

Supplement to Origen's Commentary on the Song of Songs

These notations are intended to amplify the three documents already posted on the lectio divina homepage. They go by the name of *Origen's Commentary on the Song of Songs: Scriptural Excerpts and Notes on his Text*. While preliminary and experimental, what follows here is a reconstruction of Origen's **Commentary** built upon a consideration of the scriptural verses only. Most verses are included; however, it would be impossible to include all which would make the text awkward. So the result is a kind of running commentary which unfortunately lacks depth and by nature turns out to be rather matter-of-fact.

Nevertheless the *Supplement* is a preliminary draft subject to expansion at a later time. Despite this superficiality, composing it has been a unique experience as you make the link between each verse, one after the other. That's the real purpose of putting it on line. Even better, reading these verses is as though you have Origen right by your side throughout the process, a delightful experience of being in his presence. He is teaching and guiding you as you go through each biblical verse in the spirit of *lectio divina* as it fleshes out your spiritual understanding of the Song of Songs. Thus you won't have to fear going astray from the book's message.

It should be noted that a similar commentary on the Song commentaries by Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux may come next. That is to say, this home page contains a listing of their scriptural references as with Origen.

The format below follows the English translation in the Ancient Christian Writer Series entitled **Origen: The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies**, translated and annotated by R. P. Lawson (New York, 1956).

The Prologue

#1

Origen rightly begins his commentary with mention of teachers concerned with instruction of first principles of the divine *logos* which for his pupils is milk even though they desire solid food. The act of teaching is bound up with the Trinity: destined by God, sanctified by the Spirit and obedience to Jesus Christ. Longing for the spiritual milk as new-born babes about this mystery leads to salvation when a person has grown up, spiritually, that is. When mature, they can have solid food provided their faculties are trained to distinguish good from evil. As for living on

milk, it's for anyone not skilled in the *logos* of righteousness.

The Song of Songs deals with the relationship of two spouses, one human and the other divine (the church and Jesus Christ). By mentioning the unmarried as taken from St Paul, Origen intimates that someone in this state must take caution to comprehend the Song with all its vivid imagery. It may be likened to a sapphire in the shape of a throne upon which the Lord sits in the firmament and to which he invites his bride, the church.

#2

The Lord gives a command with regard to the host of those who are bearing tidings and can pertain the maidens accompanying the bride. She is made in the divine image and likeness and thus has dominion over all creation. And like the first woman, she finds fulfilment in her husband into whom the Lord breathed the breath of life, this breath being transmitted in the Song from the divine bridegroom to his human spouse. While marital imagery dominates the Song and humanly speaking comes to an end, we don't lose heart because our inner nature is being renewed daily, this renewal based upon the reality of earthly marital imagery. The bridegroom takes delight in the divine law which he sees as mirroring the bride's inmost self. And this self has the potential of attaining the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son (bridegroom) which is the fulness of Christ.

Origen follows in the footsteps of St John in one of his epistles where he writes to little children, fathers and young men. As for the second group, they know the Father and have the *logos* of God abiding in them and thus seem the strongest of the three groups. Those whom Origen is addressing are not spiritual by nature but are of the flesh as babes in Christ. Thus he has to feed them with milk as opposed to solid food. He reminds them that once he had been a child and acted like one but forsook that stage upon reaching manhood. In other words, he became mature which means having unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ and his fulness.

The wise man has eyes in his head while the fool walks in darkness, yet one fate overtakes both as the oracle of Jeremiah against Babylon spells out. At the same time Israel as held captive has the possibility of being released. The prophet Isaiah had to proclaim his prophecy by walking about naked, an extreme way of getting people to listen to his message. Those who do pay attention will walk securely and not stumble. Should a hand or foot causes sin, they are to be cut off. Such persons resemble a pregnant woman who cries out when giving birth, an image of those who bring forth wind, not a child.

Those who do not speak truth have destructive tendencies in their heart and are to be destroyed along with their plans because they cause strife in the city, an image of the church. The Lord is to arise and deliver his people from them by seeking out their wickedness and destroying it. The presence of Jesus as bread for heaven is the instrument by which this will come about even though the Jews murmured at him. The same applies to two other occasions when Jesus offers himself as drink which, in contrast to regular water, will never make a person thirsty again. The second instance is Jesus as true vine with his Father as vine dresser. Thus he will satisfy the hungry as well as the mother who bore no children.

The person who sows in accord with the flesh will reap corruption whereas the one who does the same with regard to the Spirit will reap eternal life. The second type represents the act of bearing the man of dust who later will bear the image of the heavenly man, Christ being the image of the invisible God. When giving testimony about this, a person's mouth will resemble a sharp sword and arrow, the latter hidden in God's quiver. They will do battle against idolatry represented by the example of Oholah and Oholibah in Ezekiel.

At this juncture we have several verses which deal with accounts of patriarchs taking wives, this by way preparing the reader to comprehend better the Song of Songs. First we have Isaac who took Rebekah to become his wife followed by a contrast between Leah and Rachel and finally, Tamar, sister of David's son Absalom. All three had experienced considerable trials mirroring the bride in the Song. The same bridal imagery applies to seeking out wisdom to be a bride, followed with a quote from the Song by the bride to the daughters of Jerusalem accompanying her to tell her spouse that she is sick with love. After all, love or *agape* comes from God which behooves Christians to have this *agape* for one another. The bride seeking her spouse resembles Jesus about to depart the world and go to his Father.

