light, *katalambano* which connotes as seizing. The preposition *kata* (according to) is prefaced to the verbal root, to seize in accord with (a plan or the like).

Is 9.1: But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish.

“Gloom and anguish” or *muhaph* (darkness) and *mutsaq* (connotes something poured out). “Darkness” or *skotos* of Eph 5.8 corresponds to the former.

Eph 5.8: For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.

Ps 79.1: They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

“Ruins” or *hy* suggests more a heap of ruins.

Is 1.8: And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

Gen 2.15: (cf. above).

“Booth and lodge” or *sukah* and *malon*: the former made of leaves and branches and the latter more applicable to travelers. Compare these two temporary lodgings with the garden of Eden from which man had been expelled and who now must make use of them.

Gen 3.24: He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

“Flaming sword” (*cherev*): from a verbal root whose basic meaning is “to dry up.” This sword turned every way or *haphak*, a verb which means to overturn, change. The hithpael form of *haphak* is reflexive, almost as though the flaming sword was endowed with life of its own.

Dt 32.32: For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah.

Both vines and vineyards from Sodom and Gomorrah suggest long-term cultivation of the evil associated with those two places.

Jl 3.13: Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

Valley of “decision” or *charuts* meaning that which has been cut in or sharpened.

Mt 13.25: But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

The enemy sowing weeds in wheat means the result won’t be known for a long time, harvest, suggesting a long-term grudge.

Is 1.21: How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice!

“Justice” or *mishpat* also means judgment pertaining to Jerusalem, now turned into being a harlot which is not unlike a widow who once was great and whose gold has become dim.

Is 1.8: (cf. above).

Lam 1.1: How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations!

Lam 4.1: How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed!

Shanah and *shaphak* or “has grown dim” and “is changed.” The former means to change and the latter, to pour out, to shed. The order in the Hebrew text is reversed.

Jn 1.9: The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

“True” (*alethinos*) light intimates that there is a false light, but it is not specified.

Gen 3.21: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.

“Garments” or *kutoneth* are more inner, close to the skin. The ones at hand are made of skin implying that the Lord had to kill some of the animals in the garden for this.

Eph 1.14: Which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

“Guarantee” or *arrabon* is money deposited by the purchaser and forfeited if the purchase isn’t completed.

1Tm 6.21: For by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. Grace be with you.

“Miss the mark” is *astocheo*, a bad aim as with an arrow and used with the preposition *peri* (around) with regard to faith.

Sg 1.7: Tell me, you whom my soul has loved, where do you pasture, where do you cause your flocks to rest at noon, lest I become as one who is veiled by the flocks of your companions?

Gregory interjects a verse from the Song as to the bride concerning her spouse’s place of pasture, that is, addressing him as loved by her “soul” or *nepshesh*, principle by which the body lives. The shepherd finding the lost sheep may be situated in this context as well as Christ as good shepherd going before his sheep. Laying down one’s life (*ten psuche autou the*) or literally as “placing the soul of his.”

Lk 15.5: And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

Jn 10.14: When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Ps 23.2: He makes me lie down in green pastures.

“Lie down” is *ravats* implying a four-legged animal folding its legs under its body.

Jn 10.16: And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

Phi 2.9: Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

Charizomai is the verb for “bestowed” and means to do something agreeable.

Jn 10.11: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Kalos is the adjective for “good” meaning more specifically beautiful.

Jn 15.13: Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jn 10.9: I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

Christ as door can be put within the context of entering the kingdom of God.

Jn 3.5: Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

The piercing of Christ’s side (blood and water) may be tied in with being born both of water and Spirit. Christ speaks of drinking the water he will give but at the time does not specify how he will do this. Gen 1.2 has the *Pneuma* “moving over the face of the waters.” The garden which is “watered” prefigures the water of Christ, the word being a verb, *rawah* or to drink largely or be satisfied by drink. The waters also prefigured by Isaiah will not “fail” or *kazav* fundamentally meaning to lie, to deceive.

Jn 19.34: But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

Jn 4.14: But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.

Is 58.11: And you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Ezk 34.14: I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture.

“Feed” or *rahal* is the verbal root for pasture which will be located on the mountain heights.

Lk 11.7: Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed.

The man in bed who refuses to get up and give food to his friend decides to do so because of this man’s “importunity” or *anaideia* or lack of shame. This gesture precludes him from being “not of the night or darkness.”

1Ths 5.5: For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

Mal 4.2: But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

Despite the sun’s (of righteousness) brightness, it has concealed within its wings “healing” or *marpe’* which derives from a verbal root also meaning to droop. Such an act of necessity does make the man in bed and his children “sons of light” upon whom the sun of righteousness will bestow *marpe’*. This will preclude a darkening of “understanding” or *dianoia* which also means intention, purpose (*dia* or through prefaced to *nous* or mind).

Eph 4.18: They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

Dianoia is the noun for “understanding” which is comprised of *nous* (mind) and *dia* (through).

Sg 1.7: Where I must lie down; show me the place of midday’s rest, lest I be herded with other flocks of your sheep.

The Song’s bride asks where to lie down at midday lest she be burnt by the sun, intimating that

marpe' under the sun of righteousness' wings.

Mt 25.32: Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

"Gather and separate" with regard to nations, sheep and goats, the verbs being *sunago* and *aphorizo*.

An interval of sorts exists between the two actions to determine which goes where. Compare with the Son of man coming to judge and revealing that he was identified with those in need, a stranger and in prison.

Mt 16.26: For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?

Whole "world" and forfeit one's "life" or *kosmos* and *psuche*. The former has a wide variety of meanings such as human activity as it relates to the closed nature of reality (i.e., not infinite) about oneself. The latter often is translated as soul.

Ezk 34.17: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, rams and he-goats.

Mt 25.31: When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

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

"Affliction" and "weight" of glory or *thlipsis* and *baros*; the latter adjective often applies to being miserable and can be applied to the Hebrew concept of weight (as glory, *kavod*).

Mt 7.13: Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

Two different types of gates: "narrow and wide" or *stenos* and *plateios*. The verb for "enter" relative to the former is *eisrchomai*, literally as to go into (*eis-*) which here is suggestive of taking aim before making this entry in order to effect the action. The "base thought" or a heart (*lev*) which is *belyahal* or that which is unprofitable and suited for destruction.

Dt 15.9: Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart, and you say, "the seventh year, the year of release is near," and your eye be hostile to your poor brother."

Davar is the noun for "thought" and usually means word as expression. It is modified by *belyahal* or "base" which means worthless or useless.

Dt 4.19: And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them.

Lifting one's eyes to the heavenly bodies can result in worship but keeping them down, if you will, precludes this temptation or at least one related to cosmic entities. Such were considered as gods that ruled the world, including elements on the earth.

Wisd 13.2: But they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.

Nomizo is the verb for "supposed" and applies to the holding of a custom or opinion.

Phl 4.7: And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

"Hearts and minds" or *kardia* and *noema*, the latter also meaning perception or thought. Divine peace will watch over both because it "pass" them, *huperecho* or literally to have-beyond (*huper-*).

2Cor 3.18: And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.

In the verse at hand, one's face is "unveiled" or *anakalupto* where the veil can refer to the one Moses used when conversing with the Lord (cf. Ex 34.33).

2Cor 4.6: For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts.

The light of creation in Genesis to which Paul refers is to shine in our hearts although that verse says "Let there be light" (i.e., no specific reference to darkness).

Is 40.12: Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?

The verb "measured" (*madad*) also means to extend as one does a hand.

Eph 3.17: And that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

"May dwell" or *katoikeo* has the verbal root for house with the preposition *kata* which implies living in accord with a given schedule, plan or following certain guidelines. Compare with *enoikeo* (same root but with the preposition *en* or *in*) lifted from Lv 26.12.

2Cor 6.16: I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Mt 24.35: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Parerchomai or "pass away" has the common verb *erchomai* (to come, go) prefaced with the

preposition *para* or to be alongside). It is used with Christ's "words" or *logos*. The same verb is used with the heavens passing away. *Rhoizedon* is an adverb pertaining to a rushing sound. The psalmist uses the image of a garment for the same theme.

2Pt 3:10: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire.

"Will pass away and "will be dissolved" or *parerchomai* and *luo*. The first means a passing by the side (*para-*), a kind of falling off whereas the latter, a loosening.

Ps 102:26: They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment.

A play on words: '*avad* and *hamad* or "will perish" and "will wear out."

Mt 25:33: And he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

Mt 25:34: Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The Second Homily concludes with two verses already alluded to above with regard to the separation of sheep and goats. *Katabole* means "foundation" or literally that which has been cast in accord with something (*kata-*).

The Song of Songs, 1.5-8

I am black and beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains (skins) of Solomon. Do not look at me because I have become blackened, because the sun has looked unfavorably at me. The sons of my mother have fought in me, they have placed me as a guard in the vineyards; I have not guarded my own vineyard. Tell me, you whom my soul has loved, where do you pasture, where do you cause your flocks to lie down at midday, lest I become as one who is veiled by the flocks of your companions? If you do not know yourself, beautiful among women, go in the footsteps of the flocks, and feed the kids by the shepherds' tents.

