

The Eighth Homily

2Cor 12.1-4: (ecstasy of Paul).

Harpazo ('caught up') connotes something done in haste and almost secretly. Note that Paul speaks of himself objectively, as though another man was snatched away.

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.

Epekteino or "straining forward" consists of the root *teino* (to stretch forward) prefaced with the preposition *epék* which is comprised of *epi* and *ex* (upon and from).

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

Katharos means "pure" and suggests having been cleared of something. This same verse is repeated a few lines below.

Ps 145.5: On the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works I will meditate.

Syach is the verb for "meditate" which means to bring forth, to speak.

Ps 84.7: They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

Chyl is the noun for "strength" and can apply to ability and integrity. Seeing God in Zion may be taken as done in degrees of this *chyl*; i.e., not all at once.

Ps 92.8: But you, O Lord, are on high forever.

"On high" and "forever" (next verse) suggest that the human *chyl* of the previous verse never can attain God but approach him continuously.

Ps 102.12: But you, O Lord, are enthroned forever.

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

The first part is taken from Is 64.4. "Conceived" is rendered as *anabaino* (to go up) with regard to *epi kardian* or literally "upon the heart" (of man).

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

Sg 4.8: Come from Lebanon, my bride, come from Lebanon. You will come and pass from the summit of faith, from the top of Sanir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of the leopard.

With regard to Lebanon, it was here cedars came for construction of the Temple in Jerusalem; also refer to Sg 2.9, the chariot which King Solomon made from Lebanon cedars. Although the means of transportation are not mentioned, this chariot could refer to how the two spouses departed from Lebanon. Furthermore, the destination to which they are going is not mentioned; perhaps it is, like the cedars Solomon bought from King Hiram, the Temple at Jerusalem.

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

Pros is the preposition for "to"), indicative of direction towards-which.

1Pt 2.3: For you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

A citation of Ps 34.8 with emphasis upon the sense of taste regarding divine *chrestos*, an adjective meaning that which is fit, useful or good.

Sg 2.10 & 13: Come, my companion...Come my dove.

Sg 2.14: Bring yourself to the cleft of the rock.

This and the previous verse references to the Song have to do with the divine bridegroom summoning his human spouse.

Sg 4.7: You are all fair, my companion, and there is no spot in you.

Mum or "spot" is a defect of blemish and can have liturgical implications as with cleansing, etc.

Rom 6.4: We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death.

The preposition *dia* (through) is used with baptism or literally "through baptism."

Sg 4.8: Come with me from Lebanon, my bride.

Lebanon is the source of the cedars for building King Solomon's temple.

Ps 10.9: He lurks in secret like a lion in his covert.

Arav is the verb for "lurks" and connotes laying in ambush.

Ps 115.8: Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them.

Batach is the verb for "trust" connotes being secure, of being confident.

Gen 1.3-24: (Creation of the world).

The creation is put in terms of six days or more accurately as “day one, day two” and so forth which gives a different picture of them than temporal succession or twenty-four hour intervals.
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.

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.

Sg 4.9: You have given us heart, our sister, our spouse.

Lavav is the verb for “given (us) heart” and used with the plural “us” whereas the Hebrew has the singular “me.”

Eph 3.10-2: Principalities and powers.

The words for these two terms are *arche* and *exousia*. The first suggests a beginning as first principle and the second, power in the sense of having authority.

Jn 1.14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Skenoo: “dwelt” or literally, to dwell in a tent.

1Pt 2.24: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

This verse is built upon Is 53.4. *Apogignomai* as “might die” literally reads as to get away from.

Mt 20.28: Even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Psuche or “life” usually translates as soul.

Is 53.12: Because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

Harah is the verb for “poured out” and suggests a becoming naked or exposed.

In 1.18: No one has ever seen God.

No person can “ever” see God, *popote* which conveys a sense of absoluteness with regard to the faculty of sight.

1Tm 6.16: Who along has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see.

Here light is “unapproachable” or *aprositos*; from the verb *prosienai* where the directness intimated by the preposition *pros* (direction towards-which) cannot be effected.

Eph 4.12: For the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Katartismos as “equipment” means a strengthening or perfecting used with “work” (ministry) and “building up” (Christ’s body), these two words prefaced with the preposition *eis* (into), suggestive of presence-in, or constant entry, if you will.

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.”

Eph 1.22: And has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church.

Part of this verse is taken from Ps 8.6. *Hupotasso* as “put under” suggests not just obedience but an arranging in a certain order. Note use of “head” in this verse and in the next with regard to the church where the head keeps the newly established *hupotasso* in order.

Col 1.18: He is the head of the body, the church.

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.

Paristemi is the verb for “might present” or literally, to stand-around (*peri*-).

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*).

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

“Healing” or *marpe'* which derives from a verbal root also meaning to droop.

Mt 11.29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.

The taking of Christ’s yoke comes first followed by learning from him, namely, that he is “gentle and lowly” (*praus* and *tapeinos*, the former suggestive of that which is soft.

The Song of Songs, 4.8-15

Come from Lebanon, my bride, come from Lebanon; you will come and pass from the top of Faith, from the top of Sanir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of the leopards. Our sister, our spouse, you have given us heart with one of your eyes, with one, with the chain of your neck. Why have your breasts been made beautiful, my sister, my spouse? Why have your breasts been made more beautiful than wine? Your lips drop honeycomb, my spouse: honey and milk are under your tongue, and the scent of your garments is as the scent of Lebanon. My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed. Your shoots are a garden of pomegranates with the fruit of choice berries: henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the woods of Lebanon, myrrh, aloes, with all the chief spices; a fountain of a garden, a well of living water, springing from Lebanon.

J.245 When the great Apostle Paul gave an account to the M.940 Corinthians of his lofty vision, he doubted his human nature, that is, whether he was in the body or in the spirit. He testifies, "I consider myself not to have reached [the goal], but I stretch forward to what lies in front of me, forgetting what went before me." It is clear that Paul alone knew what laid beyond that third heaven (for Moses himself did not speak of it in his cosmogony). After hearing the unutterable mysteries of paradise, Paul still continued to move higher and did not cease to ascend. He never allowed the good already attained to limit his desire. Paul teaches us here, I believe, that the blessed nature of the good is eternally much better J.246 & M.941 than what we have received while what lies beyond our comprehension is always boundless. Something similar will occur to those who partake of the good; they will always have a greater participation in God throughout eternity. According to the true words of the Lord, the pure in heart will see God. They will receive as much as their minds can comprehend. However, the unbounded, incomprehensible divinity remains beyond all understanding. God's exceedingly great glory is endless as the prophet testifies. God always remains the same as we contemplate Him in his loftiness. Similarly, the great David placed in his heart those wonderful ascents. He always proceeded from strength to strength and exclaimed to God, "You are the Most High forever, Lord." To me this signifies that in all the endless ages of eternity the person running to you becomes greater and more highly exalted, always growing in proportion to his ascent through the good. You are the Most High forever, never appearing smaller to those who approach you; you are always higher and loftier than the capacity of J.247 those who are rising.

We learn about the ineffable nature of the good from the Apostle. He says that the eye has not seen that good even though it sees it (for the eye does not completely see the good as it is but only as it receives the good). The ear as well does not completely hear the Word but according to its manifestation even though the ear always listens to it. Also, the Word does not enter the heart of man even if the pure in heart always see it. Although the stage attained is indeed greater than what a person had earlier, this stage does not limit his good; rather, the limit of his achievement becomes a beginning for the discovery of higher blessings. The person rising never stands still. He moves from one beginning to another, for the beginning of even greater blessings is never limited. The desire of a soul thus rising never remains in its knowledge, but by an ever greater desire, it moves onwards. The soul thus progresses through higher realms towards the unbounded.

Having explained these matters, we must now apply J.248 ourselves to the contemplation [of the Song's] divine words: "Come from Lebanon, my bride, come from Lebanon. You will come and pass from the summit of faith, from the top of Sanir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of the leopards." What can these words teach us? The fountain of grace continually draws to itself those who are thirsty. As the Fountain himself says in the Gospel, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and let him drink." By these words [Christ] set no limit on our thirst, nor on our movement towards him nor on the M.944 satisfaction of our drinking, but by extending his command indefinitely in time, he exhorts us to thirst, drink and to move towards him. To those, however, who have already tasted and have learned by experience that the Lord is good, the faculty of taste becomes a kind of incitement to further progress. Therefore, a person always moving towards God never lacks this incitement towards greater progress. Let us recall the often used exhortation of the Word to his bride in J.249 the words already expressed: "Come, my companion," and again, "Come, my dove," and "Bring yourself to the cleft of the rock." The Word uses such exhortations and attractive words to excite the soul for higher things. He now testifies to the purity of the soul rising to him: "You are all fair, my companion, and

there is no spot in you." That the soul may not become proud by this testimony and that her ascent on high might not be hindered, the bridegroom again exhorts her to stir up her desire for the transcendent: "Come, from Lebanon, my bride." That is, you have done well by following me up to this point. You have come with me to the mountain of myrrh (You were buried with me through baptism into death) and went up with me to the hill of frankincense (For you have risen with me and ascended in the fellowship of my divinity signified by the term "frankincense"--*libanos*). Ascend with me from these peaks to others, advancing higher by effective knowledge (*dia tes energous gnoseos*). Therefore, the bridegroom says, "Come from Lebanon," no longer as one betrothed, but as a bride. No one is able to live with me unless he has been changed by the death of myrrh into the divinity of frankincense. Since J.250 you have already attained this height, do not cease to rise as if you have already attained perfection. Frankincense is the beginning of faith which you have shared by the resurrection; it is but the beginning of progress to loftier goods. From this beginning which is faith, "you will go and pass on," that is, you will arrive while not always ceasing to pass on continuing to rise.

The Song now says, "You will come and pass from the summit of faith, from the top of Sanir and Hermon." These words imply the mystery of our birth from above. It is from here, they claim, that the springs of the Jordan River gush forth, and the mountain situated above is divided into two crests named Sanir and Herman. The river from these springs has become the beginning of our transformation into what is divine. For this reason the bride hears her spouse calling to her, "Come from Lebanon and from the beginning of faith, and from the summit" of those mountains from which have risen those mystical springs. The text rightly mentions "lions" and "leopards." By adding these destructive beasts, the bride makes the enjoyment of pleasant things even J.251 sweeter. Although man was once made in God's image, he M.945 was transformed into an irrational animal, having become a leopard and lion through evil habits. (For the person drawn by a lion lying in wait within its den is snared in its trap, as the prophet says. He is changed into that beast after having been overpowered. "Let those who make them become like them, and all who trust in them." Similarly, a person becomes a leopard by staining his soul with this life's defilements.) At the time when human nature had these (defilements), it was led astray through idolatry, the Jew's error, and various evils of sin. Human nature afterwards passed through the Jordan, myrrh and frankincense and rose to such a height that it now walks with God. For this reason the Word intensifies the gladness of his bride's present happiness by making present former distressing elements which she had before Lebanon, the beginning of faith, and before the mysteries at the Jordan which we have considered. A life of peace is sweeter after war and is made enjoyable by recounting sad times. The boon of health sweetens our body's senses whose nature has been restored after a painful illness. Thus the J.252 bridegroom imparts to the soul ascending to him an intensity in her enjoyment of goodness. Not only does he manifest his own beauty to the bride, but he reminds her of her horrible, beastly forms that she may delight in her present enjoyment by comparing them with her former state.

The bridegroom prepares another grace for his spouse by his foresight. The Word desires us who are changeable by nature not to fall into evil but by constant progress in perfection, we are to use our mutability as an ally in our ascent towards higher things, and by the mutability of our nature we are to establish it immovably in the good. Therefore the J.253 Song, like a teacher or protector from evil, mentions beasts that have been conquered. By turning away from evil, we are to strengthen our immutability in the good. While not ceasing our progress towards the good, we do not fall into evil. Thus the bridegroom summons his spouse to come from Lebanon and reminds her of the "lions' dens" where she passed her time in association with these beasts.

The Word's voice is always one of power. As light shone at the creation by his command, and as the firmament was constituted at his bidding, the rest of creation appeared by his creative Word. In the same way, when the M.948 Word bids the soul that has advanced to approach him, it is immediately strengthened at his command and becomes what he wishes, that is, changed into something divine; and from the glory which the soul had, it is transformed into a loftier glory by a wonderful alteration. The angelic choir around the bridegroom marvels at the bride and exclaims with J.254 admiration, "You have given us heart, our sister, our spouse." For a state free from passion illumines the bride as well as the angels; it gives her kinship and sisterhood with the spiritual powers. Therefore they say to her, "You have given us heart, our sister, our spouse."

The bride is rightly honored by the other term "sister." She is our sister because she lacks passion and a bride

because she is united with the Word. We understand the words "You have given us heart" as "you have given us life;" it is as though the angels said to her, "You have given us heart." We shall leave it to the divine Apostle to explain these mysteries. He says somewhere in writing to the Ephesians when he explains God's great concern for us by his manifestation in the flesh, that not only was human nature instructed by grace in the divine mysteries, but that God's manifold wisdom was also made known to principalities and powers in the heavens by his concern for mankind in Christ. The text runs: "in order J.255 that the manifold wisdom of God might now be known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places through the Church according to the eternal purpose which God made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have freedom of speech and access in confidence through faith in him."

Through the Church, God's manifold wisdom was made known to the transcendent powers since it effects great wonders by means of contrary elements. How can life come through death, justification through sin, blessing through a curse, glory through disgrace and strength through weakness? In previous ages the transcendent powers knew only the simple, uniform working of God's wisdom which effected wonders (There was no vanity in what they beheld; by its own power the divine nature made all creation, bringing created beings into existence by one impulse of the will; it made all things exceedingly beautiful as they welled up from the fountain of divine beauty). On the other hand, the manifold quality of wisdom which arose from a union of opposites is now clearly manifested through the Church: the Word becomes flesh, life is mixed with death, by his own bruises Christ M.949 heals our wound, brings down the adversary's power by the J.256 weakness of the cross, the invisible is manifested in flesh and Christ redeems captives. He himself is the One who purchases and has become the price itself (for he gave himself as a ransom for us into death). Christ is in death; life does not depart from him, and he becomes a slave yet remains a king. All these and similar examples are manifold works of wisdom. The bridegroom's friends learn through the Church and are "given heart" to understand another aspect of the divine wisdom in mystery. If I may put it more boldly, by contemplating the bridegroom's beauty in his spouse, they are marveling at his invisible, incomprehensible presence in all creatures. "No one has ever seen God," as John says, nor as Paul testifies, can anyone see him. He has made the Church his own body and by those who have been saved, God builds it up in love until we all reach the perfect man in the "measure of the age of the fullness of Christ." If the Church is Christ's body with Christ as its head, he forms its countenance with his own features. Possibly the bridegroom's friends saw this and were "given heart" because they looked more closely at that which is invisible. J.257 In the same way, one cannot look at the sun but must behold its brightness in water. Thus persons looking into the Church's face as if it were a clean mirror see the Sun of Righteousness who is comprehended by that which is visible.

Not only do the bride's friends say to her once "You have given us heart" (that is, you put in us a soul and mind to comprehend the light in you), but they repeat this a second time and add credibility to their words: "You have given us heart with one of your eyes." This especially filled the bride's friends with admiration, for the soul has two faculties of vision: one sees the truth while the other is deceived by vain things. Since the bride's purified eye is opened only for the J.258 good, her other faculty does not function. Because of this, the bride's friends attribute praise to one of her eyes, the one by which she sees him alone. By the term "alone" I mean he who is comprehended in his immutable and eternal nature, the true Father, the only-begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is truly alone, contemplated in one nature, with no separation or division according to the difference of persons. Persons whose eyes are at variance have very poor vision regarding non-existent things; they divide the One nature into many disparate natures by appearances arising from their own distorted vision. They are said to see much, and by seeing M.952 so much, they see nothing. Some now look upon God and are deceived by material phantasms lacking substance; they are unworthy of the angels' praise because they are idly occupied with insubstantial fantasies. On the other hand, the person who beholds God alone is blind with respect to everything else. Because of this, the bride makes her friends marvel at one of her eyes. The person with many eyes is blind, using all of them to look at vain things; while he who looks only to the good by the soul's eye has sharp, penetrating vision.

That "one" ornament around the bride's neck will not be J.259 difficult to understand even if the context is obscure: "You have given us heart with one of your eyes, with one, with the chain of your neck." "With one" is similar to "with one of your eyes," assuming by this "with one soul." The uninstructed have many souls. Their strong passions usurp the soul's place, and its character is changed to grief and pleasure, courage and fear,

cowardice and boldness. On the other hand, the person looking towards the Word has one soul because of its uniformity in a virtuous life. We must make a distinction in the text, taking the words "with one" joined to what preceded it and now understand it to read "in one soul" or in one condition of life.

Another idea follows in the words, "with a chain of your neck." Changing this to obtain a clearer picture we J.260 get, "You have one eye for looking at the One, and one soul because you are not divided according to different affections. And the position of your neck is perfect, for it hears the divine yoke. We see the yoke of Christ upon your neck, and the one eye and one soul are your disposition for the true good." Because of this we confess that "you have given us heart" with these wonders, showing one eye, one soul and the chain of your neck. (The bride's yoke is the chain as we have already stated.)

We have understood the bridegroom's friends as angels who praise the bride. To keep this praise from becoming either false or extravagant, the Word himself confirms the judgment of his friends by expressing his own sentiment. He testifies to his spouse's loveliness by adding greater wonders in the description of her beauty shining in her bodily members. We will return to this later if by God's help, I may receive some J.261 assistance from on high to perceive these mysteries, understand the Church's beauty, and praise the glory of God's grace in Christ Jesus, to whom be all glory forever. Amen.

+

The Ninth Homily

Col 3.1-4: (We appear with Christ in glory).

A key word in these verses is "seek" or *zeteo* which is conditioned by being raised with Christ. The seeking is *ta ano* ('things above'), plural, indicative that the object of this seeking is infinite.

Col 2.13: And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

Another verb with the preface *sun* (with), *suzoopoieo*, or "made alive together."

Eph 2.1: And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins.

The words "you he made alive" are not in the Greek text.