For both Jews and Greeks (i.e., Gentiles) Christ is God's power and wisdom as well as source of life along with righteousness, sanctification and redemption. This is because Christ was the *Logos* in the beginning and was with God as well as being God. It entitles him, if you will, to be the way, truth and life with regard to the Father enabling us to abide in *agape* in God. Compare this abiding with God who dwells in light which cannot be approached nor is visible to us.

Knowing God and Jesus Christ is eternal life whom we are to love with all our heart, soul, strength and mind which overflows to love of one's neighbor. This love cannot separate anyone from Christ which includes all sorts of tribulation as well as any

height or depth. Such love is demonstrated by care for a man who had fallen among robbers and left for dead.

There is one God and Jesus Christ who sustains everyone in existence with the potential of making them gods. This God holds judgment in the midst of gods compared with those gods which are idols. He manifested himself through his Son that we might live through him. Such love is questioned by a lawyer who wished to test Jesus. His response is to love (*agapao*) God with one's whole mind, soul and mind (the first commandment) which is similar to the second, love of one's neighbor. Upon both depend the law and prophets. Flowing from these two are the prohibition against murder and adultery as well as not staling and bearing false witness. Chief among witnesses to all this are the apostles who resemble men sentenced to death and are a spectacle to the world and angels.

Any affliction experienced is fleeting compared with the weight of glory awaiting us which rests upon hope put into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Such patience is borne out by the example of Jacob who agreed to serve Laban seven years to win over Rachel as his wife. He knew that during this time love won't end despite the passing away of any other divine gifts.

Only the Son knows the Father and those to whom the Son chooses for this vision. The Counselor or Holy Spirit enables this seeing which also comes from the Father. He is a faithful friend, an elixir of life for those who love God who is *agape*.

#3

King Solomon is the biblical bridegroom in the Song of Songs who had divinely bestowed wisdom and understanding and excelled human wisdom as well as that of Egypt, the latter inferring rituals of mystery religions, etc. Jesus excels Solomon and also spoke in figures although at a future time he will no longer do so with regard to the Father. Those following him will receive prudence, knowledge and discretion, especially to persons who are younger so they may comport themselves well. They take delight in the divine law, meditating upon it day and night thereby having the gift to increase in learning and skill but above all, delight in the law.

Although Paul was in prison, he prays not so much that his door be opened but a door for the *logos* be opened to declare the mystery of Christ, for Paul is one to whom knowledge according to the Spirit was given. He had extended his hand to give this but people refused to listen whereas other who desired wisdom will be given it by the Lord.

Moses hid his face before the Lord who proclaimed himself as the God of Israel's three patriarchs. This concealing may be taken as Moses realizing that all he has done thus far is vanity of vanities and of no value here, the first instance when he encountered the Lord in the burning bush. However, like Abram, Moses left his own country (raised in Egypt) and led the people to a land the Lord had not shown him as of now.

For the rest of section #3 Origen cites a number examples of the three patriarchs as with Abraham who hadn't spared his son Isaac. Later we have Jacob who asked the mysterious person with whom he had wrestled for his name. Jacob confronts his brother Esau after many years and sends messengers to feel him out. Isaac sows in the land after which the Lord blesses him. Jacob beholds a ladder extending from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it and exclaims how awesome is the place on which it rests. The Lord promises Abram to give the land of Canaan to his descendants after which Abram built an altar. Jacob encountered angels of the Lord prior to meeting his brother Esau and names it Mahanaim, literally as "two armies."

Another reference is made to Abram about to offer his son Isaac. Isaac built an altar after which his servants dug a well. Jacob built an altar and called it E-Elohe-Israel or "God, the God of Israel." He built another altar and called it El-bethel or "God of Bethel." The author of Hebrews speaks of Abraham who left his native land along with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise. All three patriarchs intensely involved in seeking out the land promised by the Lord and ultimately had to abandon it for four hundred years of exile in Egypt. However, they had the ultimate goal of looking for things unseen which are eternal and not transient.

#4

No person is to offer incense which isn't holy as well as other offerings and libations, that is, as located within the tent being constructed by those who were between the age of thirty to fifty. Tied in with this liturgical practice is observance of the Law which was given chiefly because of the Israelites's transgressions. It would remain in force until the coming of the one (Jesus Christ) ordained by angels who in their expectation are like the bride desiring to be kissed with the bridegroom's kisses. As for the law, Jesus sums it up as doing the same as you wish they do to you. At this point Origen inserts the Song's words "My perfect dove is but one."

After having crossed the Red Sea in which the Lord caused pharaoh's army to perish, Moses and the people sang a song of thanksgiving for such a great victory.

Several verses about it follow, Israel here representing the bride singing about her divine bridegroom. As for the Lord, he took the nation of Israel for himself showing great signs and wonders who reminded the people that they had been slaves in Egypt and now must trust in Moses to guide them. Such is God compared with the gods of other nations, he taking Israel for himself from the land of Egypt. Israel is to be mindful of this at all times chiefly to keep the Sabbath.