J.43 & M.788 The visible exterior of the sacred tent of witness was not equal in honor to the beauty hidden within. The outer curtains were made from woven linen and the hair of goatskins, and wrappings of a reddish hue completed the tent's external decoration. Beyond this there was nothing precious to be seen on the tent's exterior. Inside, however, the entire tent of witness shone with gold, silver, and precious stones. There were pillars, pedestals, capitals, a censer, J.44 an altar, a lamp, all ark, lampstands, the mercy seat, basins and curtains at the entrance. The beautiful curtains were made from every color of richly colored dye: a golden thread elegantly woven together by skilled craftsmanship with hyacinth, purple, flax, and scarlet, and mixed with every else--meant to make the fabric gleam like a rainbow's bands.

Why I start from this point (the tent of testimony) will become fully clear to you from what follows. Once again the Song of Songs is presented to us as a guide for every type of philosophy and knowledge of God. The Song of Songs is the true tent of witness whose veils, skins, and coverings of the outer court are terms and expressions of love. They manifest the attitude with regard to the desired object in both the description of beauty and mention of bodily members of those things which appear on the outside and of those things which lie hidden by a garment's covering.

However, the elements inside form a kind of brilliant lampstand and are full of mysteries. There is the censer's good odor, expiation from sins, that solid gold altar of piety, the beauty of veils elegantly woven from the good colors of virtues, the firm pillars of reason, the unshakable pedestals of doctrine, the gracefulness of capitals which refer to the grace J.45 in the directing part of the soul, the basins of the soul, and whatever else that looks to the heavenly, incorporeal way of M.789 life. Such things the Law holds out as an example through mysterious symbols. All these things can be found in the literal meaning if we only prepare ourselves through diligence to enter the Holy of Holies after having been purified from the filth of shameful thoughts by the bath of the Word. Otherwise, we will be excluded from seeing the marvels within the tent because we have touched corrupt thoughts contrary to the Law's command, or have entertained unclean thoughts. For the law of the Spirit forbids the entry of such things unless the person who has entertained some dead, abominable thought washes the garment of his conscience according to Moses' prescription.

The consequence of what was just examined leads us to contemplate the bride's words to her maidens: "I am

black and beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of skins] of Solomon." A teacher should J.46 correctly begin his presentation of the good with an explanation for his pupils. Such souls who readily understand these symbols figuratively speak of wine. They prefer to see it as grace flowing from the bridegroom's spiritual breasts. Thus they say, "We will love your breasts more than wine, because righteousness has loved you." The bride further speaks to her pupils of an amazing fact about herself in order that we might learn of the bridegroom's immense love for mankind who added beauty to the beloved bride] through such love. "Do not marvel," she says, "that righteousness has loved me." Although I have become dark through sin and have dwelt in gloom by my deeds, the bridegroom made me beautiful through his love, having exchanged his very own beauty for my disgrace. After taking the filth of my sins upon himself, he allowed me to share his own purity, and filled me with his beauty. He who first made me lovely from my own repulsiveness, has showed his love for me.

After these words, the bride exhorts the maidens to be beautiful. She shows her own beauty in the same way as Paul who says "Be as I am, and I as you." Also, "Be J.47 imitators of me as I am of Christ." Because of this the bride does not let the souls entrusted to her charge despair of becoming beautiful when they look back to their former way of life; rather they learn by following the bride's example that the present, if it is blameless, is a veil of their former way of life. The bride says, although the beauty given to me by being loved by righteousness now shines forth, I still realize that in the beginning I was not radiant but black. My former life has created this dark, shadowy appearance. Although I am black, I am now this beautiful form, for the image of darkness has been transformed into beauty. And you, daughters of Jerusalem, look to your mother, the Jerusalem above. If you had once been the "tents of Kedar" because the ruler of the powers of M.792 darkness dwelt in you (the word 'Kedar' signifies darkness), you will become the "curtains of Solomon," that is, you will become the king's temple with King Solomon dwelling in you.

J.48 Solomon, who is named after peace, is peaceful. The tent [skins] of Solomon partly signifies the entire covering of the royal tent. I think that the great Paul is fond of such interpretations in his letter to the Romans where he recommends to us the love of God. Although we were darkened through sin, God made us bright and loving through his resplendent grace. When everything is enshrouded by the prevailing gloom of night, even if things happen to be light by nature, with the coming of light, the comparison to darkness does not apply to things previously obscured by gloom. The soul is thus led over from error to the truth, and the dark form of its life is changed to resplendent grace. Paul, the bride of Christ, had become radiant from darkness. He says to Timothy, as the bride to her maidens, that he was made worthy to become beautiful, for he was formerly a blasphemer, J.49 persecutor, insolent and black in color. Paul also says that Christ entered the world to enlighten those who were dark. He did not call the just to himself but summoned sinners to repentance whom he made to shine as luminaries by the bath of regeneration which washed away their dark form. David looked to the city above and wondrously beheld the spectacle of Babylon dwelling in the city of God, of which glorious things are said; Raab the prostitute is mentioned; the foreign tribes, Tyre, and Ethiopia are also in (the heavenly Jerusalem). No longer can anyone reproach the desolation of this city's inhabitants, saying "Never shall anyone say to Zion, 'Was a man born in her.'" Babylonians become inhabitants of Jerusalem, the prostitute becomes a virgin, the Ethiopians become light in color, and Tyre becomes the city above. Thus the bride eagerly encourages the daughters of Jerusalem, recommending to them the bridegroom's goodness because if he receives a blackened soul, he restores its beauty by fellowship with J.50 himself. If anyone is a "tent of Kedar," he becomes a dwelling of light for the true Solomon, that is, the king of peace dwelling in him. Therefore, the text says, "I am black and beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem". All of you who look at me may become "skins of Solomon," even if you were "tents of Kedar."

Then the text adds further words for strengthening the minds of its pupils. The cause of darkness is not ascribed to the Creator, but its origin is attributed to the free will of each person. "Do not look at me because I am black: I have not M.793 been such from the beginning," for neither was it likely that the bride fashioned by God's hands has been covered by a shadowy, dark form. "Therefore I was not dark," says the bride, " but I became this way. I have become dark not by nature, but shame was brought upon me because the sun changed my appearance from radiance to darkness: 'for the sun has looked upon me.' "

What can we learn from this? The Lord says to the crowds J.51 in the parable that he who sows the word not

only sows in a good heart but in one which is stony and overgrown with thorns; even if such a heart lies beside the road and is trampled upon, the Lord casts the seeds of the word to all out of love to mankind. In explaining the property of each soul, Christ says that the same thing occurs in a stony soul, namely, the seed is not deeply rooted; however, by a quick blossoming, it immediately promises the corn, but the more intense heat of the sun warms the seed in the ground and dries it up because no moisture is in its roots. The sun represents temptation. Therefore we learn the following from the Master: human nature was an image of the true light, far removed from any darkness; it gleamed by imitation of the archetype's beauty. Temptation, however, which cast down flaming heat through deception, struck down the first tender shoot lacking roots. Before any good state is achieved, and before a place is given to the roots in the depths of the earth by the farmer's care, disobedience immediately dries up the green shoot. Temptation has made it black by J.52 burning it. If, however, the attack of temptation is called the sun, let no one hearing this be dismayed, since the divinely inspired scriptures teach this in many places.

The second song of ascents contains a blessing for the person whose help is from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and Earth: he will not be burned by the sun during the day. And the prophet Isaiah, predicting the establishment of the Church, describes it as a certain procession. He brightens the story by saying that daughters are borne upon shoulders, children are carried in covered chariots and burning heat is warded off by parasols. Through these symbols Isaiah describes a life lived in virtue. He demonstrates by a youthful age the newly born and guileless; by umbrellas, however, Isaiah scribes relief from the heat which is appropriate to souls due to their self-control and purity. We learn by these examples that the soul betrothed to God must be borne upon shoulders- not trodden upon by the flesh, it is seated upon the body's mass. When hearing the term "covered chariot" (*lampine*), we learn of J.53 the illuminating (*eklamptiken*) grace of enlightenment by which we become children. No longer setting foot upon the earth, we are carried away to the life of heaven. Once the heat has been extinguished by the umbrellas of virtues, our M.796 life becomes shaded and dew-like. When the blazing heat of the sun is not shut off by the Spirit's cloud, the Lord spreads out a shadow for a shelter. The sun hums the bright surface of the body by the assault of temptations and blackens its form in ugliness.