Prov 10.14: Wise men lay up knowledge, but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near.

Tsaphan for "lay up" implies to hide or to conceal knowledge compared with the fool's "babbling" or literally "mouth" causes ruin to approach.

Col 3.1: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

The *ta ano* just noted are to be sought where Christ is seated, that is, not moving, but governing *ta ano*.

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').

Sg 4.10: How beautiful are your breasts, my sister, my spouse! How much more beautiful are your breasts than wine, and the scent of your ointments than all spices!

Dod or "breasts" mean love or a friend.

Mk 3.35: Whoever does the will of God is my brother, sister, and mother.

Jesus gives not specifics as to doing this divine will but gives three close relationships that will develop, a kind of incentive for each person to pursue this.

2Cor 11.2: For I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.

Paristemi is the verb for "present" meaning a standing beside or nearby (*para-*).

1Cor 3.2: I fed you 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.

1Ths 2.7: But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children.

Trophos as “nurse” means one who nourishes.

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

The word “face” is used for “heart” in the Hebrew text, the verb being *tsahal* or to shine.

Sg 1.2-3: Your breasts are better than wine, and the scent of your ointments is better than all spices.

Ps 118.1-4: (God's goodness to his creation).

“Steadfast love” occurs in two of these verses, *chesed*, generally considered untranslatable.

Hos 13.7: So I will be to them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk beside the way.

“Lion and leopard” or *shachal* and *namer*, both of which “lurk” or *shur*, to look round about.

Mt 25.34-46: (Christ judges between good and bad sheep).

Both the sheep and goats question Jesus as to when they had seen him in distress under the guise of people with whom he identified himself. Surprisingly, the sheep carried out good works while not knowing about this identity.

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

“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).

Prov 9.5: Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

The verb for “eat” (*lacham*) is the verbal root for “bread” (*lechem*).

Sg 4.10: (cf. above).

Gen 8.21: And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man."

The verb “smelled” (*ruach*) is the root for “odor” (*reyach*) as well as for breath, spirit.

Lev 6.7-9: (Burnt offerings to God).

These verses pertain to the burnt offering Aaron and his sons are to make, reminiscent of Noah's sacrifice of the previous verse.

1Cor 10.6: Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did.

Tupos is the noun for “warnings” or types.

Heb 10.1: For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near.

The law (Torah) as shadow is a *tupos* as in the previous verse and stands in contrast to the “true form” or *eikon* (image) used with the noun *pragma* (things; often as applied to business matters).

2Cor 3.15: Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds.

Anagnosko is the verb for “read” and means literally to know again (*ana-*), to recognize. *Kardia* is the noun for “minds,” more often as “heart.”

Ex 29.18: And burn the whole ram on the altar; it is a burn offering to the Lord; it is a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the Lord.

This and the next two verses pertain to sacrifices, both positive and negative. As for the latter, it is a “pleasing” odor or *reyach* noted several verses above.

Ps 40.9: I will accept no bull from your house, nor he-goat from your folds.

Ps 40.13: Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

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

Literally “in a figure” or *ainigma*, dark saying or riddle.

1Cor 10.11: Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction.

Nouthesia or “instruction” literally means a placing in the mind (*nous*). It is used with the preposition *pros* signifying direction towards-which.

Ps 51.17: A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

“Broken and contrite” or *shavar* and *dakah*. The former suggests being broken into pieces and the latter, crushed.

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.

Ex 30.25: And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer.

Raqach is the verb for “blended” as well as the root for “perfumer” meaning to spice, to season.

Lev 4.18: And he shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is in the tent of meeting before the Lord.

“Shall put some of the blood” reads literally as “from the blood he will give.”

Ex 30.37: And the incense which you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves; it shall be for you holy to the Lord.

Matkoneth is the noun for “composition” which alternately means a measure and hence suggestive of weight.

Prov 22.12: The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge.

Dahath is the noun for “knowledge” which the Lord keeps watch over, *natsar* meaning to defend.

Prov 6.8: She [the ant] prepares her food in summer and gathers her sustenance.

“Sustenance” is the common word for food.

1Cor 12.4: Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Diairesis as “varieties” means division or a dividing which in the next verse, “differ” or *diaphora*, an adjective meaning different or distinguished. The preposition *kata* (according to) with regard to grace suggests an order established by this grace.

Rom 12.6: Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

Lk 6.45: The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Prophero is the verb for “produces” meaning to bring before. *Perisseuma* is the noun for “abundance,” the preposition *peri* suggesting that which is around or surrounding. Such *perisseuma* may be applied to the bride when she is speaking in the next verse.

Sg 4.11: Your lips drop a honeycomb, my spouse; honey and milk are under your tongue.

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

“Spiritual men and men of the flesh:” the adjectives *pneumatikos* and *sarkinos*, the latter as “babes” or *nepios*, literally as not yet speaking.

1Ths 2.7: But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children.

Epios is the adjective for “gentle” as *en meso humon* or literally “in the midst of you.”

1Cor 2.6-8: (Christ as hidden wisdom).

Sg 4.11: The scent of your garments is as the smell of frankincense.

Reyach is the noun for “scent” applied to frankincense or as in both the LXX and Hebrew, Lebanon.

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

Karpos as “fruit” can also apply to interest or profit.

Eph 5.31: For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.

A quote from Gn 2.24. “Leave and joined” or *kataleipo* and *proskallao*, the latter meaning to glue to (*pros-*).

Mk 3.35: Whoever does the will of God is my brother, sister and mother.

Doing God’s will here suggests that Jesus has full knowledge of the person doing it.

Ps 92.13: They are planted in the house of the Lord.

This and the next two verses refer to “house,” the first two suggestive of the temple at Jerusalem.

Ps 52.8: But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.

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

Is 55.13: Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle.

Tachat as “instead of” also means under as in the next verse with regard to vine and fig tree.

Mic 4.4: But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.

Yashav means “shall sit” and is suggestive of a permanent dwelling.

Mt 6.20: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

“Lay up and treasures:” the latter (*thesauros*) is derived from the former (*thesaurizo*).

Ps 80.13: The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it.

Here ravaging and feeding are synonymous, the former being the only instance of this verb in the Bible.

Sg 4.12: You are a garden enclosed, my sister, my spouse, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.

Three verbs meaning to shut up: “enclosed, locked and sealed:” *nahul* (used twice) and *chatum*. The first two suggest being bolted shut and the latter, sealed as a document. The next three verses apply to a fountain and can be read in light of *nahul* and *chatum*.

Prov 5.18: Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Prov 5.17: Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you.

Sg 4.13-5: Your shoots are a garden of pomegranates with the fruit of choice berries;

henna with spikenard; spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all woods of Lebanon: myrrh, aloes, with all the chief spices. A fountain of gardens, and well of living water from Lebanon.

1Cor 14.2: For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

Musterion or “mysteries” suggests being initiated into a rite.

Rom 11.33: O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

Bathos as “depth” applies to deepness of these three qualities belonging to God, that is, as opposed to being on high.

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 in order to perceive it, for the task of this wind is to uncover, the verb’s meaning. This reality, difficult to perceive, is not unlike the way *Pneuma* “searches” or *eraunao* the depths of God.

Eph 5.23: For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Head = husband/wife and head = Christ/church.

Mk 3.35: Whoever does the will of God is my brother, sister, and mother.

Ex 3.8: And I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Coming down pertains to the Lord and bringing up pertains to the Israelites. The Exodus and forty years in Sinai, if you will, pertain to between these two.

Dt 6.3: Hear O Israel and be careful to do them; that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Hearing and being careful (*shamar*) are equivalent. *Davar* (to speak) is the verb for “has promised.”

Gal 3.27: For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Baptism and putting on Christ are equivalent, the former verb (*baptizo*) meaning to dip in the sense to die something. The verb *enduo* (put on) is used here as well as in the next verse.

Rom 13.14: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Ps 84.7: They go from strength to strength. The God of gods will be seen in Zion.

Chyl is the noun for “strength” and can apply to ability and integrity. Seeing God in Zion may be taken as done in degrees of this *chyl*; i.e., not all at once.

Mk 3.14: And as he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, he said to him, “Follow me.”

This and the next verse concern Jesus calling his disciples. “When it was day” suggests very early in the morning after spent in a night of prayer.

Lk 6.13: And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.

Rom 12.11: Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.

Okneros is the adjective for “(never) flag” meaning to shrink back or to hesitate.

Ex 30.23: Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two-hundred and fifty, and of aromatic cane, two-hundred and fifty.

R’osh is a noun for “finest” meaning head of anything.

Job 42.14: And he called the name of the first Jemimah; and the name of the second Keziah; and the name of the third Keren-happuch.

This verse is towards the end of the Book of Job when the Lord restored the fortunes of Job.

1Ths 5.5: For you are all sons of light and sons of the day.

Both light and day are of the same substance, the latter in contrast to the night. In the next verse Paul puts this identity in terms of walking about.

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

Peripateo is the verb for “walk” which literally reads “walk around” (*peri-*).

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

Sumphutos as “united” literally means planted together.

Phl 3.10: That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Knowing and sharing work together to become “like” Jesus but in his death, the verb being *summorphizo*, to share (*sum-* or with) the same form (*morphe*).

Jn 19.39: Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

Reference is to Jn 3.1-2 and 7.50.

Heb 2.9: But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death.

A reference to Phl 2.6-11. *Brachu* as “for a little while” suggests brevity which here intimates the span of a human life time.

Amos 6.6: Who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils.

“Finest” is the noun *re’shyth* which is akin to *r’osh* above (cf. Ex 30.23).

Amos 6.5: Who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp.

Parat is the verb for “sing idle songs” meaning to scatter or to strew.

1Cor 3.6: I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

Auxano is the verb for “gave the growth” which is dependent upon Paul and Apollos.

Sg 4.15: A fountain of a garden, and a well of water springing and gurgling from Lebanon.

Nazal is the verb for “gurgling” which means to flow or to run in abundance. It stands in strong contrast to the next verse where cisterns represent the passive collecting of rain water which can become stagnant.

Jer 2.13: They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves.

Jn 4.10: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

The woman at the well is posed with the situation at hand as a gift from God suggesting that she would recognize him as Son of God.

Jn 7.37-9: (Living water).

These words Jesus uttered on the last day of the great feast or Feast of Tabernacles when for seven days water was carried in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam to the temple to commemorate water from the rock in the desert (cf. Num 20.2-13).

Jn 8.42: If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God.

“Proceeded and came forth” or *exerchomai* and *heko*. The former has the preposition *ex* prefaced to the root suggestive of from-ness whereas the latter implies to have come or being present already. It is used with the preposition *ek* or “from God.”

Prov 5.17-8: Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you.

Zur is the verbal root for “strangers” meaning to turn aside, to depart and implies hostility.

The Song of Songs, 4.10-15

How beautiful are your breasts, my sister, my spouse! How much more beautiful are your breasts than wine, and the scent of your ointments than all spices! Your lips drop a honeycomb, my spouse; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the scent of your garments is as the scent of frankincense. My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed. Your shoots are a garden of pomegranates with the fruit of choice berries; henna with nard; nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon; with all the woods of Lebanon: myrrh, aloes, with all the chief spices. A fountain of gardens, and a well of living water springing from Lebanon.

J.262 "If you have been raised up with Christ, set your mind M.953 on things above, not what is upon the earth." Paul continues: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory." If we have died to our lower nature, life according to the

flesh becomes hidden after we have transferred our hope for life from earth to heaven. As Proverbs says, "The wise will hide perception." We await the true life, Christ, to be manifested in us so that we may appear in glory and be transformed into a divine state. Let us now listen to the Song's words as if we were dead according to the body and not attracted by words with a carnal meaning. For the person dead to both passion and desire transfers the outward meaning of the Song's words to that which is pure and undefiled. Being unmindful of lowly, earthly affairs, he sets his mind on things above where Christ, in whom there is no passion, is seated at the Father's right hand in glory. Let us now pay attention to the divine words describing the bride's immaculate beauty. Let us listen as if we had no share in the nature of flesh and blood and have been transferred into the spiritual realm.

J.263 "How beautiful are your breasts, my sister, my spouse! How much more beautiful are your breasts than wine, and the scent of your ointments than all spices! Every one who does God's will is his brother, sister and mother and is a chaste virgin joined to the Lord. Such a person sharing the immaculate bridal chamber is rightly called bride. This is clear to anyone not ignorant of the divinely inspired words. In seeking to understand these divine words, I do not merely see praise attributed by the Word to the bride; the bridegroom explains her increase in beauty: she would not have been adorned by the fountains of good doctrines M.956 signified by her breasts unless she had first made herself a sister of the Lord through good works, has renewed herself as wedded to virginity by a birth from above and has become the betrothed and bride of her groom. He who names her his "sister" and "spouse" says that her breasts change to something better and more perfect because they no longer J.264 swell with milk, the nourishment of infants, but flow with pure wine to gladden the more perfect. Tavern keepers have not spoiled the goodness of this wine with water.

Like nuptial joy, these words contain the affection of two lovers who express to each other their mutual love. By similar words the bridegroom bestows upon his Church that which he had earlier praised in his introductory remarks. Right at the Song's beginning the bride expressed her desire that the Word proceeding from the divine mouth might come to her mouth as indicated by the symbol of a kiss. She pointed out the cause of such desire, namely, that his breasts are lovely. They surpass wine and transcend every good scent of ointments and perfumes: "Your breasts are better than wine, and the scent of your ointments is better than all spices." We learn this from divine philosophy in other sources, J.265 namely, that God is always present to us inasmuch as we freely present ourselves before him (David prophetically testified that God is good to his good works. Another prophet calls a person with a savage manner of life a bear and leopard. Such mysterious associations yield an evangelical teaching where the king's character is perceived by what lies on his left and right sides: on one side are the good and gentle sheep while on the other side are the fearsome, savage goats. The king adapts himself according to the choice of those being judged). Now the bride gives a fitting response when she sings of her Lord's beauty and bestows upon him praise by similar words. He accepts her breasts and changes them for the better. Having ceased to J.266 yield milk, they now give wine which gladdens the hearts of the more perfect who are no longer tossed about by childish concerns. They are now capable of drawing good things from wisdom's cup by their own mouths.

Having lauded the bride's breasts because they yield wine, praise is added to this wine's good fragrance: "And the scent of your ointments is better than all spices." We must get a better understanding of ointments from Holy Scripture Every good smelling spice is sweet to our sense of smell. Noah offered such a sacrifice to God, and "the Lord smelled a good M.957 odor." Sacrifice is a good odor to God as were many propitiatory sacrifices--thanksgiving sacrifices, sacrifices for salvation, purification and sin. All these are spices, holocausts, whole burnt offerings and parts of votive offerings of things consecrated to God such as the victim's breast, liver's lobe and kidney fat. In addition we have J.267 frankincense, wheaten flour soaked with oil, a variety of incense and many other examples associated with fire. All are listed as perfumes.

When hearing of the superiority of the bride's perfume, we learn that the mystery of truth presented by the Gospel is alone sweet smelling to God. It transcends every scent of the Law because no longer being hidden by symbol nor shadow, it openly yields the good scent of truth. If any of the former spices were sweet smelling to the Lord, it was due to their deeper meaning, not to their superficial or literal meaning. This is evident from the prophet saying, "I will not accept bullocks from your house, nor he-goats from your flocks; I do not eat the flesh of bulls nor drink the blood of goats."

Animal sacrifices were many and frequent. If any lesson can be gained, it is enjoined upon you in mystery, that is, J.268 the necessity of sacrificing your own passions. "A sacrifice to God is a contrite heart. A contrite and humble heart God will not spurn." Hence, our sacrifice of praise glorifies such a One who smells the fragrance. The soul spiritually inhales a good fragrance like Paul, a "good odor of Christ," and transcends every symbolic fragrance of the Law. The soul becomes fragrant in her life, breathing the myrrh of priesthood and the incense of conscience composed from the different virtues; her life is a sweet smelling odor to the bridegroom. When Solomon speaks of the "divine sense" (*he theia aisthesis*) in comparison with the material spices of the Law, he adds that immaterial, pure, good scent compounded by the virtues: " And the scent of your ointments is better than all spices."

The text that follows leads to a loftier praise, testifying to the abundance of gifts (bestowed upon the bride) from J.269 attention and prayer. Since the book of Proverbs desires wisdom's disciple to go to the bee (mark well the difference between teacher and his disciples), wisdom says to her lovers, "Go to the bee and learn its work." The bee's work M.960 in procuring honey is noble, for both kings and commoners use its labors for their health (Proverbs says that the bee is desirable and honored by everyone; although weak, it esteems wisdom and is given as an example of life for the virtuous. The bee is thus offered to us as honoring wisdom).

These words counsel us not to abstain from good teachings but by flying over the fields of divinely inspired words, we are to gather something from each one for the creation of wisdom. We mold within ourselves a honeycomb, so to speak, storing up in our hearts this labor of love as in a hive. The various doctrines create in our memory storehouses like the different cells in wax which are unable to be destroyed. By imitating that wise bee whose honeycomb is sweet and whose sting does not prick, we are always busy about the noble task of acquiring virtues. A bee engaged in this task has truly exchanged the works of this present life for the blessings of eternity. It metes out the fruit of its own labors for the health of both kings and commoners. J.270 Similarly, the soul becomes desirable for her bridegroom; it is honored by angels and perfects its strength in infirmity by honoring wisdom.

The bee's wisdom instructs us to be diligent by following its example. The manifold divisions of spiritual graces are in proportion to the zeal of those who strive after them. Thus the bridegroom says to his bride, "Your heart has become a honeycomb full of every kind of instruction. From your heart's treasure come your words. They are honeyed drops that the Word may be blended with milk and honey. 'Your lips drop a honeycomb, my spouse; honey and milk are under your tongue.'" The text is so arranged that it offers not just one benefit but is fittingly adapted to all who listen to it, both the perfect and infants: honey is for the perfect, and milk is for infants. Paul thus addressed himself to those recently born. He nourished them with more tender words while to the perfect he spoke of wisdom hidden from all ages; neither this age nor its princes could accept it. J.271 The Word says that the mixture of this honey and milk lies under the bride's tongue. Here it is stored up and kept ready. The person who must speak has this manifold power of the word under his tongue; it is ready for each listener at the right time.