Despite the wondrous departure from Egypt and crossing of the Red Sea, Israel still had to traverse the Sinai wilderness to Canaan. Towards the end of the forty year wandering in Sinai the Lord commanded Moses to compose a song recounting divine care for Israel which is intended to be a witness against them should they violate the covenant made at Mount Horeb. Several other songs are mentioned. For example, the one of Deborah and Barak, a song of victory after they had defeated Sisera who attempted to destroy Israel. Next we have David when the Lord delivered him from King Saul who calls the Lord rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation and refuge. Upon becoming king, David composed a song of thanksgiving in First Chronicles. Thus David, like Israel in Sinai and when they had entered Canaan, called upon the Lord for having delivered him and the people under him.

King Solomon followed in the footsteps of his father David by composing proverbs as well as the Song of Songs itself. The queen of the south visited him, having heard of his wisdom and wealth, yet Jesus says that someone greater than he is present among those whom he is addressing, that is, himself. The genealogy of Jesus itself traces him back to David.

The testimony of Jesus before Pilate will be made manifest by those who follow him, that is, as it pertains to him as in the form of God who became a slave and the source of life. He fulfils both the proverbs and other words of Solomon which foretold his becoming man. Solomon ruled in Jerusalem, an image of the living God where angels in festal gathering are assembled along with those who are enrolled in heaven. The heavenly Jerusalem is free and our mother reconciled to Jesus by the blood of his cross. Now Jesus will hand over this Jerusalem to God the Father, having destroyed any power opposing it, the last enemy being death itself. Once all things have become subjected to Christ, he in turn will subject himself to this same Father. Before this happens Christians are not to regard anyone else from a merely human point of view just as they have regarded Jesus Christ himself.

Words from Mary's Magnificat ('He has put down the mighty and exalted the lowly') take up and perfect those songs above with regard to her son who is acknowledged as

the great high priest and who has passed through the heavens. To that Christians are to give witness by their confession, they being the Song's dove who is perfect and called happy by her maidens as well as queens and concubines. Those therefore united with Christ become one spirit with him which precludes Peter's question after the resurrection as to where he is going.

The Israelites had a census with the priestly tribe of Levi is not numbered by reason of being set apart to conduct liturgical services. Thus they are to remain both prominent and anonymous. Such an arrangement prefigures the end when Jesus will deliver the kingdom to his Father and destroy every power and authority opposed to it.

Section #4 and therefore the Prologue conclude with mention of Solomon's wisdom and understanding which surpassed the people of the east as well as Egypt, both implying esoteric knowledge which doesn't apply to the God of Israel. Such wisdom embraced details of the physical world as well. And so Solomon stands as that landmark mentioned in Proverbs set up by Israel's fathers and never must be removed.

Book One

#1, vs. 1: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

Origen starts off with a caution to the person about to read the Song of Songs. That is to say, quarreling and inappropriate adornment are to be put aside, the two referring to external behavior and comportment necessary for understanding the text in a spiritual manner. A unity exists between what is external and that which is internal, the two informing each other which then spills over to one's relationship with other persons. A perfect balance between the two is found in the person of Jesus as the visible (exterior, if you will) *eikon* of God (the Father who isn't seen).

Establishing that as a template is important here at the beginning of the **Commentary** so as to establish Jesus as Bridegroom in the Song. This is in contrast to the Law which is associated with transgressions, but the Law isn't negative, pretty much a temporary measure waiting to be fulfilled. Such waiting is expressed by being out of breath, of panting.

The longed for fulfilment just noted is expressed by Jacob's ladder on which angels ascend and descend. Also it can be taken as an image of the Song of Songs, the give

and take between two spouses, one in heaven and the other on earth. Furthermore the ladder is the means by which Jesus as visible *eikon* descends to reveal his invisible Father. Establishing a proper understanding of this relationship through the mediation of angels assists the reader taking up the Song of Songs for the first time. An angel also is mentioned with regard to the suffering servant depicted in Isaiah, this being associated with Jesus Christ.

It's necessary to comprehend the nature of a proverb and riddle because they assist us to understand the sometimes confusing language of the Song, especially reading it for the first time. We get that understanding first by reading the Book of Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiastes which are representative of two stages of growth in the spiritual life. Thus we are on firm ground as we long for the divine commandments because the bride's breasts are better than wine. Such association is for the pure of heart where a person believes, is justified and then saved, all three being accomplished in one action. One could associate this threefold action with the three books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song.

Note that the Song's words "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" appear three times in this opening section, pretty much as a refrain to first attract and then hold the reader's attention.

#2, vs. 2: For your breasts are better than wine.

Being pure at heart is vital to understand the sensual words of the Song, that is, words enabling the reader to see him. This seeing consists in a belief in one's heart which justifies and saves a person through the attractive imagery of two spouses interacting. I.e., one spouse may be God the Father and the other God the Son as the former glorifies himself in the latter. Such glorification takes place in the crucifixion of Jesus. However, before this happens, at the Last Supper John asks Jesus who will betray him as well as Peter. He does this as a bride leaning on the breasts of his spouse. As for Peter, he is not unlike one of the Song's maidens...an intrusive one at that...by asking John to ask Jesus in turn as to his betrayer.