The Song of Songs then speaks about our transformation from a good color to blackness: "The sons of my mother have fought in me; they have placed me as a guard in the vineyards. I have not guarded my own vineyard." Let me caution the reader at this point not to take these words very precisely, but he should try to understand the symbolism. If there is something not completely transmitted from the train of thought in this verse, let it be imputed to the weakness of those who have translated the Hebrew tongue into Greek [cf. the Prologue of Sirach]. Persons who carefully study the Hebrew language J.54 do not have this difficulty. The grammatical construction of our [Greek] tongue does not compare with Hebrew's elegance, but it causes problems for those who follow the superficial value of the literal sense. This is the sense of the words before us insofar as we have understood their meaning: man did not lack at the beginning anything of the divine bounty; his task was only to protect the good things received from God, not to acquire them. However, the plotting of dangerous enemies has made man naked, for he did not guard the portion given him in his nature by God. The transmission of these words is expressed obscurely as follows: "The sons of my mother have fought in me; they have placed me as a guard in the vineyards. I have not kept my own vineyard." In these few words the text teaches us much. The first thing which St. Paul declares is that all beings come from God, and one God is the Father from whom J.55 all things are. Nothing that exists has being except through and from him. ("All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made." Since God made all things, they are "very good," for he made all things in wisdom.) God gave to rational nature the grace of free will and bestowed on man the power to find what he wants that the good might be present in our lives, not coerced and involuntary but the result of free choice. The movement of our will freely leads us to apparent realities. In the nature of things is found someone who misused this free will, and according to the Apostle's words, it has become an inventor of wicked deeds. He who is from God is our brother, but he who freely rejects participation in the good introduces evil. Having become a "father of lies," he arranged himself in battle order against everyone who chooses the good. Therefore, since this fall from good was the beginning of evil for the rest of men (it already M.797 happened to the nature of man), the one who was once black J.56 but is now beautiful rightly attributes the cause of this dark appearance to the 'sons of their mother.'" We are taught here that all things have, as it were, one mother, the cause of their existence. Thus whatever is perceived in existence is related to everything

else. Free choice divides human nature into friendship and hostility, for those who have abandoned a good attitude give substance to evil by departing from the good (evil has no substance: it is separate from the good). These persons hasten to associate with others in a partnership of evil by using the plural form, "sons," the bride shows the many ways of evil). The "sons of my mother" have made war in me not by outward attacks, but by making the soul J.57 herself a battleground of the war within. This war is in each person as the divine Apostle says: "I see in my members another law at war with the Law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members." "Furthermore," says the bride, "this civil war was made by my brothers, and I have been darkened by the enemies of my salvation; I have been overcome by enemies and have not guarded my own vineyard."

The vineyard must be understood as paradise, which man was ordered to guard. Negligence in guarding it cast him out of paradise and made him a dweller at the sun's setting rather than at its rising. Because of this, the sun's rising appears in its setting. "Sing to the Lord who has ridden upon the sun's setting," in order that when light shines in the darkness, it may be transformed into rays of light, and the darkened bride may become beautiful again. The incoherence of the literal text may be thus reconciled with the true meaning: "They have placed me as a guard in the vineyards," which is the same as saying "They have placed Jerusalem as a J.58 storehouse for fruits." From the obvious sense of this text, God, not the sons, made the bride a guardian of the divine vineyard. The sons only fought in the bride, placed her as a tent in the vineyards, and made her a storehouse for fruit in a cucumber bed. Deprived of the guarded fruit through disobedience, she became a pitiful sight since the thing guarded in her lacked existence. Because God put man to work and to guard paradise,, the bride said, "When God brought my soul into life (for life was enjoyed in paradise where God placed man to guard and protect it), enemies changed me from guarding paradise into caring for their vineyard whose clusters yield bitterness and whose bunches yield wrath."

M.800 Such was the vineyard of Sodom. Such a shoot was Gomorrah which was also condemned; through them the deadly wrath of serpents was poured forth in Sodom's evil winepresses. Even to the present day there are many guardians, that is, persons who zealously watch over their own J.59 passions, fearing, as it were, that they do not lose them. Observe the evil guard of idolatry exercised in impiety and greediness: persons keep guard over such evils, thinking it a loss to be deprived of iniquity. In other cases one can likewise observe those who have taken pleasure in passion or vanity or anything similar. They were surrounded with all kinds of guards for these evils and saw an advantage in their souls never being clean from passions. Therefore, the bride expresses her lament: "I have become blackened, since in guarding and caring for the darnel of the enemy and their evil shoots, 'I have not guarded my own vineyard.' "

Oh, what sorrow the bride excites in those who listen with feeling: "I have not kept my own vineyard!" The voice is rightly a lament, making the prophets groan in sympathy. How has the faithful city of Zion, full of judgment, become a harlot? How was daughter Zion left as a tent in the vineyard? How was the city, once filled with people been abandoned? How was the city which held sway in its surrounding areas become subject to tribute? How has gold J.60 grown dim and fine silver changed? How has she become black, she who had first shone with true light? "All these things have happened to me," the bride says, "because I have not kept my own vineyard."

Immortality is the vineyard, a state free from passion, likeness to God, and estrangement from evil. The fruit of this vineyard is purity. This is the radiant, ripe cluster of grapes which warms its form and sweetens the soul's senses in chastity. The vine's tendril is union and kinship with eternal life. The growing shoots are the heavenly virtues rising up to the height of the angels. The leaves blossoming and softly moving on the branches by the gentle breeze form the many-faceted ornament of divine virtues blossoming together with the Spirit. The bride says that "although I possessed all these and radiated in their fruition, I became black: 'I did not keep my vineyard;' having driven out purity, I put on a gloomy form. This skin is a tunic or dark appearance. But righteousness has loved me. I take up my good fortune and have become beautiful and luminous. I will not lose my beauty again, having failed through ignorance to keep my guard steadfastly."

J.61 Because of her failure to keep her vineyard, the bride has ceased speaking with the young maidens. She calls upon her spouse through prayer and makes known to her beloved her heart's thoughts. What does she

say? "Tell me, you whom M.801 my soul has loved, where do you pasture, where do you cause your flocks to rest at noon, lest I become as one who is veiled by the flocks of your companions?" "Where do you feed, good Shepherd, you who take the entire flock upon your shoulders? For there is one sheep which you have taken upon your shoulders, our human nature. Show me the verdant place. Make known to me the waters of rest. Lead me to the nourishing grass. Call me by name that I may hear your voice, I who am your sheep. Give me eternal life through your voice. "Tell me, you whom my soul has loved ."

"I call you like this since your name is above every other name. It is ineffable and not contained by any intelligent nature. Therefore, your name reveals your goodness, the relationship of my soul towards you. How can I not love you who have loved me so much? Even though I am black, you laid down your life for your sheep, you their shepherd. No greater love than this can be comprehended, for J.62 you exchanged your life for my salvation. Teach me then where you feed. By finding the pasture of your salvation, I will be filled with the food of heaven; he who does not eat it cannot enter eternal life. And running to you, the fountain, I will drink from the divine stream which you cause to spring up for those thirsting after you. Water pours out from your side and the spear has opened that veil. The person tasting it will become a spring welling up into eternal life. For if you shepherd me, you will make me lie down at midday when I will rest peacefully in the shadowless light, for midday has no shadow when the sun shines directly overhead. In this midday light you will cause to lie down all those fed by you when you will take your children with you into your bed."

No one can be worthy of the midday rest unless he has become a son of the light and of the day. He who has separated himself from the darkness of evening and from the dawn, that is, where evil both begins and ends, will lie down at midday by the sun of righteousness. "Make known to me," the bride says, "where I must lie down; show me the place of midday's rest, lest when straying from your benign J.63 guiding hand through ignorance, I be herded with other flocks of your sheep." The bride speaks these words out of solicitousness over her God-given beauty. She struggles to learn and to think how her loveliness can remain forever. But she is still not yet deemed worthy of the bridegroom's voice because God foresees something even better in store for her, namely that the prelude of her enjoyment might flare up her desire into something stronger. Thus her desire may intensify her gladness.

But the bridegroom's friends speak to his bride, advising her about the eternity of her future good. Their advice is veiled in obscurity and expressed as follows: "If you do not know yourself, beautiful among women, go in the footsteps of the M.804 flocks, and feed the kids by the shepherds' tents." The intention of these words is clear from what we have closely examined above. However, the text's order is unclear. What, then, is the tent's meaning? The best safeguard for knowledge is not to be ignorant of oneself. Each person must know himself as he is and distinguish himself from all not belonging to him so that he may not be unconsciously protecting something foreign to himself. This happens to persons heedless of watching over themselves. They see strength, beauty, glory, power, the advantage of wealth, conceit, massiveness, a large body, elegance of form, or anything that may pertain to themselves. J.64 Such persons are careless guards because they are attracted by the wrong things; they leave unguarded what is proper to themselves. How can anyone watch over what he does not know? Therefore, the safest guard for the good in us is not to be ignorant of ourselves; each person should know who he is and should accurately distinguish himself from that which is accidental that he may not be attracted to something else instead. He who esteems life in this world and judges its values as worth protecting does not know how to discern what is his own from what is alien to himself. Nothing transitory belongs to us. How can anyone seize what is passing and impermanent? Since only one thing has an intelligible, immaterial nature, the material world continuously passes away by a kind of flux and movement. The person who separates himself from what endures will be borne away by instability; He who separates himself from stability is necessarily caught in instability, and he who from stability is necessarily caught in instability, and he who J.65 being frustrated: he leaves stability behind, yet he cannot hold onto instability.