After praising the bride's mouth and tongue, the bridegroom now moves onto ever greater praises: ". . .the scent of your garments is as the smell of frankincense." This statement shows a virtuous way of living for whoever considers it. M.961 The end of a virtuous life is likeness to God. Because of this, purity of soul and freedom from the disturbance of passion is exercised by attention to the virtues so that a certain form of the transcendent nature might become present in them due to their more refined way of life. Since the life (*politeia*) of virtue is neither uniform nor the same, it is like the art of skillfully making a garment by weaving various threads: some threads are pulled straight and others drawn crossways against them. Therefore it is necessary to have many elements concur to create a virtuous life. The divine Apostle enumerates the various strands constituting the texture J.272 of good works-love, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness and so forth. We are clothed with these characteristics when we exchange the clothing of this corruptible earthly existence for the incorruptible life of heaven. Thus the bridegroom receives his spouse's adorned garment and compares its fragrance to frankincense. However, he earlier said that the good odor of the bride's perfume exceeded all other spices. This seems to be a diminution in praise since the bride was placed above all other spices; now she is compared to just one of them. The Word says, "The scent of your garments is like the scent of frankincense."

Frankincense is used strictly as incense in worship of God. It is better than all spices and is worthy as the one spice dedicated to God. Our understanding of this mystery is as follows: The garment of your virtues, my bride, imitates the divine blessedness and resembles the transcendent divine nature by your purity and freedom from passion. The scent of your divine garments may be compared with frankincense which honors God.

From the bridegroom's praises we learn what it means to J.273 be a sister and spouse of the Lord. He says, "A garden enclosed is my spouse." If anyone claims to be a bride clinging to the Lord, this person is his sister because he does his will, as the Gospel says. Let such a person become a garden in blossom with every kind of tree: the sweet fig, fruitful olive, lofty palm, prolific vine. He must have no thorn bush nor nettle but in place of these, the cypress and myrtle. The great David knew how to adorn this garden as well as the sublime Isaiah: "The just will flourish as a palm tree;" and "I am as a fruitful olive tree;" and "Your wife is as an abundant vine." Isaiah says that a cypress will take the place of a hush; in place of nettles, the myrtle tree will rise. Still another prophet blesses the person reclining under his own fig tree.

M.964 Each of these trees is a mystery given by the prophets as an J.274 example which is unnecessary to explain here. Everyone knows about the sweetness of the fig tree's fruit once it has been ripened from bitter juice. In the beginning the fig was sour and inedible but afterwards it becomes a delightful fruit to sweeten the senses of the soul. What benefit does the harvest of the olive bestow through its bitter taste and tart juice which it first had during autumn? Later the olive is changed into oil by proper maturation and cultivation; it becomes material for light, soothes pain, relaxes suffering, exhilarates the head and helps those exercising themselves according to the law. How, too, does the palm tree make its fruit difficult to grasp by thieves? It keeps its treasures on high and does not bring them down to earth. And consider the vine's loveliness, the pleasant smelling cypress and sweet myrtle. Anyone who considers these examples in an allegorical fashion will see their significance in reference to a life of virtue. Thus the garden flourishes with such trees and is well cared for. J.275 It is protected from all sides by the fence of the commandments so that no thief nor wild beasts can enter (It is surrounded by the commandments' circular defense and cannot be ravaged by the solitary boar or the boar from the forest). If a person keeps his garden safe, he becomes a sister and spouse of him who says, "You are a garden enclosed, my sister, my spouse."

Nevertheless, this garden needs a fountain so its grove may remain flourishing and unceasingly watered. The bridegroom adds a fountain to his bride's praises saying, "You are a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed." The book of Proverbs symbolically teaches us about this fountain: "Let your fountain of water be for you alone, and let no stranger partake of it." The Song testifies to this by saying "sealed," that is, guarded. In my opinion this clearly means that our soul's rational faculty swells up and always flows J.276 over. Then when moving to what is agreeable, the impulse of our thoughts assists us in gaining possession of the good. When anyone turns the energy of his thoughts to evil, the flow of water is squandered on strangers. As long as we nourish the M.965 thorn-strewn path of life watered with the help of evil thoughts, the better plants dry up and waste away; the root is unnourished by moisture from good thoughts.

Because a seal protects the inviolability of whatever it guards, it scares off thieves; everything not stolen remains unharmed for the master. Praise of the bride in the Song would then testify to her excellence in virtue because her mind remains safe from enemies and is guarded for her Lord in purity and tranquillity. Purity seals this fountain while the radiance and transparency of the bride's heart is unclouded by no mire of evil thoughts. Let us clarify this point. Certain things in us are truly our own such as the properties J.277 of our soul. Others we appropriate such as external things belonging to the body (What does the spiritual nature of the soul have in common with the grossness of matter?). The book of Proverbs advises us not to let the fountain of our thoughts be squandered on things alien to us, that is, what pertains to the body; rather it should be turned to our own garden and water God's plant. We have learned that the virtues are God's plants which occupy our soul's intellectual faculty; by not flowing out, it will be sealed by the stamp of truth and formed with a disposition towards the good.

Let us turn our attention to the praises which follow: "Your shoots are a garden of pomegranates with the fruit of choice berries; henna with spikenard; spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all woods of Lebanon: myrrh, aloes, with all the chief spices. A fountain of gardens, and a well of living water from

Lebanon." These remarkable words render praise to God on high. What do they J.278 mean? The saintly Paul alone clearly knows how to express the divine mysteries in the Spirit. How is a garden of pomegranates sent out from the bride? How does the fruit of choice berries come from pomegranates? How do choice berries form a list of perfumes and spices? In the fruit of choice berries lies nard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, and every kind of wood from Lebanon. There is no distinction with respect to the spices of Lebanon: to them is added myrrh, aloes and all the chief spices. The garden is praised and is now said to be a fountain of gardens, a well of living and flowing water from Lebanon. Should these matters which I spoke of earlier be true, they are capable of searching the depths of the richness, wisdom and knowledge of God J.279 & M.968. In order that we may not pass by the good things of the garden, we will now proceed to the content of these words with the help of the divine Word as a guide. The entire catalogue of praises spoken of earlier and now added by the Word does not simply attend to the bride's praises alone but gives power that her heart may ascend on high, that is, to the place symbolized by "sister" and "spouse" of the Word. Each of these terms joins the soul as bride to its bridegroom. According to Paul, the soul is one body when joined to her incorruptible bridegroom, while the Gospel attributes zeal for fraternal kinship to the will. Next the bride's breasts which offer wine instead of milk are praised, for it is clear that praise effects this work (for anything lacking substance is not praised).

The bride's perfume is then judged as superior to every kind of aroma. She should not be judged as having this perfume unless she truly hastens on high by advancing in the good. After this the honeycombs of the bride's words are admired. They drip from her mouth, and wisdom prepares the J.280 mixture of milk and honey lying under her tongue. These are not simply words but power, for the bride is guided by the Word to reach higher states so that her mouth becomes a fountain of honey, and her tongue becomes a treasure house mingled with wisdom where she contemplates the promised land flowing with milk and honey. When the Word raises his bride to such a point through her ascents, he leads her even further, saying that her garments have the scent of frankincense. Scripture testifies that Christ is clothed with this frankincense. The end of a virtuous life is participation in God (for frankincense manifests the divinity). The soul is not always led by the Word to what is higher by means of honey and milk but after having being compared to the scent of frankincense, the garden becomes an image of paradise. It is not loosely guarded as with our first parents, but protected from every side by recollection of the bridegroom's command.

Do you now see the bride's capacity to ascend on high? Show me again the step lying even beyond this stage. Not only was the garden which bore its own pleasant fruit enclosed, but it was good for drinking after having been transformed J.281 into a sealed fountain. The bride does not consist of these elements; rather, she hastens onto something even greater, that is, a garden blossoming from her mouth (The person paying more careful attention to the Hebrew text reads instead, 'The shoots, *hai apostolai*, from your mouth are a garden of pomegranates.' The word 'sent,' *apostellomenos*, from your mouth 'is a garden of pomegranates.' Pomegranate M.969 trees bear every type of fruit: cypress with nard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon and every kind of perfume from Lebanon, myrrh, aloes as well as the best perfumes). With God's help and according to the blessing in the psalm, the bride places these lovely ascents within her heart, always going from strength to strength. The issues (*apostolai*) from her mouth are correctly named a "garden of pomegranates" at a more perfect stage of her advancement. Rightly does the text adapt the term "issue" (*apostole*) to the underlying J.282 intention: anything sent comes into the hands of the one who receives it. From *apostole* we learn that the disciples were sent to preach the truth, and were named Apostles (*apostolai*) by the Word. What then issues from the bride's mouth? It is clear that the word of faith in those who receive it becomes a garden planted in their hearts. A grove planted with abundant trees is usually called a garden.

In order that we may know the plants which the Word cultivates in believers, the Song calls the trees he planted "pomegranates." These issue from the bride's mouth. The pomegranate is difficult for a thief to grasp because of its thorny branches, and its fruit is surrounded and protected by a rind bitter and harsh to the taste. Once the pomegranate ripens in its own good time and once the rind is peeled off and the inside revealed, it is sweet and appealing to the sight much like honey to the taste; its juice tastes like wine and affords pleasure to the palate. I think that the issues from the bride's mouth is a "garden of pomegranates" present in the souls of those listening to her. We must heed her words and not become J.283 soft by indulgence and enjoyment of this present life. Rather, we should choose a life that has become toughened by

continence. Thus virtue's fruit is inaccessible to thieves and is protected by the bitter covering of self-control. Surrounded by a solemn, austere way of life, it wards off as though by spiny thorns those who approach the fruit with evil intent.

Once the time arrives to enjoy this pomegranate, we are offered other kinds of fruit for our delight from different trees: not plums, dates nor any other such fruit for enjoyment but various kinds of perfumes. Cypress is wonderfully mixed with nard: one is warm while the other is fragrant. Warmth is not praised when its heat yields an unpleasant odor. Purity, however, must assist warmth by testifying that we are on fire with the Spirit and are cleansed from every displeasing kind of warmth.

Among the bride's fruits are other perfumes such as nard and saffron, M.972 but it now remains for us to speak about J.284 the symbol of saffron. Those familiar with this flower claim that it likes neither cold nor heat. It avoids the excess of each while having the capacity of soothing pain. The Song seems to mysteriously teach about virtue by means of saffron. All virtue lies between two evils: a defect or an excess of the good. Courage and liberality may be observed as between timidity and audacity, whereas generosity lies between stinginess and profligacy. Timidity and stinginess, which are defective regarding the norm, are said to be evil. Profligacy and rashness follow excess and superabundance while the mean between both is considered virtue. Thus saffron as treated by the Song pertains to virtue because of its power of moderation, the avoidance of excess or defect in virtue.

While this explanation seems more popular, I would say that saffron's mystery more properly refers to our faith. This J.285 cloudy-colored flower with an external leaf is actually three flowers. The exterior flower has a cloudy color and once the outside petals are peeled off, three flowers which have medicinal use are revealed. Each of these flowers hidden under the petals, are alike in size, beauty, scent and property. Together they have a good color, fragrance and medicinal quality. Alongside these are three other flowers which are yellow in color and not useful for medicinal purposes. Persons ignorant of the difference may pluck the counterfeit one instead of the real one. Similarly, persons stray with regard to the faith when they choose contrived errors instead of sound teachings. Let the hearer choose either one or both of these interpretations according to his judgement, for in a certain way both mean the same: one suggests perfection in virtue and the other, acquisition of the divinity. Indeed, virtue is not separate from the divinity.

Let us now consider the rest of the spices mentioned in the text: calamus, cinnamon and choice berries. Choice berries are the fruit of pomegranates belonging to the bride's garden. Calamus has the best scent of them all, for it is used J.286 for priestly sacrifices under the Law. Cinnamon has various uses due to its natural power, some of which seem beyond belief. Some people maintain that if a pinch of cinnamon is placed in a pot of boiling water, the water immediately turns cold. Also, when cinnamon is brought into a heated bathroom, the warmed air becomes chilly. Cinnamon M.973 is claimed to have the power to destroy anything generated from corrupt matter. Other such examples told of cinnamon seem beyond belief. It is said that if cinnamon is put in the mouth of a sleeping person, he will not withhold his answer to a question but will remain asleep and give a sober, articulate answer. Such things cannot be affirmed unless one learns the truth from investigation; otherwise it would be rash to make such assertions. Anyway, cinnamon is included in the catalogue of choice berries because it has a certain mystical sense. Cinnamon does not grow on pomegranate trees (the bride's mouth does not bring forth any garden in J.287 the physical sense; rather, it has a symbolic meaning). I do not think we should neglect the stories about cinnamon or anything else pertaining to this subject.

From what has been said, something gathered from each element symbolically demonstrates a life of perfection in accord with virtue. We may say by way of instruction that cinnamon is present in the soul. When a person teems with desire or burns with rage, he uses reason to quench the passions. It is the same with the sleep of this present life: if you place the sober cinnamon of reason in your mouth, you will clearly and accurately bring forth the meaning it contains. This resembles the angels who do not sleep but are watchful. You imitate by truth of speech the sleepless angels who do not shrink away from truth by any fantasies of the imagination. Thus you can say that cinnamon swells up from your mouth to J.288 quench passion's fire and any seething rage in your heart; as a result, reason purifies the dream-like fantasy and confusion of this present life. Anyone who does not comprehend these facts about cinnamon should find fault with the Song's text because it

sometimes attributes untrue words to the bride.

It is known that holy scripture often includes stories from other sources. It unashamedly mentions names from legends to make the sense of its contents more evident as in the case of Job's daughters who are praised beyond all telling. The excellence of their names shows something marvelous: one is called "Day," another "Cassia" and a third "Horn of Almatheia." It is evident that Greek mythology has a story about Almatheia: her wild goats were fond of that Cretan whose horn fell and as a result, every kind of fruit M.976 flowed out of it. Can we believe in scripture what is said J.289 about Almatheia? Certainly not, but Job's daughters demonstrate the fruitfulness resulting from virtue as shown by their names. Scripture allows such mythical nonsense as "Cassia" and "Day." From these terms we do not learn about aromatic material nor about the sun's course over the earth: we claim that only a virtuous way of life gives meaning to these names. "Cassia" shows purity and fragrance for what is necessary in life, whereas "Day," as the Apostle says, is becoming to children of light living in purity who are named sons of day. The bride's praises are certainly valuable regarding cinnamon where a symbolic explanation serves as a means of praise. Once a person has accomplished this and has attained the summit of praises, he always shows the characteristics of the divine image in himself. The text says, "with all the woods of Lebanon." People of keen observation say that the wood J.290 of Lebanon from which frankincense flows is not of one kind; rather, there is a certain variety of wood while the kind of spice varies with the wood's form. Therefore, the person showing the divinity in any of life's circumstances manifests the beauty of the woods of Lebanon which represent the divine image.

No one can share God's glory unless he has been first conformed to the likeness of Christ's death. For this reason the spices' catalogue of praises mentions the choice berries of pomegranates. Along with them are myrrh, aloes and the chief spices. Myrrh and aloes have something in common with Christ's tomb (As the sublime Gospel says, he who was buried tasted death for us). The "chief spices" show us purity and a life free from any thoughtless, reckless behavior. Contrary to these Amos offers us the following: "Those who drink strained wine and anoint themselves with the best ointment." A little before this he mentions, "those who J.291 eat kids from the flocks and suckling calves from the stalls and excel in the sound of musical instruments." Wine from grapes is not muddied, nor is the purity of a fragrant perfume corrupted by being mixed with spice. However, the Israelites had to be rebuked by this prophecy because they bore the pure word of scripture strained from every sediment. They had the pure fragrance of spices and at all times enjoyed a spiritual banquet, yet they did not reject their preference for delighting in evil. They changed sparkling wine into a murky waste and the purity of "chief spices" into the harmful mixture of evil thoughts. However, the Song attributes to M.977 the bride unadulterated, pure doctrines because she yields "chief spices."

The bride does not remain here; she does not reach out to what is loftier, nor does the text tell about her ascent; rather, from the bride's own mouth are the emissions of pomegranates and gardens of spices; she now has become a fountain watering the gardens which flow out from her. We have not learned this as in the case of Paul and Apollo; one planted and the other watered; rather, both are J.292 used together, the planting and watering of the bride's gardens. Perhaps the bride's praise contains something more sublime. The text says that the bride is a fountain which does not flow with streams but with gardens; not streams of any water but gardens that spring and swell up. Thus the divine Apostle made "living gardens" those among whom he lived and made the garden of the Church to swell up through his doctrine.

The Song then carries the bride to the highest summits of praise, calling her a spring of living water flowing from Lebanon. We have learned about God's life-giving nature from holy scripture as a prophecy in the person of God says, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water." Again, the Lord says to the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God and who is speaking to you, 'Give me to drink' you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." And, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the scripture says, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' He said this of the Spirit which they who believed in him would receive." Each of these passages says J.293 that living water is the divine nature; hence the Song can truly call the bride a well of living water flowing from Lebanon. This is indeed paradoxical. All wells contain still water; only the bride has running water with both a well's depth and a continuous flow of water. Who can worthily comprehend the wonders applied to the bride? It seems that she has no further to reach once she has been compared to beauty's archetype. She closely imitates her

bridegroom's fountain by one of her own; his life by hers and his water by her water. God's Word is living, and the soul who has received it is living. That kind of water flows from God as the Fountain himself says, "from God I proceeded and I came." The bride contains his inflow of water within the well of her soul and becomes a treasure house of that living water flowing from Lebanon, rather, rushing, as the text says. We become partakers of God by possessing that well, in order that according to wisdom's precept, we may drink our own water and not that from another well. We do this in Christ J.294 Jesus our Lord, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

+

The Tenth Homily

Ps 103.11: For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

"High and great" with respect to distance apply to divine "steadfast love" or *chesed*.

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.

Parad is the verb for "separated" and is suggestive of a scattering or breaking. This is enhanced by use of the preposition *byn* or "between the two of them."

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

This fire is cast upon the earth in the form of tongues of flame in the next verse, that is, the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2.3: And there appeared to them tongues as of fire.