Jesus shifts such inquisitiveness by saying that if the disciples love each other, this will set an example for their future work. The example of this love or *agape par excellence* is learned from reading the Song of Songs. In Jesus (as bridegroom of the Song) are contained the hidden wisdom and knowledge of things divine, these being known partially by the maidens.

Within the context of the bridegroom's breasts, we have a breast and thigh prescribed by Moses as a peace (burnt) offering upon the altar, this intimating Christ's sacrifice for his bride, the church. In conjunction with this offering are wine and bread intimating the blood and body of Christ as applicable to his spouse's heart. The former gladdens and the latter strengthens which results in the ability to see God in whom are hidden wisdom and knowledge. Such seeing isn't limited to oneself but is manifested in doing to others what you wish they do to you, this being foretold by the law and prophets.

After the flood Noah was the first person to till the ground, that is, having planted a vineyard which can be associated with the one sung by the beloved. At this juncture the Song verse is inserted by way of interjection at the produce this vineyard (a.k.a. the bridegroom) produces, "For your breasts are better than wine!" In contrast to this vineyard of the beloved is the temptation to experience pleasure without restraint. Being taken in by it is prevented by the realization that it is a vain pursuit. For example, taking pleasure in building houses, planting vineyards (in contrast to the one above regarding Noah) along with various trees, etc. Another vain pleasure is accumulating precious metals, kingly treasures and lands as well as entertainers and concubines. All this is done without reference to God. Then the text switches to mentioning how Jesus became lost from his parents and was found teaching in the Jerusalem temple which is far more precious than the acquisition of wealth just noted.

Jesus sees the crowd pressing in on him and decides to ascend a mountain (of the beatitudes) followed by his disciples. He does this not to escape but to be in a better position to address them. Though not part of the beatitudes, Jesus says that a person who commits murder is liable to judgement according to the Law which he alters to saying that an expression of anger will have the same result. The same applies to calling a person a fool and to anyone looking at a woman which essentially is to commit adultery. At this point Origen interjects for the second time his wonder, "For your breasts are better than wine."

Keeping with this theme of denigrating Jesus, he is accused of associating with less than desirable people, an association that some may have tried to pin on him when at the Cana wedding the best wine was served last. Perhaps there some guests called him a glutton and drunkard who associates with tax collectors, etc. This suspicion arose when people asked why the best wine was being served last. Nevertheless, in time Jesus as personified wisdom will be justified by his deeds.

It was this growing reputation of wisdom that drew people to Jesus much as the queen of Sheba who had visited King Solomon and can be taken as prefiguring the Song's bride coming to her bridegroom. Upon hearing firsthand his wisdom and seeing his vast wealth, the queen ended up literally by having no more spirit in her. As for this queen and her relationship with Solomon, Jesus says that someone (i.e., he) is greater. With regard to a banquet, the prophet Jeremiah brought wine to some people whereas in another instance the sons of king of Israel obeyed him by not drinking wine. However, the wine of Israel resembles that produced by Sodom and Gomorrah which is compared to the venom of serpents and asps. As for the vine which produce wine, the Lord smote those of Egypt and other fruit producing trees. Compared to these vines the Song's bride exclaims yet again, "For your breasts are better than wine."

Both the Law and the prophets proclaim that you want done to yourself what you due to others. This reoccurring theme of mutual respect is essential before continuing with the marital relationship in the Song. As for the bride, her search for her beloved resembles a merchant looking to purchase fine pearls. When she fails or overlooks any, she asks him to forgive her with the same forgiveness she shows to others. Thus the espousal relationship embodied in the Song of Songs is not just between two persons but as this first section clearly mentions regarding the church, is communal.

Once this is established, the reader will find treasures and wisdom of knowledge hidden in Christ and no longer live on milk like a child. In place of this nourishment, the blood of Christ will purify one's conscience and make him as a Nazarite to serve the Lord. He will resemble John the Baptist who instead of drinking wine, will be filled with the Holy Spirit and thus have access to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Jesus Christ.

This section concludes with the refrain "For your breasts are better than wine," bring it to a total of four times thereby acting as kind of refrain to bring home the theme presented here.

#3, vs. 2: The fragrance of your ointments is above all spices.

A major theme of this section deals with the pouring out of the divine name which provides a model for us to fulfil the command to do to others what we wish them do to us. In order to carry this out or before we attain maturity, we have to be in the care of a guardian. Until the coming of Jesus Christ, this guardian had been the Law.

Thus faith in Christ supercedes the Law which had provided education from early childhood lasting through the rest of one's life which the Greeks call *paedeia*. The trustees and guardians are those responsible for teaching the faith. Once faith has come, that is, has taken the place of guardians, it suggests Jesus' words of being taught directly by God. The Hebrew *lamad* as to teach implies chastisement as well as being accustomed to.

The notion of a right time or *kairos* event applies to Jesus being born under the Law. It fulfills God's love or *agape* by sending his Son into this world. In sum, this *kairos* signifies the passing away of the Law as guardian for faith in Christ.