Therefore, the bridegroom's friends give this advice: "If you do not know yourself, beautiful one among women, go in the footsteps of the flocks, and feed your kids by the in the footsteps of the flocks, and feed your kids by the shepherds' tents." What does this mean? The person ignorant whom Christ has rejected at His left hand. Thus the good shepherd places the sheep at his right: He separates the goats from the better herd and places them on the left. We thus learn from the bridegroom's friends that we must be attentive to the very nature of

things and not miss the truth by erring steps.

This point needs closer examination. Many people do not judge themselves from the nature of reality; rather, they consider the way men lived who preceded them and lack sound judgment about reality; they do not have prudent reason but irrational habits while they like to pass judgment on the good. The result is that they force themselves into power, lordship, and notoriety in this world. They make a lot about material self-pretensions while it is unclear where these things will get J.66 them after this life. Human custom is not safe assurance for the future, for its end often leads us to the goats, not to the flocks of sheep.

M.805 The Gospel gives clear insight on this matter of sheep. The person considering what belongs to human nature (that is, reason) will disdain human custom as irrational nor choose as good that which is disadvantageous for his soul. Therefore, it is not helpful to consider the footprints of cattle whose traces in this earthly existence signify the lives of those who have preceded us. For our choice made from visible things is unclear until we depart from this life: there we shall know whom we have followed. The person who follows in the steps of those who preceded him and takes the passing customs of this world as his guide and does not distinguish good from evil on the basis of actual reality, often errs. In the day of judgment he becomes a goat instead of a sheep. Therefore, we must listen to the bride's friends: "You, O fair soul, although you were once black, if you wish that your beautiful J.67 form abides forever, do not wander in the footsteps of those who have preceded you in this life. For you do not know if the path seen belongs to the goats whom you follow. You cannot see those who have worn down the path with their footprints. Once you have passed out of this life and have slipped into the folds of death, you must be careful lest you are placed in the flocks whose footsteps you have ignorantly followed through life."

"If you know not yourself, beautiful one among women, go in the footsteps of the flocks, and feed the kids by the shepherds' tents." Another version of this text will be easier to understand where the words' order is not unrelated: "If you know not yourself, fair one among women, you have gone forth and followed after the footsteps of the flocks, and you feed your kids before the shepherds' tents." Here the meaning exactly agrees with the interpretation of the text previously explained. In order that you do not suffer J.68 misfortune, watch over yourself as the text says. For this is the surest way to protect your own good; realize how much more than the rest of creation you are honored by the Creator. He did not make the heavens in his image, nor the moon, sun, the stars' beauty nor anything else you see in creation. You alone are made in the likeness of that nature which surpasses all understanding, the image of incorruptible beauty, the impression of true divinity, receptacle of blessed life, seal of true light. You will become what he is by looking at him. By imitating him who shines within you, his gleam is reflected by your purity.

Nothing in creation can compare to your greatness. All of heaven is contained in the grasp of God's hand, and the earth and sea fit in the palm of his hand. Although he holds all creation in his palm, you can wholly contain him. God dwells in you, penetrates you, and is not confined in you. He M.808 says "I will dwell in them, and walk with them." If you consider this, you will not let your eye rest on any earthly thing, nor will you consider heaven as marvelous. How can J.69 you admire the heavens, O man, seeing that you are more enduring? They pass away, but you remain for eternity with him who always exists.

Marvel not at the earth's breadth nor the ocean stretching out to infinity. You have been appointed over them as a driver of a pair of horses with these elements obedient and subject to your will. The earth tends to your needs, and the sea as to your will. The earth tends to your needs, and the sea as not yourself, beautiful one among women," you will look with disdain on the entire universe. Constantly looking to the spiritual good, you will disregard the wandering footprints of this life. Therefore, always watch over yourself, and do not be deceived by the flock of goats. Then you will not be singled out as a goat instead of a sheep in the time of judgment or excluded from the right hand of the throne. Instead, you will hear that sweet voice which says to the wool-bearing and meek sheep, "Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the meek sheep, " Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." May we be worthy of this kingdom in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Third Homily

Ex 19.10: Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments.

Qadash is verb for “consecrate” or to make holy, chiefly by separating. This is to prepare Israel for God’s manifestation on Sinai, the “thick cloud” actually being on the mountain, *hanan kaved*. The adjective is derived from the verbal root *kavod* (to be heavy as well as glorious). The Lord was above these manifestations after which he descended upon Sinai and summoned Moses to ascend. Hebrews says that we have not come to a mountain like this which “may be touched,”

pselaphao implying feeling or groping about as well as one would feel a piece of fruit to check its ripeness.

Ex 19.16: On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast.

Ex 19.16-9: (God descends upon Mt. Sinai).

Dt 5.22-3: (cf. above).

Heb 12.18: For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest.

Pselaphao is the verb for “touched” and can refer to a blind man groping about.

Sg 1.9: I have compared you, my beloved, to my cavalry facing the chariots of Pharaoh.

Ex 14.16-29: (Egypt’s army defeated in Red Sea).

Ex 14.25: Clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily.

Hab 3.8: When you rode upon your horses, upon your chariot of victory.

Ps 68.17: With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.

This incident on Mt. Sinai came not long after Israel had left Egypt in dramatic fashion through the Red Sea. Ps 68 celebrates this victory by mentioning the Lord’s own chariots when he came into his “holy place” or *qodesh* (cf. *qadash* as ‘consecrate’ just above).

2Kg 2.11: And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The chariot of fire “separated” Elijah from Elisha, *qarah* which connotes a tearing asunder.

2Kg 2.12: My father, my Father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!

Zach 1.10: These are they whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.

“Patrol” is the common verb *halak*, to go or to come with the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to *‘erets*, literally as “in the earth.”

Hab 3.8: (cf. above).

Ex 5.12: So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt, to gather stubble for straw.

A number of verses from Exodus pertain to the oppression Israel had experienced at the hands of the Egyptians, including the plagues which culminate in the death of all the first-born.

Ex 1.11-4: (Egyptian taskmasters set over the Hebrews).

Ex 5.13: The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task, as when there was straw.”

Ex 5.19: You shall by no means lessen your daily number of bricks.

Ex 7.17-25: (Nile turned into blood).

Ex 10.21-3: (plague of darkness over Egypt).

Ex 7.27-8.9: (plague of frogs).

Ex 9.8-10: (plague of boils).

Ex 10.4-19: (plague of locusts).

Ex 8.12-4: (plague of frogs).

Ps 105.34: May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.

The psalmist’s “meditation” or *syach* can also mean discourse or quarrel as well as a shrub which here is “pleasing” or the verbal root *harav* which means to pledge as well as to mingle.

Ex 9.18-34: (plague of hail).

Ex 11.5: And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die.

1Cor 10.11: Now these things happened to them as a warning.

The events of Egypt happened as a “warning” or *tupikos*, an adverb meaning by way of example.

Ex 14.23: They Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea.

Ex 15.4: Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea.

Heb 10.22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

"Draw near" or *proserchomai* with the preposition *pros* prefaced to the common verb *erchomai* (to come) signifying direction towards-which. It is to be done in "full assurance" or *plerosophia* of faith, a noun consisting of the root *sophia* (wisdom) prefaced with the adjective *pleres* (full).

Eph 5.26: That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

"Sanctify" or *haziazo* comes through being washed with water coming from (*en*, the preposition for in) the "word," *rHEMA* or the subject of speech.

Ex 9.23-4: (plague of hail).

Rom 13.12: The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Night = "far gone" and day = "at hand" or *propokpto* (to put forward) and *eggizo* (to be near).

Mt 13.42: And throw them into the furnace of fire.

"Furnace" or *kaminos* which also can be an oven or kiln.

Jer 5.8: They were well-fed lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife.

"Lusty" stallions or *shakah*, a verb which means to wander about. The horse or mule is not unlike these stallions, lacking "understanding" or *byn* which connotes having perception.

Ps 32.9: Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle.

Sg 1.10: Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

The divine bridegroom praises his spouse's cheeks and neck after having compared her to a mare of Pharaoh's chariots.

Eph 4.14: So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Nepios or "children," literally as not yet speaking and are cast about like the wind with every "doctrine" (*didaskalia*, teaching). These children cannot yet speak, if you will, and cannot respond properly to false teaching which means they are subject to being blown by the wind (*anemos*, more as a squall) compared to the *Pneuma* or Spirit.

4Mac 7.1-3: (noble example of Eleazar).

Eleazar was a scribe martyred for refusing to eat swine's flesh. He was noted for his "reasoning" (*logismos* connotes calculating or reckoning) who steered the vessel of "piety" or *eusebeia* in the sea of passions, this word being akin to the Latin *pietas*, suggestive of reverence to God, one's family and lineage.

Tit 1.13: Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.

"Rebuke and may be sound:" *elegcho* or refute and *hugiainosis* or a state of being healthy. The verbal root of the latter is found in 2.2 as "be sound," *hugiaino*.