Gen 15.5: Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.

Navat as "look" means to behold in the sense of having respect for something.

Lk 12.42-4: (Faithful and wise steward).

The "steward" or *oikonomos* is one who manages (*nomos*: law, custom) the house (*oikos*) and who is *phronimos* which suggests having presence of mind.

Mt 24.45-47: (cf. vs. above).

The same reference as Luke where *oiketeia* is used for "household."

Gen 32.25-9: (Jacob wrestles with the unknown man).

Avaq is the verb for "wrestled" which suggests raising dust when engaged in that activity. Often an angel is attributed to being the contestant, but the text intimates nothing of this.

Mt 8.9: For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; I say to one, "Go," and he goes, and to another, "Come," and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this," and he does it.

Note two uses of the preposition *hupo* (under): with respect to "authority" (*exousia*) and the soldiers under the centurion.

Lk 7.8: (cf. Mt 8.9 above).

2Cor 6.14: For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

"Partnership and fellowship:" *metoche* and *koinonia*. The first is literally a having with and the second has a more communal and religious ring to it.

Rom 8.7-10: (spirit vs. flesh).

Here *phronema* is used for "mind" (spirit, purpose, resolution) is hostile literally "into (*eis*) God."

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

Ta mele ta epi tes ges reads literally as "the limbs (which are) upon the earth."

Eph 6.14-7: (armor of a Christian).

Paul makes use of Is 11.5 and 59.17: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist and faithfulness the girdle of his loins." "He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as a mantle.

Mt 8.9: (cf. 6 verses above).

Lk 8.23-4: (Christ quiets storm on the lake).

Lailaps means a furious storm more as a hurricane.

Prov 27.16: to restrain her (a contentious woman) is to restrain the wind or to grasp oil in his right hand.

"Restrain and grasp" or *tsaphan* and *qara'*: to lay up or to conceal and to call or to summon.

Zach 6.12: Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall grow up in his place, and he shall build the

temple of the Lord.

Tsemach means “Branch” or a sprout whose growth, if you will, builds the temple.

Mt 24.20: Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

If the flight were on a Sabbath, that means the person was severely restricted in movement. The paralysis of winter and restraint of Sabbath are not unlike each other.

Acts 2.2: And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

“Mighty” is *biastes* derived from a verb meaning to use force or violence.

Acts 1.15: In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about 120).

“Among” is rendered literally as “in the midst of” (*en meso*).

Acts 2.3: And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.

“Distributed and resting” or *diamerizo* and *kathistemi*: the preposition *dia* suggests thoroughness and the preposition *kata*, in accord with a plan.

Sg 4.15: A fountain of a garden, and a well of water springing and gurgling from Lebanon.

Nazzal is the verb for “gurgling” which means to flow or to run in abundance.

Ps 147.18: He breathed his breath and the waters flowed.

The Hebrew has “sends forth his word” or *davar* which causes ice to melt.

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.

Sg 4.16: Let my beloved come down into his garden and eat the fruit of his choice berries.

The Hebrew text lacks “down” and reads “comes to his garden.”

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

Three prepositions: “from, through and to” or *ex*, *dia* and *eis* (into).

Col 1.16: For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities.

Note two uses of prepositions: *en* and *epi*. The first pertains to heaven (also regarding Christ) and the second to earth.

Eph 2.10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Poitema is the noun for “workmanship” refers to anything made with respect to “good works” (*ergon* with the preposition *eis*, into).

Ps 145.15-6: The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Savar is the verb for “look” which intimates a viewing as well as a hoping.

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

Katabaino is the verb for “comes down” and is a participle suggesting continuous descent.

Ezk 47.9: And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish.

Nephesh is the noun for “living creature” and basically refers to the soul. *Sharats* as “swarm” also means to creep or to crawl.

Jn 4.34: For my food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.

Teleioo is the verb for “accomplish” and means bringing to completion or perfection with regard to the Father’s “work” or *ergon*.

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-*).

Mt 6.16: And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for the disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men.

Skuthropos as “dismal” implies being sullen or angry-looking.

Sg 2.3: And his fruit was sweet to my taste.

Matoq as “sweet” derives from a verbal root meaning to suck, as to suck out sweetness.

Mt 6.9-10: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

"In heaven...on earth:" the prepositions *en* and *epi* (upon). The "in-ness" is to be transferred to "upon" the earth.

Ps 146.7: Who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

"Executes and gives:" an active giving (*natah*) and giving (*hasah*, to make).

Is 58.9: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, "Here I am."

Hineny or "here I am" implies a beholding, a making presence in the sense of announcing.

Sg 5.1: I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spices; I have eaten my bread with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, my companions, drink and be inebriated, my brethren.

All verbs are in the past tense where the bridegroom prepares herself for reception of his spouse. His companions could also be those of the bride who went with him as attendants.

Zach 9.17: Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the maidens.

Nuv is the verb for "flourish" and means more to sprout, to germinate, here applicable to both young men and maidens.

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

Three prepositions: "from, through and to" or *ex*, *dia* and *eis* (into).

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

Stereos as "solid" can apply to anything hard or harsh. *Diakrisis* is the noun for "to distinguish" and means literally to judge through (*dia*-).

Ex 12.8: They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.

Reference to the Passover lamb which sets the stage for Christ's crucifixion in the next three verses.

Mt 27.34: They offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall.

Mt 27.48: And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink.

Mk 15.36: (cf. verse above).

1 Cor 15.31: I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!

Kauchesis is the noun for "pride" or reason for boasting.

2Cor 1.9: Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

Apokrima or "sentence" derives from a verbal root meaning to mark by a distinctive form, to distinguish.

2Cor 2.15-6: (Disciples as aroma of Christ as noted above).

Mt 25.35: For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Sunago is the verb for "welcomed" meaning literally to bring together (*sun*-).

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

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

Mt 26.26: Take, eat; this is my body.

Ps 36.8: They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

Ravah is the verb for "feast" meaning to drink largely or to be irrigated.

Ps 115.2 (LXX): And I said in my amazement, "every man is a liar."

Ekstasis is the noun for "amazement," literally as a standing-out (*ek*-).

Ps 68.28: Show your strength, O God, you who has wrought for us.

Tsuah is the verb for "show" meaning more specifically to order or to command.

Rom 11.1: I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite.

Apotheo is the verb for "rejected" or more specifically, to thrust or to push away.

Phl 3.5: Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2Cor 5.13: For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

Existemi and *sophronizo*: to stand out (cf. *exstasis* above, Ps 115.2) and to correct, to be moderate.

Acts 26.25: I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth.

Mainomai means "am (not) mad" which connotes anger and rage.

Acts 10.10: And he became hungry and desired something to eat; but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance.

Ekstasis is the noun for “trance.”

1Cor 11.29: For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.

Diakrino is the verb for “discerning” and pertains to the body, that is, without having this judgement-through (*dia-*) with respect to the sacred action of one’s action.

Mk 3.35: Whoever does the will of God is my brother, sister, and mother.

Doing God’s will here suggests that Jesus has full knowledge of the person doing it.

Sg 5.2: Eat, my companions, and drink, and be inebriated.

Shakar is the verb for “be inebriated” (to be drunk). It is distinct from the more common *shatah* (‘drink’) which can apply to being at a banquet.

The Song of Songs, 4.16-5.2

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind. Blow through my garden, and let my spices flow out. Let my beloved come down into his garden and eat the fruit of his choice berries. I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spices; I have eaten my bread with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, my companions, drink, and be inebriated, my brethren. I sleep but my heart is awake.

J.294 & M.980 Because the Song’s divine words contain some difficult, veiled ideas concealed in obscurity, we need to apply greater attention to the text; rather, we need greater help through J.295 prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit that we might not suffer the same fate as the sublime marvels we are accustomed to seeing among the stars. In admiring the stars’ distant beauty, we are unable to know the means by which they were created, but we can enjoy their beauty and marvel at them. Certain stars of the divine eloquence are bright twinklings and radiances of the soul’s eyes. As the prophet says, they are as high as the heavens above the earth. If this is the case with regard to our soul, Elijah’s example shows us how our mind is taken up in a fiery chariot and raised on high to that heavenly beauty (We understand this fire chariot as the Holy Spirit which the Lord had come to cast upon the earth; in the likeness of tongues, it was divided among the disciples). We will not despair from drawing near to the stars, I mean from considering divine things which illumine our souls by heavenly, spiritual utterances.

J.296 Look up with the eye of your soul. I am speaking to you, listener, with the same voice of the Lord who addressed the patriarch Abraham: look up to heaven and see these stars, if you can measure the loftiness of their minds. Look at the authority of the queen [i.e., the bride] and consider by power of her commands how absolute is her authority. It is not by prayers that the bride obtains her wishes but by the true voice of him who makes a promise; he calls “lord” the faithful and prudent dispenser whom the Master appoints over all his possessions. Having accepted this authority, the queen rules the two winds in a regal fashion and dispenses them as it seems fit: she banishes the north wind by her command and gently calls the south wind, urging it to come to her.

The text thus reads: “Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind.” Perhaps these words have something to M.981 do with those of the centurion at whom God the Word experienced wonder. The evangelist records this by saying, “When Jesus heard the centurion, he marveled” because the J.297 centurion surpassed Israel’s faith. It does not seem to me that we ought to compare the centurion to the Israelite people in the matter of faith but only to Israel himself. He contended with the adversary and barely escaped a fall because of God’s help; Israel was by no means immune from the adversary’s harm, for he was wounded in the thigh. The centurion of whom the text is now speaking dismissed by his king’s power anything against his authority and managed the king’s affairs in accordance with his wishes. It seems to me that the centurion is especially worthy of admiration, and because he says of those soldiers under his command that he dismisses and summons whomever he pleases and orders his servant for any service at hand. The centurion’s words contain a lesson because once he has dismissed his servant, he no longer brings him back; once the servant is let go, another is let into the centurion’s house (He said, ‘Go, and he goes;’ the centurion calls another servant, but not the one whom he first sent away).

J.298 I believe this text teaches us that elements opposed to one another do not have the same nature and cannot occupy the same place together. There is no fellowship between light and darkness, says the Apostle, but if all darkness departs, light must take its place; also once evil is removed, virtue takes its place. When this is brought about, the prudence of the flesh can no longer resist the Spirit (having been mortified, the flesh cannot be in opposition); rather, it becomes a well-disposed minister in every circumstance, subservient and docile in obedience to the Spirit's rule. When the support of the wicked soldier is taken away, the well-armed soldier of virtue takes his place. He is clothed with the breastplate of righteousness, hears the sword of the Spirit, has the protective covering of armor, the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith: he thus hears the full spiritual armor. Then will the body, his servant, fear his master, that is, his mind, and it will readily take orders from its master who applies virtue which is applied to the body's service. The text indicates this saying, "And to my servant I say, 'Do this,' and he does it."

But let us pay attention to the way in which the queen makes the north wind depart from herself and return. She does not order it to be calm in the same way the Lord ordered J.299 the storm to quiet down when he was upon the sea's waves, but she commands the south wind to depart and flee so that it might blow unhindered and not be impeded by M.984 any contrary wind: "Rise," she says, to the north wind. What causes this wind's departure? Proverbs calls the north wind by a favorable name, but the north wind does not lie on the right unless a person has the sun's rising behind him. The sun's course is towards sunset. You indeed understand the mystery contained in these words: the sun rising from the east (for Christ is so named by the prophet) hastens towards sunset, that is, towards the power of darkness; the north is on the sun's right and receives insults on its journey which ends in darkness. Thus the undisciplined person finds himself to be the north wind at the right and blowing with ignominy: this evil wind at the right becomes J.300 greedy when it avariciously heaps up material things as if they were sand or dust. As a result, the north wind cooperates with each person's errors and is situated at his right hand; however, should this wind be too harsh, it takes on the disguise of pleasure. Therefore the bride makes the north wind, whose strength comes from passions, flee by her own authority: "Arise, north wind."

The north wind signifies the power set up in opposition (to God), a fact which becomes clear to anyone considering the nature of visible reality. Who is unaware of the sun's course from its rising? It proceeds through the south and sets in the west. As experts say, the earth's shape is spherical; if part of the earth is illumined by the sun, the opposite part is darkened and shadowed over by an obstruction between it and the sun. Since the north is always cold and frigid, never J.301 illumined and warmed by the sun's rays, the ruling power of darkness petrifies souls by making them solid and hard. The Song calls this hardness "north," the effect of winter's gloom. I call "winter" the inability to escape in winter of which the Gospel speaks. In winter, too, the lovely characteristics which blossom according to virtue are extinguished.

Rightly does the queen drive away the north wind with her authority. She summons the hot, bright midday wind named "south wind" by which a torrent of delight flows: "And come, south wind, blow through my garden and let my spices flow out." This is similar to the strong wind we hear in the upper room which came to the disciples and fell upon them as "living plants." This wind makes the garden of God produce spices, gives forth fragrant prophecies and salvific precepts about the faith by the Apostles' mouths and freely pours out the good fragrance of their teachings in every language. The one hundred and twenty disciples planted in God's house made their teaching flow by the breath of this south wind.

J.302 & M.985 The bride now says to the south wind, "Blow through my garden" because her bridegroom made her a mother of the gardens: the text contains both gardens and a fountain. For this reason the bridegroom wishes his garden the Church teeming with "animated trees" to be blown through that spices may flow from them. The prophet's voice says, "He breathed his breath and the waters flowed." The bride, decorated with queenly splendor, changes the flowing streams of spices to something more magnificent: she makes them flow from the garden's trees by the Spirit's power. This image teaches us about the difference between the Old and New Testaments: the prophetic river is filled with water while the evangelical rivers are filled with spices. The great Paul, whose stream was a good fragrance of Christ, was such a river of spices flowing from the Church's garden by the Spirit. Other examples are John, Luke, Matthew, Mark and all the others; they are noble plants of the bride's garden. When that bright J.303 noonday south wind blew through

them, they became fountains of spices with the fragrance of the Gospels.

"Let my beloved come down into his garden and eat the fruit of his choice berries." Oh, what a bold statement! Oh, what a zealous, splendid soul, surpassing every wonder! Whom does the bride invite to her feast furnished with her own fruit? For whom does she prepare a banquet from her own resources? Whom does the bride call to feast on what she has spread out? It is none other than him from, by and in whom all things exist. He gives to each person his food in due season, opens his hand and fills every living thing with blessings. Descending as bread from heaven, he gives life to the world and lets water flow from his own fountain of life. This is the One for whom the bride arranges her table. The table is a garden planted with living trees. We indeed are the trees, and the food offered to him is our soul's salvation. While feasting on our life he said, "My food is that I do the will of my Father" J.304. The aim of the divine will is clear since "he wishes all men to be saved and to come to recognize the truth." This salvation then is the food prepared for him. The fruit is our free will which gives God our souls to pluck, as it were, on a small branch. The bride first enjoyed the apple's sweet fruit saying, "And his fruit was sweet to my taste." Then she herself becomes the lovely, sweet fruit offered to the husbandman for his enjoyment.

The words "Let him come down" signify choice as in the case of "hallowed be thy name" and "may your will be M.988 done." Just as these two sentences show free choice, the bride's prayer in "let him come down" shows God the bounty of virtue's fruit. The bridegroom's coming down signifies his love for mankind--We cannot otherwise be lifted up to the Most High unless the Lord inclines to the humble and exalts the meek. Therefore the soul rising on high calls J.305 upon the help of the transcendent God and prays that he descend from his own greatness so that those here below may easily reach him. He says through the prophet, "while you were still speaking, behold, I am here." Before the bride's prayer went forth, God heard it, attended to the readiness of her heart, came to her garden where the south wind blows, picked the fruits of spices, was filled with the fruits of virtue and spoke of his feast saying: "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spices; I have eaten my bread with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, my companions, drink and be inebriated, my brethren."

Do you now see how the bridegroom exceeds his spouse's request by his great gift? The bride wished fountains of spices to be in her garden, her own plants to have the south wind blowing at midday and to have the husbandman with the fruit of choice berries. (It is clear that each good scent is sweet smelling while choice berries are not as good as bread for fostering health.) When the bridegroom descends into his garden, he changes the fruits into something better and more worthy; J.306 he also gathers myrrh from the garden along with spices (For if anything lovely should be found in the bridegroom, the prophet sings of it). In place of choice berries the bridegroom makes trees produce bread mixed with his honey (We have a prophetic statement here, namely, the bridegroom's honey and other delights), and the wine drawn from the trees is mixed with his milk. "For from him and through him and in him are all things." Oh blessed gardens, whose plants swell with such fruit and are transformed into every kind of nourishment according to the desire of those who enjoy them! To be enjoyed along with the fragrance of the bride's fruit is myrrh combined with spices. They mortify our earthly members and make a pure, fragrant life from the varied, different spices of virtue.

For the person seeking more perfect nourishment, there is bread which is no longer eaten with bitter herbs as the Law J.307 commands. (This present life contains bitterness); rather, honey is changed into solid food when at the proper time, the fruit of virtue sweetens the soul's senses. Such an occurrence happened when the bread appeared to the disciples after the Lord's (*tou kupiou*) resurrection. It was sweetened M.989 with honey from the comb (*to kerio*). A cup of wine and milk is offered to a thirsty person, not gall on a sponge and moistened with vinegar as when the Jews offered their Benefactor the cup of friendship upon a reed. Indeed, we are not ignorant of the mystery contained in these words, that is, how St. Paul was a myrrh-bearing tree who was daily put to death and who put himself under death's sentence; being fragrant through purity and detachment he became a scent of life to those who were saved. Paul ground into wheat the living plants of the garden for the Lord. The One seated on the throne testified to this by saying, "I was hungry and you gave me to eat" (The bread of gladness is a delight sweetened by the honey of the command).

Again the bride pours out the garden's flourishing plants as J.308 wine for her bridegroom who said, " I was thirsty and you gave me to drink" wine mixed with milk; not with water which is the practice of tavern keepers. Milk is the first pure, simple nourishment of our human nature; it is not mixed with anything else and is pure from every source of evil.