The maidens in the Song of Songs are not unlike those under the tutelage of a guardian in the process of undergoing *paideia* which had begun under the Law. However, now they accompany the bride or Church in her relationship with the bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The bride, if you will, is an intermediary between the maidens and bridegroom who had become like them by taking on the form of a human being. The pattern used here is the Law which has acted as a guardian as noted above. At this point is interjected the refrain "Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out" which is reason for why the maidens love the bridegroom. The refrain is found four times in this section.

The sharing in every aspect of the human condition enables Jesus to be a high priest prepared to make expiation for sin as it pertains to the entire world. Keeping in mind the marital element depicted in the Song is important because it mitigates the harshness and didactic manner which can be associated with tutelage under the Laws. Thus Jesus has become expiation not only for the maidens' sins but for the entire world, he being the sole mediator. While this role obviously is important, that of a bridegroom is primary as depicted in the Song.

Those following the example of the maidens accompanying her divine bridegroom are to walk in love, this very act having the capacity to make us both a fragrant offering and sacrifice. And Christ as bridegroom presents his spouse the Church free from defect in order to be holy. The act of anointing with regard to the tent of meeting and ark of testimony mirror the bridegroom's name which is as oil poured out.

Related to the anointing of the tent of meeting, is the Lord's command to Moses to take the finest spices which are detailed to some extent because they are the source of a sacred anointing oil. The next verse pertains Christ as head of the body which is the church, this oil being used to anoint Christ as head implying him as king and

priest.

We are to be united with Christ first in a death similar to his followed by a resurrection similar to his. His death sanctifies the church as by washing of water of the *logos* so that the church may be presented to him as a bride which has been purified. This makes the bride exult with a good theme to her king, she ready to address him as a scribe which suggests putting down in writing anything he utters.

Christ emptied himself taking on the form of a servant, he being the only mediator between God and mankind. He loves righteousness and hates wickedness, anointing his bride with the oil of gladness over her fellows who are her maidens accompanying her as depicted in the Song. As for this anointing, God did it to Jesus who is identified as coming from a local place, Nazareth, the anointing being with the Holy Spirit. It enabled him to commence his ministry of preaching and healing. While engaged in this activity, Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness because he had been anointed with the oil of gladness. Such oils from the Father are fragrant, Jesus' name being as oil poured out, the reason why the bride's maidens love him.

Such a picture of Jesus Christ is wisdom for the mature which has no part with this age's rulers who are destined to pass off the scene. After all, Jesus is the mystery unknown to previous ages but now manifested by reason of his fragrant oils and his name being poured out. Furthermore, his breasts are superior to wine, breasts being associated with nourishing milk.

#4, vs. 3: You name is as ointment emptied out. Therefore the maidens have loved you, have drawn you. We will run after you in the fragrance of your ointments.

The theme of pouring out characterizes this section of Origen's **Commentary** and intimates a certain fulness of divinity that never can be contained. This transforms members of the church into the aroma of Christ which works in two ways: for those being saved and those perishing.¹Such an outpouring (manifestation of divinity as through Jesus Christ) continues with a force that scours our old nature which lust has corrupted. Once we have opened to the divine outpouring, we can present ourselves to the church as being holy minus any blemish. Such an awareness makes

¹ Among the three commentaries on the Song by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux, this verse from 2Cor 2.15-16 ranks among the most frequently quoted.

us not lose heart even if our outer nature has submitted to his pouring out by divine oil. It pours outward to our inner nature and thus renews it. Thus the pouring out of oil has two goals in mind, one destructive and the other constructive, if it may be put this way. Should we wish for an example, we have it in the person of Jesus Christ who emptied himself (another way of stating this pouring forth) and took the form of a man.

The one who poured himself out (Jesus Christ) dwells in light which no one can approach meaning that no human being has seen him. Nevertheless, he (the *Logos*) became flesh and dwelt among us, making visible his glory as the only Son of the Father. In other words, what the Song has as oil poured out signifies a making visible of that which is not visible. Belief in the outpouring comes through divine grace, the human analogy being is a race where only the winner gets the prize . For this reason the Song verse is inserted as a refrain, “We will run in the scent of your ointments.” This scent is where Christ is present even if it’s just two or three gathered together in his name.

Anyone united with Christ by this outpouring becomes one spirit with him which fulfils his wish that we be with him where he is. Being in this place, if you will, is the same as seeing the glory he received from the Father before the world’s foundation. Symbolically a royal entourage of sixty queens and eighty concubines accompanies Christ as bridegroom. The Word became flesh that we behold this glory, this happening first on behalf of the Jews who followed the Law, hence the importance of Abraham in all this as first patriarch whose sons are the first recipients of salvation.

The sense of taste which implies consuming food applies to the bread which descends from heaven and gives life, that is, the flesh of Jesus Christ. Eating this bread makes one born anew through the living word of God. Also it requires putting away malice, guile, etc. Such solid food or flesh of Christ is intended for those who are mature, that is, instead of vegetables, and trains one’s faculties to distinguish good from evil. Having consumed it, the Lord accompanies his people as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, day and night, and remains with them. An example of this is when the Israelites had set out from Elim after which they were nourished by bread...manna...from heaven.