Tit 2.2: Bid the older men be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

"Temperate (*semnos* connotes being revered or august), "serious" (*sophroneo*, to be temperate), "sensible" (*hugiano*, to be sound or healthy), "love" (*agape*), "steadfastness" (*hupomone*, or literally a remaining under).

Prov 1.9: For they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck.

"Fair" or *chen*, a noun meaning favor or grace; i.e., a "garland of grace or fairness." What makes this garland so is the instruction of one's father and the teaching of one's mother (cf. vs. 8).

Sg 1.11-12: We will make for you figures of gold with studs of silver while the king was at table.

Note the plural form of the verb ('we will make'), as though the bride's companions had joined her spouse to collaborate in embellishing her. Here is the second instance of *tur* or "boarder" with explicit mention of gold. Presumably the king is at table eating, whereas Sg 1.4 has him in his "chambers." This is the only instance where *mesav* is used for "table;" it derives from the verbal root *savav*, "to surround." Note that the spikenard sends forth its smell or *reych*, from the same verbal root as *ruach* or "spirit."

Hab 3.8: when you rode upon your horses, upon your chariot of victory.

Chariot of "victory" or *yeshuha*, a word which pertains more to salvation or deliverance (the verbal root to the name Jesus). Compare the horses of this verse with the ass of Zachariah. Despite the king being triumphant and glorious, he is "humble" or *hany* which also means afflicted or poor.

Zac 9.9: Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.

2Cor 6.16: I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

“Live and move” or *enoikeo* and *peripateo*: two verbs with prepositions prefaced to them, *en* and *peri* (in and around). The quote from Lev 26.12 has the verb *halak* (to go, to come) for both “live and “move.”

2Cor 12.4: And he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

“Things that cannot be told” or *rhema* which are *arretos*: that which is said or the subject of speech; compare with *logos* as expression. It appears the adjective is derived from this noun with alpha privative.

Heb 1.3: He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.

“Stamp” or *charakter* or a mark which has been engraved or impressed and applies to *hupostasis* or “nature,” literally a standing-under in the sense of a support or foundation. “Form” of God, *morphe* being similar to this *charakter* which is the Word or *Logos* who is “with God,” *pros* being the preposition signifying direction towards-which.

Phl 2.6: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Morphe is the noun for “form” and *huparcho* is the verb for “is” which means literally to begin under or more commonly to come into existence.

Jn 1.1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1Cor 4.7: For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive?

“Different” is the verb *diakrino*, literally as to separate one from another.

Prov 10.20: The tongue of the righteous is choice silver.

“Choice” silver, *bachar* being the verb meaning to choose, to select.

Jn 1.18: No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

“Bosom” or *kolpos*, also as a fold in a garment used with the preposition *eis*, literally as “into the bosom.”

Jn 5.37: His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen.

Eidos is the noun for form as noted in the next verse.

1Cor 13.12: For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

“Form” or *eidos*, that which is seen, a shape which we see “dimly” or literally “in a figure” or *ainigma*, dark saying or riddle. This verse occurs a few lines below.

Eph 3.17: And that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

“Dwell” or *katoikeo*, the verbal root for house prefaced with the preposition *kata*, signifying in accord with a plan or something determined beforehand. Such a particular type of taking up residence is done *dia* (through) faith.

Phl 4.7: And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Christ’s peace “passes” or *huperecho* (literally, to have beyond, *huper-*) “understanding” or *nous* (mind).

Acts 9.15: Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

Gal 2.20: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

“Live” or *zao* is a fuller word, of living life to the full, than *biao* which connotes being alive. Compare this Christ living in me with Christ speaking in me and who is “powerful” in you, the verb *dunateo* (to be strong).

2Cor 13.3: Since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you.

“Proof” or *dokime* can also applied to a character which had been tried.

Heb 1.14: Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Spirits which are “ministering” or *pneuma* which are *leitourgikos*, originally fulfilling public service (*ergon*).

Sg 1.12: My nard gave forth its scent.

“Scent” or *reyach* is similar to *ruach*, breath, spirit.

Hab 3.3: His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

“Glory” or *hod* connotes majesty and beauty which has a direct correlation to the earth being full of divine “praise” or *tehilah* which also can mean a hymn.

1Cor 3.18: And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. Also noted below as in #3c.

“Beholding” divine glory or *katoptrizo* which means to show in a mirror, and such mirrors were of polished metal not giving an exact reflection as with modern ones. Such beholding tinged with a certain golden or silver hue allows change into the divine “likeness” (*eikon* or image compared with *homoiosis* which usually translates as likeness). Note use of the prepositions “from and to” or *apo-eis* (the latter more as into). This reveals the hidden nature of change or *metamorphoo*, literally to change-after, to bring a form (*morphe*) after (*meta*), if you will, or into a new state, and that is an eternal dynamic, not static.

1Cor 13.12: (cf. above).

Wisd 7.26: For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.

Wisdom consists of the following three: a “reflection” or *apaugasma* (an effulgence), a mirror which is “spotless” (*akelidotos*, free from soil) and “image” (*eikon*).

Gal 5.22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

One of the fruits of the “Spirit” or *Pneuma* is *agape*.

2Cor 2.15-7: (fragrance of Christ).

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

“Fragrance and “aroma” are mentioned with regard to Christ, *euodia* and *osme* (mentioned below). The former is more a sweet smell (*eu-* means ‘well’) and the latter, a scent whether good or bad. Both are mentioned in the next verse where we are to “walk” or *peripateo* (literally to walk around) in *agape*. Both may be related to the costly ointment of nard Mary used to anoint Jesus’ feet. Also the anonymous woman who anointed Jesus’ head.

1Tm 4.12-15: (exhortation keep prophetic gift).

A gift given by “prophetic utterance” through the council of elders, *propheteia*.

Phl 1.25: I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith.

“Remain and continue” or *meno* and *parameno*, the same verbal root with the latter having the preposition *para* (beside) prefaced to it. *Prokope* or “progress” also means advancement, here with regard to the faith.

2Tm 4.10: For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

“Love” or the verb *agapao* used in the negative sense, this “present world” or *ton nun aiona*, literally “the things of this age or time period now.”

2Tm 4.14: Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm.

“Harm” is the adjective *kakos*, also meaning evil.

2Tm 1.15: You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, and among them Phygelus and Hermogenes.

“Turned away” or *apostrepho* connotes taking to flight.

2Cor 2.15: For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

Jn 12.3: Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

Mk 14.3: A woman came with an alabaster jar of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the jar and poured it over his head.

Jn 12.3: Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

A few verses above Mary was noted with regard to anointing Jesus’ feet, symbolic of his burial. Jesus says “memory” of this will be spread abroad, *mnemoson* being indicative of a memorial and record used here with the preposition *eis*, literally as “into memory of her” which connotes perpetuity. Mary is not unlike the Song’s bride wishing her divine spouse to lie between her breasts, the verb *lun* intimating a tarrying or passing the night. It is here that the “treasure” of both woman lies, *thesauros* also meaning a secure storage place for valuables to which the description of a vine may be applied, that is, “within” your house, *yarkataym* suggesting the inmost part of anything

Mk 14.8: She has anointed my body beforehand for burying.

Mt 26.12: In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial.

Mt 26.13: Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she had done will be told in memory of her.

Sg 1.13: My beloved is to me a satchet of myrrh; he shall lie between my breasts.

Mt 6.21: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Ps 128.3: Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house.

Sg 1.14: My love is to me a cluster of cypress in the vineyards of En-Gadi.

Mt 26.28: For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

“Covenant” or *diatheke* can also mean a disposition of property by a will or an arrangement between two parties; the verbal root *tithemi* (to place) prefaced with the preposition *dia* (through), a placing-through in the literal sense.

Ps 104.15. And wine to gladden the heart of man.

Wine gladdens one’s heart, the verb being *samach* connoting a leap for joy.

Dt 32.14: With the finest of the wheat, and of the blood of the grape you drank wine.

“Finest” as applied to wheat derives from the verb *kalah*, to complete, to come to and end.

Lk 2.11: For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

City of David is Jerusalem and applied to Jesus’ birth suggests a connection between the two as kings.

1Cor 3.1-3: (feeding with milk, not solid food).

Heb 5.12: You need milk, not solid food.

The need to be nourished with milk applies to those who are not “spiritual men” or *pneumatikos* but who are *sarkinos*, of the flesh. Compare this milk with food which is “solid,” *stereos* also applied to anything hard or harsh. Paul’s *pressing* on may require milk for nourishment, at least when he starts out, the verb being *dioko* or to pursue as in a hunt.

Phl 3.12: Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Teleioo is the verb for “am perfect” which means to complete or come to the end as a goal.

Eph 4.14: So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

In other words, Paul does not wish to be a child who is both “tossed to and fro” and “carried about,” *kludonizomai* (suggestive of waves) and *periphero* (literally, to bear or carry around, implying rapidly going around a tighter and tighter circle).