Once the bridegroom has addressed her spouse, the Song offers the bride's companions the mystery of the Gospel saying, "Eat, my companions and drink, be inebriated, my brethren." To the person familiar with the Gospel's mystic words, there is no difference between this sentence and the words applied to the disciples' mystic initiation: in both cases it says "Eat and drink." The bride's exhortation to her friends seems to have more weight than those in the Gospel. If anyone carefully examines both texts, he will find the Song's words to be in agreement with the Gospel, for the word addressed to the companions is brought to fruition in the Gospel. All inebriation makes the mind overcome with wine go into ecstasy. Therefore, what the Song enjoins J.309 becomes a reality by that divine food and drink of the Gospel; as then and always, this food and drink contains a constant change and ecstasy from a worse to a better condition.

As the prophet says, those who drink from the richness of God's house and the stream of his delight become inebriated. Similarly, the great David became inebriated because he went out of himself and into ecstasy: he saw the invisible beauty and exclaimed in that inspired voice of his, "Every man is a liar." By that statement David explained those ineffable treasures. Thus Paul, the new Benjamin, was inebriated and said in ecstasy "whether we are transported in mind, it is to God (Here ecstasy is a movement towards God) or whether we be sober, it is for you." In a similar way, Paul showed to Festus that he was not insane but uttered words of sobriety and righteousness.

I know that blessed Peter participated in this kind of inebriation J.310 & M.992 while being hungry and drunk at the same time. Before material food was offered to him, Peter was hungry and wished to taste it. While his family members were preparing food, Peter experienced that divine, sober inebriation. By it he went out of himself and saw the "linen sheet" of the Gospel "let down by its four corners." It contained every kind of man in countless forms as well as birds, four-footed beasts, reptiles and beasts according to the different forms of cults. The Word ordered Peter to sacrifice the animals and irrational beasts because once these animals had been purified, the remaining beasts would be fit to eat. The message of faith is handed down in purity; the voice of God has spoken not only once that "what God has cleansed is not common" but three times. By the first voice we learn that God the Father purifies; by the second voice, that it is the only begotten God who purifies; and by the third voice, that God the Holy Spirit purifies everything. Such is the inebriation from wine which the Lord offers to those at his table. The Lord rightly exhorts those near J.311 him by their virtuous lives but not those who are far off: "Eat, my companions, and drink, and be inebriated." For he who unworthily eats and drinks does so in judgment against himself. Rightly does he call those worthy of this food "brothers," for the person who does his will is named a brother, sister and mother by the Word himself.

Sleep results from inebriation; it is an occasion for the digestion of food and the maintenance of health for those at the banquet table. Therefore the bride sleeps after her banquet. This sleep is quite extraordinary and different from one's natural habit, for in natural sleep one is not awake. Both are opposed to each other, for sleep and waking succeed and follow one another. We see in the bride a new, paradoxical mixture of opposites: "I sleep," she says, "but my J.312 heart is awake." What can we understand by this statement? This sleep is like death. In it each sensory function of the body is lost: there is no vision, hearing, scent, taste nor feeling but the body's tension is loosed. Sleep brings about forgetfulness of anxieties; it calms fears, softens rage, slackens the tension from bitter experiences and makes one unaware of evils. Therefore we have learned from the bride that she has risen higher and boasts, "I sleep but my heart is awake."

M.993 As long as the mind lives alone and untroubled by the senses, it is as though the body were overcome by sleep and torpor. One can then truly say that sight is at rest through inaction while the soul has contempt for visions which frighten little children. I speak not only of material things such as gold, silver and colorful stones which arouse greedy eyes but the wonderful marvels in the heavens: the twinkling stars, the sun's orb, the moon's many changes and anything else giving J.313 pleasure to the eyes; these things will not last forever but will move and pass away with the cycle of time. Despising all such wonders through the contemplation of

true goodness, the body's eye becomes tired, and the more perfect soul is not attracted to anything visible; with the mind it regards only what transcends visible objects. Hearing, too, is dead and does not function because it is now occupied with what lies beyond speech. The soul keeps far away from our more animal sensations as if they were a foul stench; I mean the sense of smell which enjoys perfumes, the sense of taste which is subservient to the stomach and the vulgar sense of touch which lacks sight; it seems that touch is for the blind. Once all these senses have been put to sleep and are gripped by inaction, the heart's action is pure; reason looks above while it remains undisturbed and free from the senses' movement.

Pleasure has two aspects: one is effected in the soul by freedom from passion and another by passion in the body. Of these two, the one which free will chooses has power over the other. If a person pays attention to the senses and is drawn by pleasure in the body, he will live his life without tasting the divine joy since the good can be overshadowed by what is inferior. For those who desire God, a good not shadowed over by anything awaits them; they realize that what enters the senses must be avoided. Therefore when the soul enjoys only the contemplation of Being, it will not arise for those things which effect sensual pleasure. It puts to rest all bodily movement and by naked, pure insight, the soul will see God in a divine watchfulness. May we be made worthy through this sleep of which the Song has spoken to keep our soul vigilant in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

+

The Eleventh Homily

Is 52.2: Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion.

Hur for "awake" suggests being hot or ardent.

Mt 24.42-25.13: (Signs and parables of the end).

The kingdom of heaven has two basic comparisons here: Noah's ark and the ten wise and foolish maidens. The burning lamps of the next verse can apply to the wise maidens who had sufficient oil.

Lk 12.35: Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning.

1Jnn 3.21: Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

Parresia as "confidence" applies to the freedom a citizen of a Greek city-state has to speak his mind.

Rom 1.21: For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds, were darkened.

Dialogismos and *asunetos* or "thinking and senseless." The former is suggestive of deviousness and the latter, want of understanding which modifies *kardia* or "heart."

Eph 4.17-9: (Gentiles as alienated from God).

The verb for "alienated" (vs. 18) is *apallotrioō* which connotes estrangement due to "hardness" or *porosis* of heart, this noun suggestive of petrification.

Wis 13.1: For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature.

Mataios is the adjective for "ignorant" and more properly means vain.

Lk 12.36: And be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks.

Analuō is the verb for "come home" which literally means to dissolve or to break up as with regard to a camp.

Ps 19.5: Which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber.

Reference is to the sun leaving its "chamber" or *chupah*, literally as that which is covered.

2Cor 11.2: I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.

Paristemi is the verb for "present" meaning a standing beside or nearby (*para*).

Ezk 16.15: But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by.

"Renown" is *shem* or literally, name which suggests already Israel had a reputation which was not good.

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

Lk 12.43: Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.

"So doing" implies that the servant is performing his duty at the exact time his master arrives, the

same as those servants being “awake” in the next verse, *gregoreo* implying watchfulness. Also it applies to knowing about the thief breaking in (the same verb).

Lk 12.37: Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.

Mt 24.43: But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into.

Lk 12.39-40: (cf. vs. above).

Sg 5.2: The voice of my beloved knocks at the door.

Daphaq is the verb for “knocks” and can apply to driving a flock (sheep) hard.

Sg 4.7: You are wholly beautiful, and there is no spot in you.

Mum or “spot” is a defect of blemish and can have liturgical implications as with cleansing, etc.

1Cor 8.2: If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

Dokeo is the verb for “imagines” which means to seem, to appear, and applies here to “know” or *gignosko*.

Gen 2.6: But a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

Ed is the noun for “mist” and refers to vapor sufficient to water the entire ground. The same *ed* may apply to the bride’s head filled with dew and drops of the night, next verse.

Sg 5.2: Open, open to me, my sister, my companion, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Ex 19.3: And Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel.”

First Moses is to “say” and then “tell.” The first is a general type of address and the latter is more specific, *amar* and *nagad*.

Ex 19.16-9: (Mt. Sinai wrapped in smoke).

Ex 20.21: And the people stood afar off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Haraphel is the noun for “thick darkness” and intimates thickness of cloud cover.

Sg 1.5-6: I am black, but beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the skins of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has looked unfavorably upon me.

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 *homoioima*. The former is more concrete and the latter suggests resemblance.

Mt 13.6: But when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away.

“Scorched and withered away” or *kaumatizo* and *xeraino*. The latter means a drying up which results from the first.

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 kept my own vineyard.

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

Sg 1.7-8: Where do you tend your flock, where do you cause them to rest at noon...go forth by the footsteps of the flocks and feed your kids by the shepherds' tents.

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

Sg 1.9: I have compared you, my companion, to my horses in the chariots of Pharaoh.

Sg 2.3-5: (Bride compared to an apple, etc.).

1Cor 13.9: For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect.

Ek emerous or “from part” is the root for the adjective “imperfect.”

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

Literally “in a figure” or *ainigma*, dark saying or riddle which may be equated with the *ek merous* of the previous verse.

Ps 24.7: Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! That the King of glory may come in.

“Gates and doors” or *shahar* and *petach*: the former often applies to a city and the latter can be any opening or entrance which here are “ancient,” suggesting they had been closed a very long time.

Mk 3.35: Whoever does the will of God is my brother, sister, and mother.

Doing the divine will makes a person these three relationships to Jesus. Note absence of a father which intimates the Father of Jesus.

Is 26.19: For your dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades you will let it fall.

Rapha' means "shades" and derives from a verbal root meaning to restore, console, heal.

Is 43.20: For I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

"Wilderness and desert" or *midbar* and *yeshymon*. The former can refer to a sterile land and the latter more to a waste.

Ezk 47.9: And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish.

"Living creature" is the noun *nephesh* which more properly refers to a soul. *Sharats* as "swarms" also means to creep, to crawl.

Ps 65.9: You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water.

Paqad is the verb for "visit" which has multiple meanings, more often military, as mustering troops, etc.

2Cor 12.2-4: (Paul's ecstasy).

1Cor 13.9: For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect.

Noted several verses above.

1Cor 8.2: If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

Dokeo is the verb for "imagines" which means to seem, to appear, and applies here to "know" or *gignosko*.

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.

Epekteino or "straining forward" consists of the root *teino* (to stretch forward) prefaced with the preposition *epék* which is comprised of *epi* and *ex* (upon and from).

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

Pros is the preposition for "to," indicative of direction towards-which.

Sg 5.3: I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?

These words precede the divine bridegroom's arrival at the door, the bride having prepared herself for the wedding night.

Gen 3.19: You are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Haphar is the noun for "dust," usually fine particles thrown up into the air.

2Cor 3.15-6: Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed.

Anagignosko is the verb for "read" and means literally to know again (*ana-*), to recognize. *Kardia* is the noun for "minds," more often as "heart."

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

Praxis is the noun for "practices" and often refers to the carrying out of business affairs compared with *ergon* referring to work or deeds as well as a transaction.

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

Anastrophe means "manner of life" and means literally a turning upside down and can refer to a conversion.

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.

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

The verb *enduo* meaning literally to put in (*en-*), that is, she assimilated the new "nature" or *anthropos* (literally, man) with the preposition *kata* regarding likeness (literally as in accord with the likeness). The same is applicable in the next verse.

Rom 13.14: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mt 22.11-2: (the wedding feast with a man lacking a proper garment).

The king enters to look at the guests, the verb being *theomai* meaning to survey or to behold.

Mt 10.10: No bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food.

Axios is the adjective for "deserves" meaning to be worthy.

2Cor 6.14: For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

"Partnership and fellowship:" *metoche* and *koinonia*. The first is literally a having with and the second has a more communal and religious ring to it.

Mk 2.21: No one sews a piece of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment.

Epiblema is the noun for “piece” meaning a patch or literally that which is placed upon.

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.

Prov 23.21: For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.

Yarash and *lavash*: to take possession, to occupy and to put on clothes which here are similar.

Ex 3.5: Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

Maqom and *‘admath*: “place and “ground.” To call the latter by the former serves to intensify the meaning of the location, that is, as “holy” (*qodesh*).

Ex 28.5: They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet stuff, and fine twined linen.

Laqach is the verb for “receive,” alternately as to take.

Ex 25.9: According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

Tavnyth is the noun for “pattern” which alternately means a structure, model or likeness.

Mt 10.10: (cf. above).

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

Pros or “to” signifies direction towards-which, continuous movement.

Jn 13.5: Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.

Diazonnumi means “girded”, the preposition *dia* (through) suggestive of a garment being wrapped around the middle of one’s body. The same can apply to the next verse regarding “majesty and strength.”

Ps 93.1: The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength.

Num 20.17: We will not pass through field or vineyard, neither will we drink water from a well; we go along the King’s Highway.

This highway ran from the Gulf of Aqabah to Syria.

Lk 3.16: I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

Hikanos as “worth” connotes being sufficient, competent or befitting.

Mk 1.7: (cf. vs. above).

Ps 40.2: He set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

Kun means “making secure” also meaning to establish, to found, and thereby suggestive of permanence.

1Cor 10.4: For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

Pneumatikos is the adjective for “supernatural.”

Jn 1.4: In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Here *zoe* = *phos* (life and light).

Jn 8.12: I am the light of the world.

Jn 14.6: I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

1Cor 15.53-7: (death vanquished).

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

“He is the source” is rendered literally as “from him” (*ex autou*).

1Cor 2.30: (cf. vs. above).

Sg 5.4: My beloved put forth his hand through the hole of the door, and my belly was moved for him.

Hamah means “moved” or fundamentally to hum, signifying an internal emotion.

2Cor 3.16: Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed.

Anagnosko is the verb for “read” and means literally to know again (*ana-*), to recognize. *Kardia* is the noun for “minds,” more often as “heart.”

Ps 24.7: Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! That the King of glory may come in.

“Gates and doors” or *shahar* and *petach*: the former often applies to a city and the latter can be any opening or entrance which here are “ancient,” suggesting they had been closed a very long time.

Wisd 13.6-7: Yet these men are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For as they live among his works they keep searching.

Despite going astray (*planao* means to wander), such men both seek and desire him, *zeteo* and *heurisko*. *Anastrepho* is the verb for “live” and means more to conduct oneself which in God’s “works” (*ergon*: deed or transaction).

Wisd 7.25: For she is a breath of the power of God and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty

Atmis and *aporrhoeia* or “breath and influence:” the former suggests steam or vapor and the latter a flowing forth with some vehemence.

Wisd 13.1-9: (origin and folly of idolatry).

Rom 1.20: Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Noeo and *kathorao* are two verbs used to express “clearly perceived.” The first applies to perception and understanding and the latter to seeing in accord with (*kata-*) a specific plan, form or idea.

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

Parerchomai is the verb for “pass away,” the preposition *para* suggestive of passing by the side or off to the side.

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

A verse consisting of Is 64.4 and 52.15. “Conceived” is rendered as *anabaino* (to go up) with regard to *epi kardian* or literally “upon the heart” (of man).

1Cor 13.12: Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

“Know and understand fully:” both have the root *gignosko* while the latter has the preposition *epi* (upon) prefaced to it, a knowing-upon.

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

Gignomai is the verb for “were made” and suggests more a coming into being which can apply to the next two verses.

Is 66.2: All these things my hand has made.

Acts 7.50: Did not my hand make all these things?

Heb 4.15: For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning.

“Sympathize” is the verb *sumpatheo*, literally as to suffer with. “In every respect” is rendered literally as “according to all according to likeness.”

1Tm 3.16: Great indeed we confess is the mystery of our religion. He was manifested in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

“Religion” or *eusebeia* is presented as a “mystery” or *mysterion*. That is, it is a reverence which requires initiation.

Jn 1.14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth .

Skenoo: “dwelt” or literally, to dwell in a tent.

Lk 1.79: To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

A quote consisting of references from Is 9.2, 58.8 and 60.1-2.

2Cor 4.6: For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

A reference to Gn 1.3. A direct correspondence between “in our hearts” and “in the face of Christ.” Two words are used relative to light: *lampo* and *photismos* or “shone” and “light.” The former suggests giving light and the latter being radiant.

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

Sumphutos is the adjective for “united” suggests having grown together as well as being grafted.

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

Logos is “word” spoken by The Word which automatically means shifting attention to the one (Father) who had sent him, this *Logos*.

2Cor 4.10-1: (Imitating death of Jesus).

Ps 95.4: In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

The Hebrew lacks "in his hand" and has literally "which to him is."

Is 40.12: Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span?

"Measured and marked off" or *madad* and *kun*. The first means to extend as with a hand and the second, to establish or make permanent.

Mt 9.18-30: (Jesus heals).

Jn 11.11-44: (cf. vs. above).

Mt 8.1-4: (Cure of a leper).

Rom 1.20: Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

(Cf. vs. above). *Anapologetos* suggests being without legal defense..

The Song of Songs, 5.2-7

The voice of my beloved knocks at the door: "Open, open to me, my sister, my companion, my dove, my perfect one: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? My beloved put his hand through the hole (of the door), and my belly was moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers dropped choice myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; my beloved was gone; my soul went forth at his speech, I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he did not answer me. The watchmen that go their rounds in the city found me; they smote me; they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

J.315 Our Lord has given us precepts to make the M.996 disciples desire the transcendent once they have shaken off as dirt every material element from their nature. One of these precepts is the necessity to overcome sleep in searching for the life on high. They must always keep their minds awake warding off the insidious deceiver both of souls and of truth, the deceiver who creates a kind of drowsiness. J.316 By such drowsiness and sleep I mean those dream-like fantasies formed in persons such as rulers and rich lords who are sunk in the deceptions of this life: vanity, seductive pleasures, love of glory and its enjoyment, love of honor and every other kind of deception sought after in this life by careless persons. Such things are transitory and pass with the flow of time. They seem to have existence but are not what we think, nor do they always remain in the way we think of them. Just as the sea swells into waves and has a kind of substance by the wind's movements then suddenly subsides and is calm, so it is with transitory things. They are destroyed like waves.

J.317 In order that our minds may not partake of illusions, we are exhorted to shake off heavy sleep from our soul's eyes lest by our inclination to non-existent things we slip away from what has substance and true being. Christ, therefore, admonishes us to be watchful: "Let your loins be girded and have lamps burning in your hand." Light shining in our eyes will scare off sleep: our loins girded with a belt will not let the body sleep and the exertion of labor will not allow sleep. The meaning of these symbols is evident: he who has girded himself with temperance lives in the light of a pure conscience, for his life is illumined by the lamp of confidence. His soul remains sleepless and undeceived under truth's rays, and he is not idly occupied by useless dreams. If we achieve this with the Word's assistance, we will attain the angelic life. For the divine precepts compare us to angels J.318 saying, "And you ought to be like men waiting for their master to return from the marriage feast, in order that when he comes and knocks, they will immediately open the door for him."