Job says that he was clothed with skin and flesh which makes him like St. Paul in their mutual desire of being free from the body so as to be with Christ the bridegroom. Although awaiting this separation has to be endured, upon death the Lord will affirm his servant for having been faithful and set him over far greater

things but more so, will allow the servant to share in his joy. This can be put in terms of a desire to dwell in the Lord's house and behold his beauty as well as to inquire within his temple. Furthermore, the temple is a kind of garden not unlike Eden where precious stones were garments. There one will find continuous delight in the Lord by reason of insertion of "We will run in the scent of your ointments." Such an intent to run implies never achieving a goal; instead, emphasis is upon movement forward which itself is fulfilment.

Running in the bridegroom's ointments is a taking delight in the divine law, for it's solid food for the mature who have engaged in a practice to distinguish good from evil. It makes a person an aroma of Christ for those being saved as well as for those who are perishing. That means the single aroma is detected from distance before coming in contact with it and has a double effect. The latter are unspiritual who don't receive the Spirit's gifts which are folly to him since it requires spiritual discernment. However, for a person who fears the Lord, this fear is clean along with divine ordinances which last forever. Anyone so desiring it must have ears to hear.

Yet again, we are presented as being an aroma of Christ for those being saved as well as an aroma for those who are perishing. Emphasis upon the sense of smell implies that the presence of Christ in believers can be detected at some distance and has either a positive or negative effect...contact at a distance, if you will. Also related to this sense is the one of taste which enables a person to see that the Lord is good. Both senses work together to detect that which we have seen, looked upon and touched, the last being another sense to perceive the Lord. Activation of all three senses (sight is included but in a certain way is secondary to smelling and tasting) cause delight in one's inner most being causing one to run in the scent of the bridegroom's ointments.

God gave his Son for the world that it might not perish, this coming about by the above mentioned scent. Divine love is manifested by Christ who assumed human form while being in the form of God enabling us to receive grace from his fulness. Again, we have mention of running in the scent of divine ointments. Such a person will be in the company of the bride's maidens who recognize that the bride has become weak in imitation of her spouse's weakness who has become all for all men in order to save some of them.

#3: The King has brought me into His chamber. Let us rejoice and be glad in You. We will love Your breasts more than wine. Equity has loved You.

The king here, of course, is the bridegroom or Jesus Christ who has brought his

spouse the church into the inmost recesses of his house. This place may be called heaven, a place of initiation into the Christian mysteries. Here people become imitators of those who already have been initiated, having received word of this with considerable affliction. More specifically the people at hand are from Macedonia and Achaia, objects of Paul's missionary endeavors. Through an initiation process which is unlike those of ancient pagan mysteries, the Christian one at hand is public. It bestows the mind of Christ, a bold claim to those familiar with this secretness, in place of the world's spirit. Also involved is the Holy Spirit who enables understanding of divine gifts. Of these gifts no one has seen nor heard as they relate to what God has prepared for the one who receives them.

"The king has brought me into his chambers" or the place where treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. There St. Paul was caught up, and when he was, he didn't know whether he was in the body or outside it. While in paradise, Paul heard things which a person cannot utter. Coming back from this experience signaled a shift in his preaching, being more conscious of the mystery he had beheld. Chances are that a person who has had a similar experience will be hated for the sake of Jesus Christ. However, enduring to the end will be his salvation.

The paradise into which Paul had been snatched contains all the treasures hidden in darkness. They are kept hidden by the Lord who alone knows the name of the person so initiated, an incentive for the maidens to run with the bride in the scent of the bridegroom's ointments. These maidens resemble runners competing in a race where only one wins the prize, that winner being the bride. However, the maidens, by reason of participating with their mistress, share in her victory. Then they will be called daughters of the king along with the bride who resembles the queen in gold of Ophir. She is adorned with robes of many colors along with her virgin companions and thus led into the king's palace.

That palace is symbolic of the room in which Jesus commands us to pray to the Father who sees in secret. Anyone who fails to observe the secret seeing will have taken away from what he has been given to him whereas the person who has something more will be given.

Book Two

#1: I am dark and beautiful, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

King Solomon can be taken as the bridegroom in the Song of Songs, but he fades in comparison to Jesus Christ who assumes the same role, the former's glory not arrayed with the same glory as that of Jesus. Such adornment is to be passed on to the Gentiles where Simeon recounts how God takes them for his name. By comparison the Jews are considered enemies of God which doesn't detract from their election by reason of their forefathers' election. As for the Gentiles, they heard the Lord, inclined their ears and forgot their own house which is in the pattern of Abraham. Here we have a new creation where God created the Gentiles in God's image and likeness, that is, in reference to Jesus Christ.

The maidens who accompany the bride are not unlike the children of Ishmael, not of Abraham, and by a kind of ingrafting become like her, for the Lord has paid attention to their affliction. They will bring offerings such as scarlet material and twined linen as well as bearing witness or testimony to her love for her bridegroom. In this way they will become like gods which Jesus took up and reaffirmed. This will counter any rebuke coming, for example, from Miriam and Aaron who accused Moses of having married a Cushite woman.