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

Eph 1.10: As a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

“Fulness” or *pleroma* here applies to “time” or linear time, *chronos* which is not unlike the “plan” or *oikonomia* (literally house + law or custom) with mention of *pleroma* but involving *kairos* for “time,” a special event or intervention.

2Cor 1.21: But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us.

“Establishes and commissioned” or *bebaioo* (connotes maintaining) and *chrrio* (to anoint), both literally “into (*eis*) Christ.”

Rom 8.24: For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope.

The verb *blepo* is used for “seen” with regard to hope, the capacity for sight as opposed to vision in and by itself.

Is 5.1: Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard.

“Love song” or *shyrah* which as in the case at hand, applies to a parable (of the vineyard).

Num 32.1: Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad has a very great multitude of cattle.

“Place” (for cattle) or *maqom* can apply to a habitation or permanent dwelling.

Ps 1.2-3: (happiness in following God’s law).

The first Psalm speaks of “happiness” or delight, *chaphets* which suggests something pursued with ardor.

Is 5.1: (cf. above).

1Cor 3.9: For we are fellow workers for God; you are God’s field, God’s building.

“Fellow workers” or *sunergos* or literally working-with.

2Cor 3.18: And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed in to his likeness from one degree of glory to another.

“Beholding” divine glory or *katoptrizo* which means to show in a mirror, and such mirrors were of

polished metal not giving an exact reflection as with modern ones. Such beholding tinged with a certain golden or silver hue allows change into the divine "likeness" (*eikon* or image compared with *homoiosis* which usually translates as likeness). Note use of the prepositions "from and to" or *apo-eis* (the latter more as into). This reveals the hidden nature of change or *metamorphoo*, literally to change-after, to bring a form (*morphe*) after (*meta*), if you will, or into a new state, and that is an eternal dynamic, not static.

Jn 1.9: The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

"Coming" (*erchomai*) into the world: note present tense or a continuous process. Compared with the Son of God who "has come" or *heko* (also as to be present), past tense. He has given us "understanding" or *dianoia* (also as intent, purpose; *dia* or through prefaced to *nous* or mind).

1Jn 5.20: And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true.

Dianoia is the noun for "understanding" as in the verse above.

Prov 1.3: Receive instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity.

Musar ('instruction') implies some type of chastisement which is to be received...to be taken...not just in and by itself but in *sekel* or "wise dealing." The verbal root *sakal* means to be prudent, to attend to and thus involves careful consideration with regard to *musar*.

2Pt 1.4-8: (exhortation to holiness).

2Cor 3.18: (cf. above).

Ps 128.3: (cf. above).

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

"True" vine (*alethinou*) which implies that other vines exist which are not true; same can apply to the vine dresser.

Jn 6.53-6: (eating the body and blood of Christ).

The verb *trogo* is more suggestive of nibbling or gnawing than outright eating.

Dt 32.43: For he avenges the blood of his servants.

Qum is the verb for "avenge" which essentially means to rise, connoting that the Lord will rise up to effect vengeance.

Rom 15.10: Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.

"Rejoice" or *euphrainomai* where *eu-* is an adverb signifying anything done well. Reference is from Dt 32.43.

The Song of Songs, 1.9-14

I have compared you, my love, to my cavalry facing the chariots of Pharaoh. Why are your cheeks beautiful as those of a turtledove, your neck as small necklaces? We will make for you figures of gold with studs of silver. While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its scent. My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh; he shall lie between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of cypress in the vineyards of En-Gadi.

J.70 & M.808 What we have considered in the opening verses of the Song of Songs may be compared to the sun's beams at dawn just after night has passed. They are not the pure light but a prelude to the light. These beams signify for us the rising of the true light, but they are not the sun's rays which clearly shine forth. In the Song's opening words the bride, the bridegroom's friends, and the maidens speak. But now the voice of the bridegroom himself rises like the sun, and by the J.71 brilliance of its beams it renders invisible the light of the stars and the breaking dawn. This signifies cleansing and purification by which souls are purified and prepared to receive God. The present text of the Song, however, is a participation in the divinity itself since God's own Word and great power enables a reader to share this Word. This is similar to Israel M.809 at Mt. Sinai which was prepared during two days of purgation and became worthy of a theophany at the dawn of a third day. No longer occupied with washing garments, Israel received God himself for whose sake the people washed off their own filth by ablutions. Thus the interpretation of the Song's prologue according to the two preceding days had the benefit of washing and purifying from preceding days had the benefit of washing and purifying from the flesh's mire our understanding of its words.

God the Word will appear to the purified (soul) today, the third day, which follows the first and second day. He makes his presence known not in darkness, the whirlwind, the sound of the trumpet J.72 or in terrible fire

which burns all around the mountain from the base to its peak, but he changed that earlier fearful appearance to one of conjugal joy which is both sweet and accessible. When the bride asked to learn the place of rest where the Good Shepherd passes his time so that she might no longer suffer anything unwillingly through ignorance, the bridegroom's friends then explained the sure norm of truth: the soul must watch over herself and know herself (It is said that ignorance of oneself is the beginning and consequence of never having known anything of the things which one ought to know. How could anyone obtain knowledge while he is ignorant of himself?). Once the governing part of the soul has been cleansed, the Word rises like the sun for her who desires him and exhorts her to greater perfection by receiving what is already present, for praise of J.73 deeds rightly done instills a keener desire for the Good.

What, therefore, does the true Word say to the virgin? He says: "I have compared you, my beloved, to my cavalry facing the chariots of Pharaoh." Since it is not possible to interpret these words according to the literal sense, we must carefully examine the text before us. From the Exodus narrative we learn of another power set in opposition to Pharaoh's cavalry: the cloud, staff, violent wind, the sea divided into two, the depths turned into land dry as the dust, the waves forming a wall, the abyss changed into dry land in the midst of the walls of water. By all these, salvation came for the entire host of Israelites while Pharaoh's cavalry with its horses and chariots was covered by the waves. Since no cavalry force was set in opposition to the Egyptian army, it is not easy to know to what cavalry against the Egyptian chariots the bride is now compared. For "to my cavalry" he says, "who won victory against the chariots of Pharaoh, cannot be defeated in a naval battle unless a naval power sinks its force; neither would there be defeat in a cavalry J.74 engagement unless some kind of equestrian force was set up in opposition to the Egyptians. Since, then, the cavalry was the M.812 strongest unit of the Egyptian army, the text calls "cavalry" the force invisibly led against it by which the Egyptians were defeated. For they too perceived the Lord fighting against them and cried out to one another, "The Lord makes war on the Egyptians," and "Let us flee from before the face of the Lord." It is clear that the true commander armed his own forces in a way appropriate to the enemy force. Therefore an invisible power destroyed the Egyptian through the miracles in the sea, and this power is named "cavalry" by the text. We assume this cavalry was the angelic host of which the prophet says "You mounted your horses, and your cavalry is salvation." David also mentions a chariot of God saying "The chariots of God are ten thousand fold" to which are yoked the ten thousands of the upright. Further, the power which took up Elijah and removed him from the earth to the ethereal region is named a horse by Scripture. The text calls the prophet the chariot of Israel J.75 and its horseman. Also, Zachariah the prophet called "horsemen" those who went around the whole world and saw that it is at peace. They spoke to the man standing in the "midst of the two mountains.." Thus the one who possesses the universe has a "cavalry" which at one time lifts up the prophet, and at another time it establishes the inhabited world while at another time it is yoked to a chariot. At another time the cavalry receives God mounted upon it for man's salvation, and at another it destroys the Egyptian army. Therefore there are a great number of different ways in which the divine cavalry works. The cavalry which drew the soul to God through the "course of virtue" is compared to the one which destroyed the Egyptian power. For thus the Word says to his bride, "I have compared you, my love, to my cavalry facing the chariots of Pharaoh."

The Song contains many praises, and the comparison to that cavalry is, as it were, a catalogue of praises. The following elements are recalled of Israel during its sojourn among the Egyptians: servitude, chaff, clay, bricks, every occupation related to the soil, those who demanded a daily quota of bricks, the changing of water into blood, light becoming J.76 dark, frogs which crept into houses, the burning dust which caused swelling blisters, every type of misfortune such as the locust, fleas, rain, hail and the calamity which befell the first born. All these and similar examples of the way in which salvation comes for the Israelites are the basis of praise for the soul joined to God. The soul would not have been compared to that power which destroyed the wicked Egyptians and freed Israel from evil tyranny unless all these events had succeeded, both those which destroyed Egypt and those which prepared the journey to God for the people led to the land of promise from the slimy mud of Egypt.

M.813 Since, as the divine apostle says], everything was written for our instruction, the Word gives us counsel through his words addressed to the bride, namely, that we must also receive the Word mounted upon us as upon a horse to conquer the Egyptian cavalry with their chariots and mounts, to drown their whole evil power in the water and to become like that power leaving behind in the water the opposing army much like a stain.