M.997 Those expecting the Lord's return are watchful at the heavenly gates when he, the King of glory, enters his transcendent blessedness. According to Psalm Eighteen--"As a bridegroom coming from his chamber"--he has betrothed us, we who had committed fornication with idols, as a virgin through a mystical rebirth, restoring our nature to virginal incorruptibility. The marriage ceremonies are complete, and the Word is espoused to the Church. As John says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." The bride-Church is received into the mystical bridal chamber, and the angels expect the king's return while he leads the Church as a bride to a blessedness befitting her nature. He said that our lives are to be free from evil and deception and hence prepared to receive the Lord's coming. By watching at the J.319 gates of our dwellings, we prepare ourselves for the bridegroom's summons when he arrives and knocks at the door. "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds so doing when he comes."

Because it is blessed to obey the One knocking, the soul which always looks to that blessedness, perceives its bridegroom standing at the door. She diligently watches at her own treasure house and says, "The voice of my beloved knocks at the door." How can we worthily consider the bride's ascent to what is more divine? By exhibiting such authority and boldness, she dismisses the biting north wind, summons the light breeze [i.e., the south wind], makes by the sound of her voice a garden of apples whose spices are the choice berries and sets her garden as a table for the Lord of creation who rejects nothing set before him, but says that all things are lovely: the myrrh, spices, bread with honey and wine with milk. Of these the Word himself testified, "You are wholly J.320 beautiful, and there is no spot in you." She is now disposed to receive God's appearance, but she does not yet receive the Word standing at her door; rather, she admires the sound of his voice. She says that this voice is not hers, but the bridegroom's at her door: "The voice of my beloved knocks at the door."

You see how boundless is the path for those rising up to God, yet how is it that what the soul has always comprehended is the beginning of something beyond her? We expected that the bride would come to a stop on her way on high because of the words addressed to her. (For what more could she seek after so great a testimony to her perfection?) We then see her inside, not outside her house. She has not yet delighted at the appearance of her groom's face but is still M.1000 led by hearing to participate in the good. We learn that for those who are always advancing to what is greater the Apostle's words hold true: "If anyone thinks he knows something, J.321 he does not yet know as he should." Hitherto the soul understands only what she has understood, but what she still does not know is infinitely greater than what she has already comprehended. Because of this, the bridegroom often appears to the soul; although not present to her sight, he promises the bride by his voice that he will appear.

To clarify this point, I will give an example. If anyone happened to be near the fountain which scripture says rose from the earth at the beginning of creation and was large enough to water the earth's surface, he would approach it marveling at the endless stream of water gushing forth and bubbling out. Never could he say that he had seen all the water (For how can what is hidden in the earth's bosom be seen? Even if he remained a long time near the gushing water, he would always behold the water as for the first time, for the water never ceases to gush forth). Similarly, the person looking at the divine, invisible beauty will always discover it anew since he will see it as something newer and more wondrous in comparison to what he had already comprehended. He continues to wonder at God's continuous revelation; he never exhausts his desire to see more because what he awaits is always more magnificent and more divine than anything has seen. Thus the bride wonders and is amazed at her knowledge. Despite this, she never ceases to long for further vision. Now the bride perceives the Word knocking J.322 and she rises at the sound saying, "The voice of my beloved is knocking at my door."

Once the bride has quieted those who have listened to her, the text then says, "Open, open to me, my sister, my companion, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Our interpretation will help you grasp the meaning of this text. God's manifestation to the great Moses began with light, after which he spoke through a cloud. Having risen higher and having become more perfect, Moses saw God in darkness. By this example we learn that our withdrawal from false, deceptive ideas of God is a transition from darkness into light. Next, a more careful understanding of hidden things leads the soul through appearances to God's hidden nature which is symbolized by a cloud overshadowing all appearances and which little by little accustoms J.323 the soul to behold what is hidden. Finally the soul is led on high. Forsaking what human nature can attain, the soul enters within the sanctuary of divine knowledge where she is hemmed in on all sides by the divine darkness. The soul forsakes M.1001 everything without, that is, appearances and ideas; the only thing left for her contemplation is the unseen and unattainable in which God dwells. Scripture says of the Lawgiver, "Moses entered into the darkness where God was."

Having considered these matters, we must now examine the words before us which are related to what we said earlier: the bride was "black" when shadowed by obscure teachings. Then the sun looked unfavorably upon her, the very sun that warms the seeds lacking roots cast upon the rocks by temptation. The bride was defeated by those who fought against her; she has not kept her vineyard. Because the bride did not know herself, she pastured flocks of goats instead of sheep. But when she disassociated herself from evil and desired to approach

J.324 the fountain of light by that mystical kiss, she became bright with the light of truth, having washed herself of the ignorance of darkness. Next the bride is compared to a horse because of the swiftness of her progress and to a dove because of her nimble mind. Like a horse she runs through everything she has understood and experienced; she flies like a dove and rests with desire under the apple tree's shadow. The Song speaks of the shade of an apple tree instead of a cloud. She is now embraced by a divine night where the bridegroom comes near but does not appear.

How can what is invisible be seen at night? The bridegroom bestows upon the soul a perception of his presence although a clear apprehension escapes it since his invisible nature lies hidden. What is the mystic initiation which the soul experiences during this night? It is the Word touching the door. We understand by this door the human mind searching for what is hidden; through it the object sought after enters. Therefore, truth stands outside our souls because, as the Apostle says, we know in part. Truth knocks at the mind by means of allegory and mystery saying "Open," and with this summons the bridegroom suggests a way we can open the door. He gives us certain keys, that is, the beautiful J.325 words of the Song. Names such as sister, companion, dove and perfect one are clearly the keys which open what is hidden.

The bridegroom says, "If you wish to open the door and raise the gates of your soul that the king of glory may enter, you must receive my wishes in your soul." As the Gospel makes clear, whoever lives in accord with Christ, he is his brother and sister. You must approach the truth and be its companion so that you are not separated from it. You must be perfect like a dove, that is, you must lack nothing and be completely filled with innocence and purity. Once you have received these names as keys, O soul, let truth enter and M.1004 become a sister, companion, dove and perfect one. Your reward for receiving me and letting me dwell with you is dew from my head of which I am full and the drops of the night flowing down from my locks. These words symbolize the healing power of the dew as we have learned from the prophet: "Your dew is their healing." The "drops of the night" have a meaning which we have examined earlier. It is impossible for a person entering the inner part of the sanctuary J.326 of the invisible to meet a drenching torrent of knowledge. Rather, one must be content, if by a few obscure insights, truth bedews his knowledge: these spiritual drops flow from the saints and the hearers of the divine.

I understand the locks suspended from the head of the universe to symbolize the prophets, evangelists and apostles. Although they are dew-drops in comparison with the truth, despite the fullness and depth of their teaching, each one draws water from dark, hidden and unseen treasures that have become rivers for us. Paul was such a river born aloft on the wave of his thoughts to the paradise of the third heaven, that is, to those unutterable, indescribable words. Paul swells like the sea with all this eloquence, showing again that it is a dew drop in comparison with the true Word. He says, "We know in part and we prophesy in part;" and "If any man thinks he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;" and "I do not estimate myself to have apprehended." If then the dew and the J.327 drops from the bridegroom's locks seem like rivers, the open sea and waves, how necessary it is for us to think of that fountain of which Christ says, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me." Let each person listening to these words form an idea of such a wonder by comparing it to what we have said. If such a small drop gives birth to rivers, how can we form an idea of the river of God from this mere drop?

Let us see how the bride obeys the Word and makes an entrance for her spouse. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Rightly the bride heard her spouse summoning her to be a sister, companion, dove and perfect one so that through these words truth might dwell in her. She did what she had heard, that is, she removed her garment of skin with which she clothed herself after her sin. The bride also washed from her feet the dust with which she was covered when returning to earth after her time in paradise because she had heard "You are dust and unto dust you shall return." J.328 Therefore the bride opened a way into her soul for her M.1005 spouse by removing the veil from her heart, that is, her flesh. By flesh I mean the old man. Those who are about to wash the filth from their soul's feet in the bath of the Word are exhorted by the Apostle to remove it and to cast it off. By stripping off the old man and by removing the veil from her heart, the bride opened a way for the Word. Upon his entrance, the soul makes him her garment according to the Apostle's bidding that he strip off the fleshly garment of the old man and put on the tunic created according to God in holiness and righteousness. He says that Jesus is this

garment.

The bride confesses that she will no longer take up this rejected tunic but is content with the one tunic which she put on by a rebirth from above according to the command given to the disciples. This action confirms divine garment to no longer put on the tunic of sin nor to have two tunics but only one, lest these two tunics be incompatible with each other. For what fellowship does the dark J.329 garment have with the luminous, immaterial one? Not only does the law forbid us to have two tunics but also to sew a patch on an old cloak. This is to prevent the shame of the person putting it on from becoming worse because the patch may not adhere, and the tear of the old garment may become worse and harder to fix. Christ says, "remove (the patch) from the old and a worse tear results" and by it, what is shameful may be exposed. Thus the bride says, "I have taken off my garment; how shall I put it on again?" For the person who beholds himself clothed with the radiant tunic of the Lord which be put on with purity and incorruptibility is like the tunic Christ showed in his transfiguration on the mountain. This person then rejects the poor, tattered garment with which a drunk and a harlot clothe themselves according to the proverb.

Neither is a person soiled again with dust from the earth after having washed his feet. "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" says the bride. For by a divine command Moses removed from his feet the covering of dead J.330 skins because he walked upon holy, enlightened ground. The text says that Moses never again put his sandals on even when, according to the pattern received on the mountain, he fashioned the priestly garments with gold, purple, linen, hyacinth and scarlet, combining these splendid colors into a woven material that their combined beauty may shine forth. Still, Moses fashioned no adornment for his feet, for the priests' feet were bare and lacked covering. A priest must tread on holy ground, and here it is unlawful to tread with dead skins. Therefore the Lord forbids his disciples to wear sandals since he bids them to go on the way M.1008 of sanctity. You are not unmindful of that holy way on which the disciples are hidden to run, instructed by him who said, "I am the way." We cannot go on this way unless we remove the covering of the dead man.

The bride had entered this way in which the Lord washes her feet and wipes them with the linen cloth girding him (This towel girding the Lord has power to cleanse from sins. The "Lord has clothed himself with power and has girded himself"). Once the bride has set her feet J.331 on this royal road she watches herself; neither straying to the right nor to the left, she does not defile her feet with mud by stepping off the road. You certainly understand what these words mean: through baptism the bride has once and for all removed her sandals (For the task of him who baptizes is to loosen the sandal strap as John bore witness when he could not do this for the Lord. How could John loosen the strap of him who was never bound by the strap of sin?). The bride keeps her feet undefiled on the paved road just like David when he placed his feet on a rock after washing them from mud. David then said, "He brought me out of the pit of misery and from miry clay. He set my feet on a rock and directed aright my footsteps." We understand this rock to be the Lord who is the light, truth, incorruptibility and righteousness with which the spiritual road is paved. The J.332 person not going off either side of the road keeps his footsteps always unsoiled by pleasure's mire. These, then, are the means by which the bride's door is opened to the Word. She promises to no longer take up the rejected dirt nor to receive any earthly defilement on the road of this life. Her soul is now ready to be sanctified. The Lord himself is this sanctification. Therefore we have finished examining the sense of these words.

No longer does the bridegroom's voice knock at her heart but the divine hand penetrates inside through the door's opening: "My beloved put forth his hand through the hole of the door, and my belly was moved for him." It is indeed clear to a person of prudent understanding that these words are more sublime than what has preceded. "Open," says the Word to his bride, that he might give her the capacity to open the content of the divine names. The bride obeys the Word (She has become what she has heard: a sister, companion, dove and perfect one). She removes the tunic of skins, washes dirt off her feet and does not put on again that ugly, ragged J.333 garment. Neither does she fix her footsteps on the earth. She M.1009 has heard her bridegroom's voice and trusts in its command. The bride opens the door after removing the veil from her heart; she opens the door, the veil of flesh; once the door has been flung wide open, the king of glory may enter. But the gate has a narrow aperture through which the bridegroom cannot fit, for he can scarcely get his hand inside. However, his hand reaches inside and rouses the bride's desire for seeing him. She considers as gain the knowledge of the hand of him whom she desired.

If we linger here a little on the Song, its contents may impart to us a lesson. The human soul has two natures: the incorporeal, intellectual and pure on the one hand; the bodily, material and irrational on the other. When the soul is J.334 purged of the gross habits of earthly life, it looks up through virtue to what is connatural and divine; it does not cease to search out and seek the origin of created reality, the source of its beauty from which springs the power whose wisdom is manifested in it. Wisdom moves all one's thoughts and capacity for investigation to grasp out of curiosity the object of one's search. Wisdom limits our comprehension of God and is the sole divine operation which descends to our mortal existence for the purpose of giving us life. Similarly, water moved by wind does not remain at the edge of the lake but becomes a spring gushing forth which rushes on high to its connatural state. Once it has passed the highest manifestation of water and becomes mixed with air, the wind's movement comes to rest on high. Such is the case with the soul seeking the divinity. Because the soul reaches from below to a knowledge of the transcendent and to a comprehension of God's wonderful works, it is unable to proceed further in curiously scrutinizing J.335 these works; rather, it marvels and worships him who alone is recognized by his works. The soul sees the heavenly beauty, the splendor of the luminaries, the swiftness of the earth turning on its axis, the good order of things, the harmony of the stars' course and the yearly cycle with its four seasons. The earth is sustained by God who embraces it. He changes the functions of the stars above. He sustains the great variety of living beings: water creatures, birds, things on the earth such as plants and grasses, their quantities and differences and the properties of fruits and juices. All these manifest God's power.

When the soul beholds these wonders, it considers him J.336 who is recognized in his works. Similarly, in the age to come M.1012 all limitations will yield to that life which is beyond anything seen, heard or understood. As the Lord says, "Heaven and earth will pass away." Then we will no longer know in part the Good through its works as now, nor will we understand the Transcendent by its manifestations, but we will fully comprehend the form of ineffable beauty according to a different mode of enjoyment, the nature of which has not yet entered man's heart. Meanwhile our soul's limit of ineffable knowledge consists in appearances whose operation in creation we symbolically understand as the bridegroom's hands. By them the purified soul no longer sets foot upon material existence so that it may not defile its footsteps by being frustrated in expectation for the bridegroom to enter its house.

For the time being the bride has enjoyed contemplating only her spouse's hand which signifies his capacity for action: "My beloved has put his hand through the hole of the J.337 door." Human nature is not able to contain the infinite, unbounded divine nature. "My belly was moved (*throeo*) for him," the bride says. The term "wonder" (*throesis*) signifies amazement and astonishment at the sight of this miracle. Every soul endowed with the faculty of reason is struck by the wonderful deeds of the divine hand which transcends our human capacity, for the divine nature effecting such wonders can neither be grasped nor contained. Every created being is the work of that hand which appeared through the aperture. So John cries out about this out in his Gospel, "Everything was made through him" and the prophet Isaiah expresses the same thought. He calls the hand God's operative power: "My hand made all these things." Man's inquiring mind cannot comprehend that operation: the celestial beauty, namely the sky, the sun or any other wonder of creation. His heart is nevertheless moved at God's power. If he cannot understand these things, how can he comprehend God who lies beyond them?

J.338 I think that the image of the bride's house represents human life. God's creative hand contracted itself to reside in our small, worthless human existence; he partook of our human nature in everything except sin and filled us with astonishment at his appearance in the flesh, at his birth M.1013 from his mother who remained a virgin, at the mixture of light with darkness, of life with death, at the shortness of life and at the door's aperture which received him whose hand embraces all things and measures the heavens, earth and seas. For the bride, her spouse's hand represents the gift of the Gospel. Because God was seen on earth and conversed among men, we have known the pure, immortal beauty of the bridegroom, the Word's divinity and the splendor of true light by the work of his hands. For we understand God's hands as J.339 the operative power of the wonders by which the dead were restored to life, sight was restored to the blind, suffering of lepers was assuaged and every kind of incurable and severe illness was dismissed from bodies at his command.

The bridegroom's hands offer us two points for consideration: they suggest that the incomprehensible divine nature is made known through these operations alone. Through the bride's words the divine nature prophesies in advance the gift of the Gospel. Upon hearing them, we prepare ourselves to choose something better than what the Song contains. The way to the good may be adequately expressed through each of the Song's words. For if according to Paul we seek to know something of God from creation, we turn away from curiously examining what cannot be comprehended. If we cannot understand God's incomprehensible, unutterable nature, there arises an occasion for heresy against the truth. But if we look to the Gospel, we understand the mystery of the bridegroom's hand; thus our faith will become stronger with regard to the Gospel's hidden teachings, and we will receive what cannot be doubted through the prophetic words of the Song in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

+

The Twelfth Homily

Sg 5.5: I rose up to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers were full of myrrh on the handles of the lock.

Note the contrast between rising up and dropping (*qum* and *nataph*), the latter also meaning to make prophecy.

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

"What is earthly" reads literally as "the limbs upon the earth."

2Cor 3.16: Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed.

Anaginosko is the verb for "read" and means literally to know again (*ana-*), to recognize. *Kardia* is the noun for "minds," more often as "heart."

Jn 19.39: Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

Reference is to Jn 3.1-2 and 7.50.

Rom 6.4: We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Hosper and *houtos* or "so that and too" signifying a close parallel between two different realities, the divine and human.

Col 3.5: (cf. above).

Jn 12.24: Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

A contrast between two adjectives, *monos* and *polus* or "(remains) alone" and "much (fruit)."

1Cor 15.36: What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Zoopoieo: "comes to life" or literally "makes to life."

Mt 24.45: Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?

"Faithful and wise" or *pistos* and *phronimos*, the latter suggesting having presence of mind in the face of adversities.

Lk 12.45: (cf. above).

Ps 101.8: Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land.

"Morning by morning" reads literally as "to the mornings."

Dt 32.39: See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal.