When the divine *Logos* or Word became man as Jesus Christ, people were able to behold his glory which is proper to the Son of the Father. Jesus' dwelling with us literally means pitching his tent and thus implies a temporary residence. Jesus is also identified as image or *eikon* of the invisible God and first-born of creation reflecting this divine glory and upholding the universe by the *Logos* with his *logos*...word...of his power.

A person turning away from sin shouldn't be reproached as is the case with someone boasting in the law while at the same time breaking it. In contrast to this, Simeon speaks of how God visited the Gentiles to make of them a people for his own. Again, Miriam and Aaron are mentioned as having spoken against Moses for his marriage to a Cushite woman who was a Gentile. When the Lord heard of their complaint, he was angered. Another reference to this preference for non-Israelites is the queen of Sheba who will condemn the present generation for not recognizing the divine predilection. She made her way to King Solomon (also as bridegroom in the Song) to hear his wisdom. In addition to this, bronze will be offered from Egypt, and Ethiopia will acknowledge the Lord. A prophecy from Zephaniah backs this up saying that all nations will call on the Lord's name as well as singling out Ethiopia as bringing offerings to him.

Jeremiah is mentioned twice, in the cistern and with regard to a prophecy against

Jerusalem prior to its fall by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon claiming that the Lord will deliver the city. At this critical point a verse from the Song is inserted, that is, the bride being dark yet comely, dark by reason of the siege and comely by reason of eventual divine deliverance. For a third time the rebuke by Miriam and Aaron against their brother Moses is inserted to show the inability of people to perceive how God is acting among them, this followed by Simeon saying that the Lord had visited the Gentiles. With this visitation is the coming of the perfect and the fading away of the imperfect. To the former belongs what we see dimly as in a mirror (ancient ones were of polished metal) as well as knowing in part and to the latter, face to face as well as being understood fully.

Wisdom has erected her house whose foundation rests upon seven pillars which can represent the seven sacraments. One is the Eucharist where Jesus becomes food for those who do his Father's will, baptism being the most important initiation into this. It enables participants to drink wine gladdening the heart along with oil and bread for nourishment. Upon entering this house built by wisdom the queen of Sheba exclaims that her own eyes confirmed reports she had heard about it, Mount Zion, the city of the living God where angels are present in festive gathering.

At present we see dimly as in a (polished metal) mirror and know in the same fashion compared to understanding as we are understood. Such is the expectation which is beyond sight, hearing or what the human heart can conceive. Those so privileged exclaim with the queen of Sheba that the bridegroom's wives and servants are happy to be in his presence. They are blessed to listen to his wisdom which is a form of praying constantly and rightly rejoice in this fact. Martha's sister Mary represents this as she sits at Jesus' feet and listens to him, having chosen the good portion. In the meanwhile, Jesus has listeners like Mary sit on his throne with him, he being our peace and has dissolved hostility. In response, those present with him offer an abundance of gifts as the queen of Sheba had done for Solomon.

Only eight persons survived the great flood in Noah's ark, having been saved through water, a kind of baptism. In a sense, Noah prefigured Moses who led Israel through the Red Sea and later died in the full bloom of his strength. Although both were acknowledged, largely they were not understood, their devotion to the people being in secret and have received their reward in secret. Later nations other than Israel acknowledged their greatness as shown by the offerings of Egypt and Ethiopia. Salvation came to them which was bound to make Israel jealous.

It is natural for such Gentiles to bring gifts to the Lord, but a broken spirit and

contrite heart surpasses them. Jesus will not cast out such persons whom the Father has sent to him. As for Israel, a hardening of heart has come upon this people and will last until the full number of Gentiles has come to the Lord. However, Israel will be saved by a deliverer who will come from Zion. On the day of his arrival the Israelites won't be shamed by having rebelled against the Lord. One such prefigurement is Jeremiah whose own people had cast him into a cistern. It took a Gentile...an Ethiopian...to rescue the prophet.

There are eunuchs made by men and those who have become eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven ². The latter resemble a slave who cares for his master's son prone to misbehaving and because of this service, will share in his inheritance. They bear witness to Christ's resurrection even if as a slave happens to be dark like the tents of Kedar and Solomon's curtains because they have been made comely. Even Solomon himself can't compare with the service thus rendered, being ministers in the sanctuary and true tent which the curtains of Solomon cover.

Jesus Christ has not entered that sanctuary made by human hands, a copy of the true one which is in heaven, there interceding on our behalf. That heavenly sanctuary has many rooms prepared by Jesus. By way preparation to enter it we are to bear fruits of repentance and not rely upon having Abraham as father, for God can make of stones children of this patriarch.

This section concludes with the bride expressing her darkness yet comeliness as she awaits her divine bridegroom whose maidens can't yet identify as she rises from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved.

#2: Look not at me, for that I am darkened; for the sun has looked down on me.

The bride asks her maidens not to look at her because of her swarthy skin. However, this did not prevent the queen of Sheba from coming to King Solomon to hear his wisdom. Most likely she and the bride met numerous times during her stay with both hitting it off well. This contact put the queen in a unique situation where later she will condemn the current generation, she being a spokesperson for King Solomon's wisdom which foreshadows that of Jesus Christ.