J.77 In order that we may better comprehend the Song's words, consider this. A person cannot be compared to the cavalry through which the Egyptian chariots were sunk in the deep unless he has been liberated from servitude to the enemy through the mystical waters. He must leave behind every thought of Egypt, every evil and sin in the water. He must emerge cleansed, bringing to his new life no trace of the Egyptian conscience. For the person who has been thoroughly cleansed of all Egyptian plagues--blood, frogs, boils, darkness, locusts, fleas, hail, fire from the sky, and the other afflictions which the narrative relates--is worthy of being compared to that power on which the Word is mounted. We are not entirely ignorant of what is signified by the plagues such as the blood, the odor of frogs, the changing of light into darkness and so forth. Who is not ignorant of that life which turns into blood? It was previously water fit for drinking and has now been polluted. Also who does not know the means by which the foul stench of frogs is propagated in one's own house, or how a luminous life is changed into one fond of night and its shadows? Because of such a wicked life, Gehenna's furnace makes the wicked boils of damnation seethe. Each one of the evils which befell the Egyptians can easily be transformed into something instructive and a means of restraint formed into something instructive and a means of restraint J.78 long time on matters on which we all agree. Once we have overcome such things as these and have drawn near to God, we too will surely hear the words "To my cavalry facing the we too will surely hear the words "To my cavalry facing the chariots of Pharaoh I have compared you, my beloved."

Perhaps this comparison to cavalry-horses distresses persons who have led a temperate and disciplined life. Many prophets forbid us to compare ourselves to horses as when Jeremiah uses horses for a symbol of adulterous frenzy: "They became as adulterous horses: each one neighed after his neighbor's wife." Likewise, the great David said it was a terrible thing to be like a horse and mule, and he exhorts us to restrain the jaws of such animals with bridle and bit. For this reason the author of the Song takes a mitigating tone in the next verse, saying in effect, "Even if you are a horse, your jaws do not need bridle and hit for constraint. Your cheeks are made beautiful by the purity of M.816 turtledoves. For he says: "Why are your cheeks beautiful, J.79 like those of a beautiful turtledove?" Persons endowed with keen observation claim that this bird remains alone if it is separated from its mate and never takes another as if chastity were naturally exercised in its life. For this reason the turtledove was included by the Word in his enigmatic praise. In place of a bridle for the jaw of the divine horse, we have cheeks compared to a dove. They signify that a life of purity befits such a horse. The Word admiringly says to his spouse: "Why are your cheeks beautiful, like those of a dove?"

He also adds another praise by making a comparison. "Your neck is as small necklaces." After using figurative language pertaining to horses, the bridegroom intends these words as praise for his bride. He praises her neck which is curved as praise for his bride. He praises her neck which is curved horses. The mention of small necklace indicates a circle whose form upon the neck makes the young horses more beautiful to behold. The word "chain" (*hormos*), on the other hand, properly refers to places near the seashore where the shore is bent inward in a crescent shape. It receives the sea into its bosom and affords a resting place for those who sail in from the open sea. Because of its shape, the neck adornment is metaphorically J.80 called a *hormos*. When the diminutive form *hormiskos* is used in place of *hormos*, we are shown the similarity of shape in miniature. Therefore, the comparison of the bride's neck to small chains constitutes high praise for the bride. First of all, a young horse, by bending its neck into the form of a circle, pays attention to its own footsteps so that it runs safely. It does not strike its hoof against a stone nor falls into a hole. (This is no small praise for a soul which is attentive and hastens without falling on the divine course, leaping over and transcending every impediment of temptation in its way.) The original sense of the word *hormos*, due to its similar form as a decoration for the neck, is called *hormiskos* and implies truly great praise when the neck is compared to necklaces. And what are the praises which scripture reveals to us by this term? A harbor is a welcome safe refuge for sailors and a calm haven after their sufferings at sea. Here they forget the sea's evils while they recuperate and find relief from their long labors. J.81 There is no fear of shipwreck, nor anxiety about the ocean's deep, nor danger of pirates, nor tumults of the wind, nor the sea swelling up from the deep because of the wind. Those who were tempest-tossed are now far from all such dangers in the haven of calm water. If anyone should dispose his soul so as to keep it quiet and undisturbed in a waveless calm not M.817 tossed about by the winds of vice, or swelled up through haughtiness, or foaming with waves of anger, or tossed about by any waves of passion, or borne about by every wind which raises the many waves of passion--if the soul is thus disposed, and if he calms those who are storm-tossed on the sea of life with all its huge waves of evil and spreads out for them the smooth, calm

life of virtue so that they may enter it and escape the dangers of shipwreck, then he is aptly compared by the Word to "small necklaces" since the plural signifies perfection of virtue in every form. If the bride were compared to only J.82 one necklace, her praise would not be complete since it would not include the other virtues. As it is, the comparison to a number of necklaces bears witness to the fact that she is being praised for all the virtues. And this is a counsel prescribed by the text for the entire Church. We are not to regard just one of the virtues while neglecting other right actions. If you have the necklace of temperance adorning your neck with a pure life as with pearls, then you should also have another necklace: eagerness for virtue contains stones of the divine precepts and multiplies the beauty of your neck. You should also have another adornment for your neck: piety and sound faith. This is the golden collar made from the pure gold of the knowledge of God which shines all around your neck. The Book of Proverbs says, "You would receive for your head a crown of graces, and a chain of gold around your neck."

Thus the bride's small necklaces yield us abundant fruit for thought. It is time now to contemplate the words which J.83 the bridegroom's friends say to the virgin: "We will make for you figures of gold with studs of silver while the king was at table." If one looks at these words in the context of the interpretation given above, the intention seems to be in harmony with it. However, the literal meaning is deeply embedded in symbols and is difficult to interpret. Since the soul's beauty was compared to the cavalry (that is, the angelic army) which destroyed the Egyptian chariots, and the noble rider calls his horse's reins "purity" by the comparison to a dove's cheeks, and the ornament about the bride's neck is composed of various chains resplendent with the virtues, the bridegroom's friends wish to add to the horse's beauty. They do this by decorating its cheek-pieces with golden bosses engraved with the purity of silver. In this way the ornament's beauty will shine all the more, since the brightness of silver will be combined with the glitter of gold.

J.84 We must leave behind these figurative meanings yet not M.820 omit any meaning which may be helpful. The soul purified through the virtues was compared to cavalry. However, it has not yet become subject to the Word; neither does it bear upon itself him who is borne upon horses for the purpose of bringing salvation. It is first necessary for the horse to be fully adorned and then to receive the king. Whether the king conforms the horse to himself--he who, according to the prophet, ascends upon us horses and rides upon us for the purpose of achieving our salvation]--or whether he is the one dwelling in us and walking about with us and penetrating our soul's depths, it makes no difference for the meaning. For however unity is achieved from both elements, any defect is brought to perfection. Whoever has God on himself indeed has him within himself, and he who has received him in himself transcends what he had formerly been. The king, therefore, is about to rest upon this horse. In the divine power, as was said, a seat and couch for reclining have the same meaning. Whichever of the two is J.85 present in us, God's grace is the same. The king's attendants prepare the horse for his mounting by adorning it, since in God's eyes, being in someone and on someone are the same. Leaving aside the order of the figurative sense, we see that those who prepare and attend to the horse have now made it a couch. We must, as the text says, make likenesses of gold with studs of silver to beautify the horse's form in order that the king might not rest on a seat but on a couch.

As scripture shows, the text has this meaning just described. We should not proceed without considering why the king does not use gold as his ornament but images of gold; and not silver, but studs impressed from this material in the likeness of silver. We understand this as follows: every teaching concerning the ineffable nature of God, even if it seems to reveal the best and highest possible understanding, is the likeness of gold, not gold itself, for the good transcending the human mind cannot be accurately presented. Even J.86 if someone like St. Paul was initiated into the ineffable mysteries of paradise and heard words not to be spoken, any understanding of God remains unutterable. Paul himself says that such conceptions are ineffable. Those persons, therefore, who offer us any good thoughts about these mysteries, are unable to state anything regarding the divine nature. Rather, they speak of the splendor of God's glory, the stamp of his nature, the form of God, the Word in the beginning, the Word being God. All these expressions seem to us who have not seen the divine nature as gold from that treasure. But for those capable looking on the truth, they are likenesses of gold and not gold shining in the delicate studs of silver. Silver is the meaning of these words as scripture says: "The tongue of the just is fire-tried silver."

The revelation presented here says that the divine nature M.821 transcends every conception which tries to

grasp it. Our understanding of the divine nature resembles what we seek. It does not show its form which no one has seen or can see, but through a mirror and a riddle it provides a reflection of the thing sought, that is, a reflection present in J.87 the soul by a certain likeness. Every word signifying these conceptions is like a point lacking extension (*stigma*) since it cannot show what is present in the mind. Thus every thought of ours falls short of the comprehension of God. Every word which tries to explain God seems to be a little dot (*stigma*) incapable of being coextensive with the breadth of the conception. Thus the soul led through such conceptions to comprehend what cannot be laid hold of except by faith must establish in itself a nature transcending every intelligence. This is what the bridegroom's friends say: "Let us make for you, oh soul, who are compared to a horse, certain images and likenesses of truth (for this is why they mention silver: their words are like sparks that glisten and cannot accurately show the deeper meaning)." Once you have received these words, you will become submissive and be a dwelling place through faith for the one about to recline and dwell in you. You will be both his throne and dwelling place. Perhaps St. Paul himself or someone like him could be worthy of such words. For J.88 once Paul became a "vessel of election," he no longer lived his own life, but showed Christ living in him and gave proof of Christ speaking in himself. Thus he was a house containing that nature which cannot be contained.