Machats and *rapha'* or "wound and heal." The former means to agitate, to shake and the latter connotes a drooping.

2Cor 6.9: As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed.

The first two verbs have as their root *gignosko* (to know), the first with alpha privative and the second with the preposition *epi* prefaced to it (upon).

2Cor 12.10: For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Eudokeo or “am content” means to be well (*eu-*) pleased.

Acts 20.22-4: (Spirit testifies on behalf of Paul).

2Tm 4.6: For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come.

Kairos or “time” means more a special occasion, here with respect to *analsis* or “departure,” literally a loosening or dissolving.

2Cor 4.10: Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

Periphero is the verb for “carrying” or literally, “carrying around (*peri-*).” *Phaneroo* or “manifested” suggests a disclosure.

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

Tov me'od or “very good,” *me'od* being an adverb connoting excessiveness.

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. The next verse has this image or *eikon* after God's eternity.

Wisd 2.23: For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity.

Gen 2.9: The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Two example of the “tree of life:” the garden of Eden and with regard to the “river of the water of life.”

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 the 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.

Gen 2.9: (cf. above).

Gen 3.3: You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

Here emphasis is upon “touch” or *nagah* which implies a reaching.

Rom 6.23: For the wages of sin is death.

Opsonion is the noun for “wages” and applies to provisions or supplies.

Wisd 1.13: Because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.

Terpo is the verb for “delight” meaning to satisfy, to have enough, and used with the preposition *epe* (upon) “death” or *apoleia* which connotes destruction.

Prov 5.3: For the lips of a loose woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil.

“Drip and smoother:” the verb *nataph* (to fall in drops) and *chalaq* (connotes smoothness).

Hab 3.2: O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years renew it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

“Heard and report:” the verb *shamah* and the noun *shemah*, the latter being derived from the former.

Rom 6.11: So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Dead = sin vs. alive = God. The latter consists of the verb *zao* which connotes living life to the full.

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

Pros or “to” signifies direction towards-which, continuous movement.

1Cor 8.2: If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

Dokeo is the verb for “imagines” which means to seem, to appear, and applies here to “know” or *gignosko*.

Phl 3.13: But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

Epekteino or “straining forward” consists of the root *teino* (to stretch forward) prefaced with the preposition *eppek* which is comprised of *epe* and *ex* (upon and from).

Sg 5.5-6: Upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved. My beloved was gone. My soul went forth at his word.

Davar is the noun for “word” which caused the bride to go forth even though her divine spouse had left.

Mt 7.14: For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

“To life” reads literally “into (*eis*) life” which is with respect to a narrow gate and a hard way.

Mt 16.19: I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The verb is in the future meaning that Peter will have to wait from this point until the descent of the

Spirit at Pentecost. In the meanwhile, this being towards the end of Jesus' ministry, he would have to reconcile these words with his betrayal.

Jms 2.20: Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren?

Kenos is the adjective for "foolish" which means empty as well as vain.

Ex 33.12-22: (God's revelation to Moses, Mt. Sinai).

Ps 121.8: The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.

Shamar is the verb for "will keep" and used often with the keeping of the divine Torah as in Ps 119.

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

Jn 10.9: I am the door.

Ex 33.19-23: (cf. above).

Ex 2.11: One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.

This looking by Moses on the people's burdens parallels 3.7: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt."

Heb 11.24: By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Reference is to Ex 2.10-12.

Heb 11.25: Choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Proskairos is the adjective for "fleeting" consisting of the noun *kairos* prefaced with the preposition *pros* signifying direction towards-which.

Ex 2.11: (cf. above).

Acts 7.24: Seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian.

A reference to Ex 2.11-12. "Defended and avenged" *amuno* (connotes warding off) and *ekdikesis* (noun for an avenging used with the verb *poieo*, to make).

Ex 3.1: And he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

"West side" is *'achar* or after in the sense of behind.

Ex 2.23: In the course of those many days the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God.

Shewah is the noun for "cry" which also means to be freed from distress as well as to be rich or opulent.

Acts 7.30: Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush.

Reference is Ex 3.2-3. *Batos* is the noun for "bush" referring to either bramble bush or one with wild raspberries. The Hebrew for this word (next verse) is *seneh*, a thorn bush.

Ex 3.2-5: (The burning bush).

Ex 7.12: For every man cast down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

Tanyu is the noun for "serpents" often referring to a sea monster or a crocodile.

Ex 13.21: And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.

Hamud is the noun for "pillar" which is one of a cloud and fire and derives from the verbal root meaning to stand, to constitute.

Ex 15.25: And the Lord showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

Mataq is the verb for "became sweet" and fundamentally means to suck up.

Ex 17.6: Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it.

Nakah is the verb for "strike" and can apply to killing someone.

Ps 78.25: Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance.

'Avyr is the word for "angels" and more commonly means a mighty person as well as being noble.

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.

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

Ex 19.10-11: Consecration of the people by Moses, the verb being *qadash* or to make holy which implies

separating.

Ex24.17: Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire.

“Devouring” is the common verb *’akal* (to eat).

Ex19.20: And the Lord came down upon Mt Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and he came up.

The precise nature of this divine coming down isn’t specified despite the attendant drama of the situation.

Ex24.18: And Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. A Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Apparently the cloud was towards the base of Sinai as well as the summit. So to be on the mountain forty days and nights can apply to it as a whole compared to the summit only.

Ex31.18: And he gave to Moses when he made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Luach is the noun for “tables” where God’s finger acted as a pen for inscribing.

Ex 24.7: Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”

“Read it in the hearing” of the people is rendered literally as “he called in the ears” of the people.”

Ex 34.27: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.

Py or “mouth” is the way “in accordance with” is rendered. That is, mouth is associated directly with divine words.

Dt 9.10-12: (God appears at Sinai).

Ex 34.29-35: (God speaks with Moses, Sinai).

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

The only other specific prophet seems to have been Aaron mentioned in Ex 7.1 and before that, Abraham (cf. Gn 24.7).

Ex 3.11: Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

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

Num 12.8: With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech.

The idea of “mouth to mouth” is not unlike “faces to faces” several verses above, a sign of intimacy.

Chydah is the noun for “dark speech” and means that which is difficult or twisted.

Ex 33.13: Now therefore, I pray, 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” which can refer to grace. *Yadah* is the verb for “know” and implies intimate knowledge. The same two words are found in the next verse.

Ex33.17: This very thing that you have spoken I will do; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.

Ex33.21-3: (Moses sees God’s back).

Sg 5.6: I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and went away. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not.

“My soul failed me” is rendered as “my soul went out at his word.”

Ps 86.15: But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious.

Rachum and *chanun* or “merciful and gracious.” The former derives from a verbal root meaning to behold with tender affection and the latter is related to *chen* in Ex 33.13 above.

Ps 18.2-3: The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

The images here can pertain to Mount Sinai spoken of above from where the psalmist is “saved” from his enemies, *yashah* being the verb which is the root for the proper name Jesus.

Ps 46.1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

“Very present” is rendered as *nimtsa’ me’od* or literally as “found excessively.”

Ps 8.1: O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

’Adayr is the adjective for “majestic” and from a verbal root meaning to be wide, to swell out.

Sg 5.7: The watchmen that go their rounds in the city found me. They smote me, they wounded me; the

keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

“Watchmen” is derived from the verb *shamar*, often used in conjunction with keeping the Torah.

Sg 5.3: I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I soil them?

These words precede the divine bridegroom’s arrival at the door, the bride having prepared herself for the wedding night.

Gn 24.65: Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us? The servant said, "It my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.

A reference to Isaac about to meet Rebekah when she will become his wife. The time is evening which, coupled with Rebekah veiling herself, adds to the sense of mystery.

2Cor 3.16-7: To this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

“Turns and “removed” or *epistrepho* and *periaireo*: literally as to turn upon (*epi-*) and to take away from around (*peri-*).

Prov 23.13: Do not withhold discipline from a child; If you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

Musar is the noun for “discipline” also means admonition, usually from a parent to a child.

Dt 32.39: See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Machats and *rapha’* or “wound and heal.” The former means to agitate, to shake and the latter connotes a drooping.

Ps 23.4: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

“Rod and staff” or *shevet* and *mishhen*. The former applies to a shepherd’s crook or a king’s scepter whereas the latter is more a support of any kind.

Ps 23.5-6: You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

“Goodness and mercy” or *tov* and *chesed*. The former is the common adjective whereas the latter is that difficult to translate quality of divine mercy, not unlike *agape*.

Ps 115.3: Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.

Chaphats is the verb for “pleases” and suggests a bending or an inclining.

Ps 118.10-2: (Taking refuge in God).

Jn 10.10: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

“Kill and destroy” or *thuo* (to kill for food) and *apollumi* (connotes complete destruction).

Ps 121.4-8: (God guarding Israel does not slumber).

Ps 127.1: Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Shawe’ means “in vain” and also applies to any falsehood or iniquity.

Heb 1.4: 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*).

2Cor 6.16 (Lev 26.12): I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

A quote from Lev 26.12. “Live and move among” or *enoikeo* and *emperipateo*. The former applies to a living in whereas the latter, a walking in-around (*em-* and *peri-*).

1Cor 3.16: Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Naos as “temple” refers to its inmost part.

Lk 15.4-10: (The lost drachma).

Ps 89.20: I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him.

Mashach is the verb for “anointed” from which is derived the noun messiah, David being a forerunner or type of Jesus.

Ps 89.22-3: The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

“Outwit” is rendered literally as “shall not raise in him.”

Ps 34.7: The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

The very act of encamping (*chanah*) effects or causes to effect deliverance, the verb being *chalats*

which means a drawing out or departing.

Ps 23.4: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Cf. above.

Dt 32.39: See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Cf. above.

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

Karpos as “fruit” can also apply to interest or profit.

Gal 6.17: Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Stigma is the noun for “marks” which usually refers to a tattoo mark or a brand.

2Cor 4.10: Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

Periphero is the verb for “carrying” or literally, “carrying around (*peri-*).” *Phaneroo* or “manifested” suggests a disclosure.

1Cor 15.31: I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!

Kauchaomai is the verb for “protest” and means to speak loudly, to boast.

Phl 3.10-13: (Paul sharing in Christ's sufferings).

Sg 4.13-4: Your shoots are a garden of pomegranates, with the fruit of choice berries; camphor, with spikenard: spikenard, and saffron, calamus and cinnamon; with all woods of Lebanon, myrrh, aloes, with all chief spices.

Note eight consecutive references from the Song of Songs. The “shoots” or *shikchym* come from the verbal root *shalach*, “to send,” and the Septuagint uses the term *apostolai* which, in turn, is related to the Greek for “apostle.”

Sg 4.16: Awake, O north wind; and come, O south; and blow through my garden, and let my spices flow out.

“North” or *tsaphon*, the first direction mentioned by the bridegroom, designates a place of cold and is derived from the verbal root, *tsaphan*, “to hide,” alluding to the darkness connected with that direction. The second direction, “south” (wind) is symbolic of the desert and therefore the right side of the Jerusalem Temple. That is, “right” when one looks towards the east or rising of the sun. These two directions are important for the Song's bride in that they serve to orient her with regard to the Temple, mythic center of the earth, from which all directions emanate.

Sg 4.15: A fountain of a garden, and a well of water springing and gurgling from Lebanon.

Nazal is the verb for “gurgling” which means to flow or to run in abundance.

Sg 4.7: You are all fair, my companion, and there is no spot in you.

Mum or “spot” is a defect of blemish and can have liturgical implications as with cleansing, etc.

Sg 5.2: I sleep, but my heart is awake; the voice of my beloved knocks at the door saying, “Open, open to me, my companion, my sister, my dove, my perfect one. For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Hur, which also means “to be ardent,” “to be naked,” “to be blind”): the same verb used in Sg 2.7 with reference to the bridegroom, “that you stir not up nor awaken love until it pleases.” Presumably the bride has drunk the wine mentioned in the previous verse, the one mixed with milk. This unique blend makes her sleep (wine) yet remain awake (milk).

Sg 5.3: I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?

Here we have the same word, *kutoneth*, for “garment,” only in Genesis it is composed of “skins” (*hor*).

Note that *hor* is derived from *hur* as seen above with regard to “I sleep but my heart is awake.”

Sg 5.5: I rose up to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers choice myrrh, on the handles of the lock.

Note mention of two distinct but related elements: “hands dripped with myrrh” and “fingers with liquid myrrh.” The former has the verb *nataph* (‘to drip’) as in Sg 4.11: “Your lips drop as the honeycomb.” The latter or “fingers” are apparently soaked with “liquid myrrh,” literally, “passing over (*havar*) myrrh” which implies an abundance of this solution.

Sg 5.6-7: I opened to my beloved; my beloved was gone. My soul went forth at his speech. I sought him, but found him not. I called him, but he answered me not.

Note the similarity between the bride's words and the disciples: “My soul failed when he spoke” and “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures” (Lk

24.32)? Here Christ opens the scriptures, whereas in the Song it is the bride who opens the door; surely her intent is for her beloved to have the scriptures opened or explained to her which is why like the disciples, her "heart burned" within her or in her own words, "My soul failed when he spoke."

Ps 78.20: He smote the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed.

"Gushed out and overflowed" or *zuv* and *shataph*. The former applies to any situation whereas the latter is more forceful.

Ex 17.6: Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock and water shall come out of it that the people may drink.

Moses is aware of the Lord's presence before him, but this verse intimates that the people are not, that they are more focused on the water.

Dt 8.15: And scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock.

"Flinty" or *chalamysh* is a noun which connotes a certain smoothness.

Ps 114.8: Who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

Haphak is the verb for "turns" and connotes an overthrowing or change.

Is 6.1-8: (Isaiah's vision in the temple).

2Chron 26.19-23: (Azariah becomes leprous).

2Cor 3.13: Not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor.

"Might see" is *atenizo* which means an intent look, to look with earnest or literally (alpha privative) to look without extension.

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

"Love" being derived from the verbal root *chul* which has multiple meanings such as "to turn," "to tremble," "to be strong," "to wait." Most likely the notion of being ill originates from the fact when in such a state, one "turns" in pain or "trembles."

Sg 2.5-6: (Bride wounded with love).

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

"Love and know" or *agapao* and *gignosko* go together, God being *agape* itself.

The Song of Songs, 5.5-7

I rose up to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers were full of myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; my beloved was gone; my soul went forth at his word. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he answered me not. The watchmen that go their rounds in the city found me. They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

J.340 Those preparing to travel abroad have high expectations M.1013 for the coming voyage. When they bring their merchant ship out from port and the helmsman directs the ship's prow J.341 towards the open sea, the sailors offer a prayer at the voyage's M.1016 start, asking God for a safe journey. Of chief concern in their prayer is a gentle breeze to push their sails in the direction desired by the pilot at the ship's stern. With a favorable wind, calm sea and gentle, rippling waves, the sea causes no distress because the ship easily flies over the waves. To the sailors' eyes is already present the hoped-for wealth while their voyage is proceeding well and before any danger arises. I use these examples as a kind of prologue, for what I mean is quite evident to those receptive in listening. The vast sea represents contemplation of the divine words. From this voyage we expect great wealth; the Church is this living vessel which expects the riches of divine guidance in all its fullness. But the J.342 Song's text acting as pilot does not touch the tiller before prayer is offered to God by the entire crew so that the Holy Spirit's power might breathe on us and put into motion the waves of our thoughts. In this way he guides our prayer as one directs a voyage. Having thus traversed the open sea by contemplation, we might traffic in the wealth of knowledge if by your prayers the Holy Spirit strikes our sails.

Let us begin with the divinely inspired words which read as follows: "I rose up to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers were full of myrrh on the handles of the lock." The living Word cannot be present in us (I mean the pure, invisible bridegroom who unites the soul to himself by incorruptibility and holiness), unless we remove the veil of flesh by the mortification of our bodies on earth. In J.343 this way we

will open the door to the Word that he may enter and dwell with the soul. This is clear not only from the Apostle's divine teachings but from the bride herself. "I rose," she said, "to open to my beloved" by making my hands fountains of myrrh from which flowed spices and by showing that my fingers were filled with myrrh. By such words the bride opens a way for her spouse: "being buried with him through baptism into death, I rose."

Resurrection is not effected in us unless a voluntary death precedes it, Such a voluntary death is indicated by the drops of myrrh dripping from the bride's hands because her fingers are filled with this spice. She says that myrrh did not come into her hands from any other source (if this were so, myrrh would mean something accidental and involuntary); rather, her J.344 hands (the operative faculties of the soul) drop myrrh, M.1017 meaning a voluntary mortification of her bodily passions. This is why all her fingers are filled with myrrh. By using the word "fingers" the Song interprets each activity affected by virtue. We can understand this as meaning, "I received the power of the resurrection by mortifying my bodily members on earth. Freely have I taken this task of mortification; the myrrh placed in my hands was not someone else's but flowed from my own free will. Thus the same disposition may always be seen in all my acts of virtue which are named 'fingers.' "

As for those who practice virtue, you can see some dead to one passion but alive to others. We observe some putting intemperance to death, but they still foster pride or other passions destructive to the soul such as cupidity, anger, ambition, love of honor or anything else of the sort. If these evil passions abide in the soul, one cannot show myrrh on one's J.345 fingers, for mortification and estrangement from evil do not extend throughout one's life. Once all the fingers are filled with what is understood as myrrh, the soul then rises and opens to the bridegroom. The great Saint Paul seems to have well understood the Lord who says, "An ear of corn cannot grow unless the grain be dissolved in death." Paul preaches this doctrine to the Church: the necessity for death to precede life, for life cannot be in a person unless it enters death's gate.