These graces the bridegroom's friends bestow upon the pure, virginal soul (such friends are ministering spirits in service of those about to inherit salvation). The bride is made more perfect by the addition of these graces. As she draws nearer to the object of her desire, before her spouse's beauty appears, with the sense of smell she touches the one she seeks. She recognizes his color by the faculty of scent and says that she has perceived his odor by the fragrance of her perfume which is called "nard." She uses this term when speaking to her friends: "My nard gave forth its scent." You, she J.89 says, do not give the pure gold of divinity but gold's likeness through concepts accessible to us and do not reveal anything of him except by a sign. However, you provide some reflection of the one I seek through your allusion to " studs of rational silver." So too I have received his good odor through M.824 the fragrance of my nard by means of sense perception. To me these words seem to have the following meaning: there are many diverse perfumes and their fragrances differ from one another, but a careful mixture creates a special perfume. One fragrant herb called nard gives its name to the whole mixture. Many aromatic properties contribute to one, good odor of the bridegroom which the purified sense receives.

We think that the Word teaches us here about his essence underlying the order and structure of creation: it is inaccessible, intangible and incomprehensible. Instead of the Word we have in us this compounded fragrance from the perfection of the virtues. It imitates by its own purity that which by nature is incorruptible; by its goodness it imitates his goodness; by its incorruptibility, his incorruptibility; by its immutability, his immutability; and by everything in us effected J.90 through virtue, his true virtue which contains all the heavens according to the prophet Habakkuk. Therefore, when the bride says to her spouse's friends "My nard gave forth its scent," she is clearly teaching us a lesson. If a person should gather the aroma of every sweet flower from the various meadows of virtue and make his life fragrant through the good odor of his conduct and thus become perfect in every way, such a person would not have it in his nature to look steadily upon the Word of God as upon the sun; rather he sees it within himself as in a mirror. For the rays of that true, divine virtue shine forth in a pure life by the out-flow of detachment (*apatheia*) and make the invisible visible to us and the inaccessible comprehensible by depicting the sun in the mirror of our souls. It makes no difference for our understanding of the text whether we speak of the sun's rays, the outpouring of virtue or the good scent of fragrances. Whichever J.91 expression we take, one idea is common to all, namely, that from the virtues we obtain knowledge of the good which transcends all understanding just as the beauty of an archetype can be inferred from its image. Thus Paul the bride imitated the bridegroom by his virtues and depicted by his fragrance the unapproachable beauty. From the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace and the like, he made his perfume and claimed to be the "good odor of Christ." Paul inhaled that inaccessible, transcendent grace and gave himself to others as incense to take according to their ability; according to each person's disposition, Paul became a fragrance bringing either life or death.

If the same perfume is put before a beetle and a dove, it will not have the same effect on both: the dove becomes M.825 stronger by inhaling it while the beetle dies. Thus it was with that divine incense, the great Paul, who resembled the dove. Titus, Silvanus and Timothy all partook of the fragrance of J.92 Paul's perfume and progressed in every deed with Paul as their example. On the other hand, if a person was like Demas, or

Alexander, or Hermogenes and did not bear the incense of temperance, he was banished like the beetle by the perfume's good fragrance. Because of this, Paul, being fragrant with such perfumes, said that "We are the good odor of Christ in those who are saved, and in those who perish; the scent of death to those who are to die, and the scent of life to those who are to live."

If the nard of the Gospel has any relationship to the bride's perfume, we may consider that precious, "genuine nard" poured on the Lord's head which filled the entire house with its good odor. In all likelihood this perfume did not differ from the perfume which gave the bride the scent of her spouse. In the Gospel, the pouring of the ointment on our Lord's head fills the house with a good odor in which the banquet was held. The woman with her perfume seems to prophetically foretell the mystery of Christ's death. The Lord testifies to her action by saying, "She has come beforehand to bury me." And the house filled with the fragrance, represents the entire universe, the whole world: J.93 "Wherever this gospel will be preached in the entire world," the fragrance of her deed will be diffused with the preaching of the gospel, and the Gospel will be a "remembrance of her." Since in the context of the Song of Songs, nard brings the odor of the bridegroom to his bride, and in Gospel the good odor of Christ which fills the house becomes the anointing of the whole body of the Church in all the universe and the whole world, perhaps one may find a connection between the two passages.

So much for this point. What now follows seems appropriate for the nuptial theme, that is, a bride preparing herself in her bridal chamber. However, the text contains a better teaching available only for those who are already perfect. What, therefore, does the text say? "My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh; he shall lie between my breasts." It is said that women fuss over their ornaments to be recognized as lovely by their companions, but they also take care that J.94 their bodies appear attractive with sweet smelling perfumes for their husbands. Thus they hide perfume in the folds of their dresses so that while it gives forth its own scent, the M.828 body also shares in the perfume's fragrance. Keeping in mind such customs used by women, what does the noble virgin dare to say? I have a "sachet of myrrh" suspended from my neck upon my breast giving my body a lovely fragrance. But it is not any perfume. Rather, the Lord himself has become the myrrh lying in the "sachet of my conscience" and dwelling in my heart.

Experts say that the location of the heart lies between the two breasts. Here is where the bride says that she has the sachet in which her treasure is kept. Also, the heart is said to be a source of warmth from which the body's heat is distributed through the arteries. The body's members are thereby heated, animated and nourished by the heart's fire. Therefore the bride has received the good odor of Christ in the governing part of the soul and has made her own heart a kind J.95 of sachet for such incense. And so she makes all her actions, like parts of the body, seethe with the breath from her heart so that no iniquity can cool her love for God in any member of her body.

Let us now examine the next verse. Let us hear what the flourishing vine says about its fruits, the vine located at the sides of God's house which, as the prophet says is stretched out. A divine, pure life entwines it by the tendrils of love. "My love is to me a cluster of cypress in the vineyard of En-Gadi." Who, then, is so blessed? Rather, who is so superior to all blessedness, that when looking at his own fruit, he sees in the cluster of his own soul the Lord of the vineyard? Observe how much the bride has grown when in her own nard she recognizes the good fragrance of her spouse. She has made of him sweet myrrh and received this perfume in the sachet of her heart, that its goodness may always remain with her and never escape. Thus the bride has become the mother of the divine cluster of grapes which blossomed, that is, which flourished before the Lord's passion while during his passion it poured out wine. The wine that gladdens the heart J.96 is called the blood of the grape after the Passion. We may enjoy a cluster of grapes in two ways: by its blossom, which gladdens our senses, by its good odor, and by the ripeness of its fruit when enjoyed by eating or by enlivening banquets with wine. In the context of the Song, the bride gathers the still flowering cluster and calls the vine's first shoots a cypress.

The child Jesus born within us advances by different ways in those who receive him in wisdom, in age and in grace. He is not the same in every person but is present according to the measure of the person receiving him. He shows himself according to each one's capacity. He comes either as an infant, or a child advancing in age or as one fully grown after the example of the cluster. Christ is never seen M.829 with the same form upon the

vine, but he changes his form with time-now budding, now blossoming, now mature, now ripe and finally as wine. Thus the vine holds out a promise with its fruit. It is not yet ripe for wine, but it awaits maturity. J.97 Meanwhile it does not lack any delight, for it gladdens our sense of smell instead of our taste with its expectation of the future; by its fragrance of hope it sweetens the soul's senses. A faith firm in a grace we hope for becomes a delight for us who wait in patience.

Thus the "cluster of cypress" promises wine. It is not yet wine, but by its blossom-the blossom is hope-it waits for a grace yet to come. The additional mention of En-Gadi signifies a green spot where the vine takes root and produces healthy, sweet fruit. Those familiar with geography say that the land of Gadi is well suited for tending grapes. The person who has his will in harmony with God's law and cares for it day and night becomes a flourishing tree fed by streams of water, yielding its fruit in due season J.98. Thus, too, the bridegroom's vine is rooted in Gadi, a fertile place, that is, in the depths of a mind watered by the divine teaching, and it bears that blossoming, fruitful cluster in which one can observe its vinedresser and husbandman.

How happy is that orchard whose fruit resembles the bridegroom's beauty! For he is the true light, true life, and true righteousness and all the rest, as Wisdom says. When a person becomes these qualities by good works, he looks into the cluster of his own conscience and sees the bridegroom there and mirrors the light of truth by his own pure life. Therefore the flourishing vine says, my cluster blossoms with flowers. It is the true cluster who manifested himself raised upon a cross of wood and whose blood is drink J.99 and salvation for persons who are saved and rejoice in him. To him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

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