Our nature is two-fold: on the one hand, the subtle and light and on the other, the thick, material and heavy. Thus the movement of each has a proper activity which cannot be communicated to the other. For the intelligent and light is characteristic of upward movement, whereas the heavy and material always tends downward and is carried there. Because these two movements are by nature contradictory, the movement of one cannot function properly unless the other is slackened in its natural movement. Between these two is J.346 located our faculty of free choice which of itself makes the weak strong and visa versa: our will bestows victory to whichever side it supports. Thus in the Gospel the faithful and prudent steward is praised (In my opinion, the steward represents our free will. He is lauded because he maintains the master's house by destroying his foes. Their destruction is both food and health for what is good in us.). On the other hand, the bad servant who associates with drunkards is condemned since he mistreats and strikes those of God's household. A blow is truly given to virtue when evil has its day. Because of this it does us well to be zealous for the prophet's word, M.1020 that is, to destroy all evildoers of the land in the early morning and to wipe out from the Lord's city (the city is the soul) all thoughts desirous of evil. Once these evils are destroyed, our better part will prosper. Thus by death do we live when one of the two men within us is put to death, and the Word bestows life to the other. As the J.347 prophet says, "I will kill and I will bring to life." J.347 Paul lived by dying: he was strengthened in weakness, followed his course while in chains, had wealth in poverty, was rich while having nothing and always had the death of Jesus in his body.

But let us return to our discussion, that is, it is through death that the soul rises (If it does not die, it remains forever dead and is incapable of life. By dying the soul passes into life and rejects everything mortal). This teaching is confirmed for us in the bride, "I rose up to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers were filled with myrrh on the handles of the lock." Myrrh is symbolic of death, as no one acquainted with sacred scripture can doubt. How can death raise us up from death? I think that we should seek a clearer understanding of this point. We will respond to the best of our ability, treating it in an orderly fashion. God made all things exceedingly beautiful as the Genesis story of creation testifies. Among such exceedingly beautiful J.348 things is man; rather, he was adorned with a beauty better than other created beings. What can be better than the image of incorruptible beauty? If everything is exceedingly beautiful, and man was among them and created above them, death certainly was not present in him. Man would not have been beautiful if the sullen stamp of death were in him. However, man was the image and likeness of eternal life, truly beautiful and exceedingly good, adorned with the radiant form of life.

God's paradise was for man, and it teemed with life due to an abundance of trees. God's commandment was the law of life which promised that man would not die. In the midst of paradise was planted a tree teeming with life: how necessary it is to understand what is meant by that tree whose fruit was life! On the other hand, there was a death-giving tree whose J.349 fruit was both good and evil. It, too, was in the center of paradise. These two trees could not occupy the same place at the center of paradise: if we allow one to be at the center, the other must be excluded. The dead center of a completely M.1021 bounded object is determined by its equidistance from the circumference. Since a circle has only one center, it can never have two centers occupying the same location. If the center of the other circle takes the place of the one already there, it is necessary to substitute another circle; thus the first center is excluded from being its center, while a new circle is described about the second center. But scripture says that in the center of paradise both trees had a power contradictory to each other; I mean one tree bestowed life and the other's fruit was death. Saint Paul named this latter fruit "sin" saying that the "fruit of sin is death."

The lesson we must understand here is that life is the most central of God's plants. Death was not planted, nor did it have J.350 roots nor room of its own; by the barrenness of its life, participation in the good became fruitless for living beings. Since life was at the center of all the things God planted, death's nature consists in the cessation of life. Therefore the death-giving tree which is symbolically presented to us and whose fruit has a power from contradictory qualities is in the center of paradise. The text clearly says that it was at once good and evil, hinting, I think, at sin's nature. Pleasure indeed precedes everything done through evil, for a sin cannot be found without being yoked to pleasure, for instance, a sin connected with anger and lust. Because of this, the fruit is called "beautiful" by the mistaken judgement of those finding their good in pleasure. As a result, the fruit is found to be evil due to the bitterness of its taste. According to Proverbs, honey drops from the lips of evil and moistens the throat for a time; afterwards it is found more bitter than gall by those who tasted its sweetness with wicked intent.

Man cut himself off from the fruitfulness of good things and was filled with the fruit bringing ruin through disobedience (the name of this fruit is death-yielding sin). Man J.351 immediately died to the better life, having exchanged divine life for one brutish and devoid of reason. Once death had been mixed with nature, mortality passed on to successive generations of children. Thus our very life has become death, for in a way, our life has died. Our life is mortal indeed and was deprived of immortality. But the person knowing that he is in the midst of two lives crosses over from mortality to immortality. By eliminating the former, the bad one, he gives victory to the latter. By death man M.1024 exchanged true life for this mortal life; thus when he dies to this mortal, brutish life, he passes over to life eternal. Undoubtedly one cannot enter a life of blessedness unless he is dead to sin. The [Genesis] text interpreted this point saying that there are two trees at the center of paradise: one there by nature and the other coming afterwards by privation. For the alternation of life and death occurs through participation and deprivation with regard to the same thing. Whoever dies J.352 to good lives for evil, and he who dies to evil, lives for virtue. Thus the bride's hands are correctly shown to be full of myrrh; by her death to all sin she rises to make an entrance for the Word. The Word whom she admits is Life.

The soul looking towards God is raised to this sublime height as we have observed earlier. It does not know as it ought, as Paul says, nor does the soul estimate itself to have comprehended but runs to what lies beyond, stretching forward to what is before. The Song offers these words of the bride: "Upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved." And she adds, "My beloved was gone. My soul went forth at his word." The bride teaches us here that the only way for comprehending that power which transcends all understanding is never to remain in any notion of him but to always move forward and never stand still. Being filled with myrrh, the bride symbolically J.353 names "fingers" death to evil in every action of life. By her hands dripping myrrh she shows her own free consent to virtue. She says that her hands touched the door's bolt, that is, her good deeds have approached the narrow, constricted entrance whose bolt the Word offers to persons like Peter. Thus the bride opens the kingdom's door: by her hands which manifest her good deeds and by the key of faith; through both deeds and faith the Word prepares the key of the kingdom in us.

When she hoped, like Moses, that the king's face would appear to her, the one whom she desired escapes her grasp. She says, "my beloved has passed by;" he did so not to forsake her soul's desire but to draw her to

himself. "My soul went out at his word." Oh how blessed is this going out and coming in, says the prophet. God truly watches the coming and going of those who are worthy. The J.354 exit from our present state becomes an entrance to the transcendent M.1025 good. The soul thus goes out using the Word as a guide who says, "I am the gate, the way," and "if anyone enters through me, he shall go in and out." The bride never ceases going in nor going out, but she rests only by advancing towards that which lies before her and by always going out from what she has comprehended. In a similar way the Lord's face passed Moses by, and thus the lawgiver's soul kept going out of that state which it had attained, ever following the Word who went before him.

Who does not know of those ascents which Moses experienced? He always grew greater and never remained stationary at any point of his growth. Moses grew right at the beginning when he put Christ's humiliation higher than the kingdom of Egypt; he preferred to share the afflictions of God's people rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasure of sin. Again, Moses waxed stronger when Egypt fought the Hebrews; he killed a foreigner and struggled on behalf of the Israelites. One rightly understands these examples of growth by shifting the narrative to a symbolic plane. Yet again Moses J.355 grew by keeping his life tranquil when he spent much time in the desert. Then he is illumined by fire in a bush: next he bares his feet of that dead covering of skin. His staff consumes the Egyptian serpents; he frees his tribe from Pharaoh the tyrant; he is guided by the cloud; he divides the sea; he drowns the tyrant; he sweetens Marrha; he makes the rock flow; he is provided with angelic nourishment; he hears trumpets; he braves the burning mountain; he touches its summit; he enters the cloud; he enters its midst where God is; he receives the covenant and becomes like a sun unable to be approached by those coming near. How can anyone fully list Moses' ascents and various theophanies?

But as great and exalted as he was with such experiences, J.356 Moses still had an insatiable desire for more. He implored God to see him face to face, despite the fact that scripture already says that he had been allowed to speak with God face to face. But neither did his act of intimately speaking with God as a friend make him cease to desire more; rather, "If I have found favor before you, show me your face clearly." And he who promised to grant this request said, "I have known you above all others.". God passed Moses by at the divine place in the rock shadowed over by his hand. Moses could hardly see God's back even after he had passed by. I believe we are taught that the person desiring to see God can behold the desired One by always following him. The contemplation of God's face is a never ending journey toward M.1028 him accomplished by following right behind the Word. Once the soul has risen through death and has been filled with myrrh, it places its hands on the door's bolt by means of good works and hopes that the desired One will enter within. Then the bridegroom passes by and the bride exits; she no longer J.357 remains in the place where she had been but touches the Word who leads her onward.

The words which follow confirm what we have understood thus far: we cannot comprehend the greatness of the divine nature, yet we must pass by all illusions. The soul already "went out" from its nature so that its habits will not interfere with knowing invisible reality; neither does it stop to seek that which cannot be found nor does it cease to call the divine nature inexpressible. The bride says, "I sought him but found him not." How can the bridegroom be found when he does not reveal anything of himself? He has no color, form, quality, quantity, place, appearance, evidence, comparison nor resemblance; rather, everything we can discover always transcends our comprehension and completely escapes our search. Therefore the bride says, "I have sought him by my soul's capacities of reflection and understanding; he completely transcended them and escaped my mind when it drew near to him."

How can that which is always beyond everything we know be designated by a name? For this reason the bride understands J.358 every function of a name as a sign of the ineffable good; the significance of each word falls short and shows something inferior to the truth. She thus says, "I called as best I could, taking these names to indicate an ineffable blessedness, for my spouse showed himself to be greater than any name." Similarly, the great David often called God by a multitude of names and admitted them as being inferior to the truth: "For you are God, compassionate, merciful, patient, rich in mercy, true, strong, steadfast, a refuge, power, help, assistance, horn of salvation, and so forth." And again David confesses that God's name is not known in all the earth, yet it is admired: "How wonderful is your name in all the earth." God also spoke to Manasseh who prophesied about his son. When asked about God's name, Manasseh responded that he is marvelous and

greater than the human ear can contain. The soul calls the Word as best it can; it cannot do so as it wishes, for the soul desires more than it is capable of. The soul does not wish J.359 what it is incapable of receiving such as God himself, but its choice is in accord with its wish. Since the one called is unattainable, the bride says, "I called him, but he did not answer."

M.1029 The bride speaks further as if she were indicating her dejection, yet it seems to me that we must examine her words which contain an ascent to something more exalted: "The watchmen that go their rounds in the city found me. They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." These seem to be words of pain rather than of gladness especially when she says, "They smote me, they took away my veil." If you consider the meaning of these words carefully, they show that the bride boasts in what she finds most beautiful. We may clarify her words as follows: somewhat earlier the Song testifies that the bride is being purified of every garment when it has her say "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Here the Song says that her veil is removed. A bridal veil is a cover for both head J.360 and face as in the story of Rebekah. How, then, does the bride, stripped of every garment, have a veil which the guards now remove from her? Is it not clear from these words that the bride has advanced to a higher state? Having removed her old tunic and every covering, she became even purer. In view of her current purity the bride does not seem to have removed her covering. Even after that stripping of herself she still finds something further to be removed.

Thus the ascent to God always indicates something unbecoming in the bride. In comparison with her current purity, that removed tunic becomes a garment to be removed again by those who find the bride, the guards going about the city (the soul is the city). Those whose task it is to guard the city walls remove the bride's veil by striking and wounding her. A certain benefit lies in this removal of her veil: her eye is free and unhindered to contemplate her beloved. J.361 There can be no doubt from the Apostle's words that the veil's removal refers to the Spirit's action: "When a person turns to the Lord, his veil will be removed. The Lord is the Spirit.

Any one acquainted with logical thinking cannot doubt that whatever produces the good must itself be good: If the veil's removal is a good thing, so is the blow and the wound which effects its removal. But a certain unpleasantness is evident from the obvious meaning of the text (for the expressions, M.1032 "He struck me" and "He wounded me" indicate pain). It would be helpful to first consider the use of these words in sacred scripture, that is, whether it ever uses them in a good sense.

How does wisdom free a youth's soul from death? What does wisdom advise him to do that he may not die? Let us pay attention to her words: "If you strike him with a rod, he will not die." If you strike him with a rod, you rescue his soul from death. The Song's text, "They struck me," now suggests immortality in light of "If you strike him with a rod he will not die." Unless the youth be stricken by a rod his soul will not otherwise be rescued from J.362 death. It is good, then, to be stricken as these words show us, for it is good to rescue a soul from death. The prophet says that God accomplishes the same effect when he brings to life by killing, and cures by striking: "I will strike and I will make life to live." The great David said that this rod produces no wound but only consolation: "Your rod and staff have comforted me." By these actions the divine table is prepared with the other details which psalm twenty-two relates: oil upon the head, a cup of unmixed wine causing sober inebriation, mercy which follows him so well and a long life in God's house. If that sweet blow embraces such elements of which Proverbs and the prophet speak, it is good to be struck by the rod from which comes an abundance of good things.

Let us now examine some of the earlier sections of the text which we have passed over. The Word passed by his bride J.363 who could not grasp her desired lover. He did not pass her as one to run ahead and forsake her; it was rather to draw her to himself. The bride says, "My soul went out at his word." Her soul now goes out from that place where she had been and is found by the city guards: "The watchmen that go their rounds in the city found me. They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." If any pains of hell or a robber found the bride, this would have been a distressing experience for her ("The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy"). But to be found by the city guards is indeed a blessing, for what they find cannot be stolen by robbers. Who are these guards anyway? None other than those guarding Israel, those J.364 keeping guard at our right hand, those whom we believe are M.1033 protecting our souls from evil and

are watching our coming in and going out. God is the city watchman of whom it says, "Unless the Lord keeps the city, in vain does he watch while keeping it." Those whom the text indicates as city guards are the ministering spirits sent to serve those to inherit salvation.

The text, however, says that the soul is God's dwelling. Here the soul is found as in the case of a sheep by the Good Shepherd at which all the angelic choirs are moved to celebrate as the Lord tells us. Similarly, the drachma is found with a lamp, upon whose discovery all the friends and neighbors rejoice. God's servant David was found when the psalm says, "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him." After being found, David was the possession of him who found him as we learn from the following, "My hand will help him, and my right J.365 hand will make him strong. The enemy will not prevail against him, and the wicked man will not oppress him. And he will strike from his presence his enemies and I will put to flight those who hate him." There are other elements to be included in this list of praises.

Therefore it is good for the soul to be found by the angels going about the city. David also suggests this by saying, "The angel of the Lord will surround those who fear him and will rescue them." When the bride says, "the guards struck me," she boasts about her further advancement to on high. If she says this upon being wounded, the divine rod has penetrated deep within. The bride did not superficially receive the spiritual rod's effect, the place it struck, but the blow is marked by a wound of which the bride is proud. Such is the significance of the text. The divine rod or Spirit is a comforting J.366 staff whose blow effects healing and whose fruit consists of those other goods listed by Paul, especially temperance, the teacher of a virtuous life. For Paul was stigmatized by such blows and rejoiced in these wounds saying, "I bear the marks of Christ in my body." He showed weakness in every kind of evil by which the power of Christ is perfected in virtue. These words show us the beautiful wound which removed the bride's veil. In this way the soul's beauty is revealed, no longer overshadowed by a covering.

Let us recapitulate the sense of the text. The soul which looks to God and conceives that desire for incorruptible M.1036 beauty always has a new desire for the transcendent, and it is never dulled by satiety. Such a soul never ceases to stretch forth to what lies before, going out from her present stage to what lies ahead. Anything great and marvelous always seems inferior in comparison to what succeeds it since what the bride has found seems more beautiful than her earlier discoveries. Thus Paul died each day because at all times he partook of a new life, being dead to the past and forgetful of previous things.

J.367 In running towards her spouse, the bride finds no rest in her advancement towards perfection. She has made a "garden of apples" with fragrances flowing from her mouth; she prepares food for the Lord of creation with her own fruit; waters her gardens and becomes a spring of living water; shows herself to be all-beautiful and blameless according to the text. Going beyond these, the bride perceives something even more majestic: as the Word precedes her, her head is filled with dew, and drops of the night are in his locks. She washes her feet, removes her tunic and her hands drop myrrh. She puts her hand to the door's bolt, opens the door, seeks him who cannot be grasped and calls him who cannot be attained. The bride is found by the city guards, receives a blow from a rod and imitates the rock of which the prophet speaks, "He struck the rock and waters flowed out." Observe that J.368 height to which the bride has run. The bride thus received a blow like the flint Moses struck so that she might stream forth for those thirsting after the Word. The guards then expose the beauty of her face by removing her veil. Such is the symbolic meaning. However, there is no reason for jealousy should anyone obtain a better understanding of the text from him who reveals the hidden mysteries.

Someone may see a relationship between Isaiah's vision and the Song's text. I speak of his vision after the king died from leprosy. Isaiah beheld one sitting in magnificence upon a lofty, exalted throne though he could not see his form and greatness (Isaiah would have spoken of this if he could when he saw the other things, such as the number of the wings of the seraphim, their location and movement). He only speaks of the Voice he heard, the lintels raised because of the seraphim's singing and the house filled with smoke. One of the seraphim touched his mouth with a fiery coal; not only were his lips purified but his ears in order to receive God's word. J.369 Similarly, the bride says that she was struck and wounded by M.1037 the city guards and her veil was removed; instead of a veil, the lintel was removed so that Isaiah's contemplation may not be hindered; in place of guards seraphim are mentioned; instead of a coal, a rod; and burning heat in place of a blow. There

is a common goal for both the bride and Isaiah: purification. As the prophet was not harmed by a burning coal but glorified for being illumined, the bride for her part does not question the pain received from the guard's blow, but boasts in her freedom at the removal of her veil. The Song calls this veil a light garment.

Another understanding is to be found here which is not out of harmony with what we have examined. After the soul has gone out at her spouse's word, she seeks him who cannot be found. She calls him who cannot be comprehended by any name, is taught by the guards that she loves him who is unattainable and goes after him who cannot be seized. They strike, wound and frustrate the bride. Because the desire for her beloved is frustrated, her yearning for his beauty cannot be fulfilled. But the veil of despair is removed when the bride learns that the true satisfaction of her desire consists in always progressing in her search and ascent: when her desire is fulfilled, it gives birth to a further desire for the transcendent. Thus the veil of her despair is removed, and the bride will always see more of her beloved's incomprehensible beauty throughout all eternity. The bride is inflamed by a more vehement longing and makes known her heart's affliction through the daughters of Jerusalem because she has received God's chosen arrow within her. Her heart was struck by the arrow tip of faith and was mortally wounded by the arrow of love. "God is love," as John says to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

+