² Origen is said to have made himself a eunuch.

The queen asks a rhetorical question of her maidens as to her bridegroom coming from the wilderness even though she knows it is he as the true light that enlightens everyone coming into the world. Those who fear the Lord's name shall have the sun of righteousness rise for them along with healing which will cause them to leap like calves. In addition to this, they will have the strength to escape tribulation because they have both watched and prayed continuously which enables them to stand before Jesus.

Paul speaks of a mystery, namely, that Israel's collective heart has become hardened for the purpose of having the full number of Gentiles share their heritage, the queen of Sheba being one such important representative by reason of her relationship with the bridegroom's spouse. In fact it may have been this queen who extended an invitation to Israel to recant her disobedience and join these Gentiles. Those coming in are to proceed straight ahead, swerving neither to the left nor to the right. En route they are to watch the path closely on which they are treading so as to avoid evil. Fidelity to this path will cause the sun of righteousness to arise with healing. It will make those on the journey leap like calves as they rejoice in walking without blame in the divine commandments.

The city (the heavenly Jerusalem) to which the Gentiles start off walking toward then leap like calves as they approach, making them the light of the world, for this city on a hill cannot be hidden from view. However, should they fail on this path by not listening to the Lord, plagues will afflict them sevenfold and preclude their light from shining, the light that has been present within them since they were born. There remains the ever present danger of being scattered among enemies before reaching the heavenly city as well as their habitations being destroyed. Always there is held out the promise of humbling oneself before the Lord by confessing one's iniquities by having walked contrary to the Lord symbolized by hearts which aren't circumcised. Pharaoh is a prime example of this failure, for the Lord had hardened his heart by not listening to Moses.

A second mention of healing in the Lord's wings is found for those who fear the Lord's name which will make the sun of righteousness arise. This stands in stark contrast to Israel's former condition of being enslaved in Egypt when they had to perform all sorts of heavy manual labor. Prior to the current pharaoh who imposed this slave-like work, Israel had prospered in Egypt, but now their burdens made them cry out to the Lord for deliverance. He answered through Moses, connecting Israel's present plight with the covenant he had made long ago with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Both sun and moon will not cause harm to anyone trusting in the Lord. On the other hand, anyone who hates light and fails to come into it loves evil and will have his evil deeds exposed for all to see. It will be before the Lord who is a devouring fire and jealous of his people. Such is the message proclaimed to the people, that the Lord is light and has no darkness in him.

#3: The sons of my mother have fought in me, they have made me the keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept.

The bride's sons became angry with their mother, perhaps out of jealousy and lack of attention, she being focused upon her divine bridegroom. Tied in with this is the jealousy between the two sons of Hagar and Sarah, the son of the former was according to the flesh and the latter through the divine promise. With the coming of Jesus Christ, attention shifts to Mount Zion, symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem, along with countless angels. Those who come there are from the Gentiles whom God in his power has made a people according to his name.

The weapons at our disposal do not belong to this world but are endowed with divine power to destroy arguments and anything standing in the way to prevent knowledge of God. Also every thought is to be brought into submission to Jesus Christ. Such power rests upon a blessing from the Lord as transmitted through Isaac to Jacob and to the detriment of the first born, Esau, who sold his birthright for a pittance. The anger shown by Esau ties in with the Song's verse about the sons of the bride's mother being angry with her because of her favored relationship with the Lord, something in which they don't participate. Thus they banish her to keeping vineyards, egged on by their mother out of jealousy.

Despite the bride's banishment by her own sons, she counts this as loss for love of her bridegroom. In fact, everything else is a refuse in order to gain her spouse, she being aware of not being righteous on her own account but that it derives from her divine spouse. So while the bride was keeping her sons' vineyards, she became aware that the vines have grown wild and resemble those of Sodom and Gomorrah, the grapes thus being poison as venom of asps and serpents. From within this vineyard the bride exclaims that she wants the sons of her mother to be saved and gathered from among the nations that they may praise her spouse's name. At the same time she realizes that these sons are those of their father, her divine bridegroom.

Eve was responsible for having deceived Adam yet will be saved through bearing children in a marriage filled with love and faith as well as following a modest life

style. The relationship between two spouses can be either the individual with Christ or the church with Christ, Origen preferring the latter. Christ had died for his spouse, then ungodly and full of sin. With this in mind, Paul calls those he's addressing as of the flesh and babes in Christ; in other words, both are not mature persons. Still, all are to put on the armor of God to resist assaults from the devil. As for the so-called babes, from their mouths comes perfect praises while being under the care of guardians until they reach maturity. While still small, they aren't to be despised because their angels behold the Father's face in heaven. Thus they are favored by Jesus to approach him.

Those who have come to Mount Zion or the heavenly Jerusalem where angels are present have entered a city which is free and our mother. That mother has one God from whom everything exists and Jesus Christ through whom we too exist.

Although the bride accuses herself to be swarthy and is forced to keep vineyards not belonging to her because she failed in keeping her own, she will enjoy wine which will gladden her heart along with oil and bread.

#4: Tell me, O You whom my soul has loved, where do You feed, where do You have Your couch in the midday, lest perchance I be made as one that is veiled above the flocks of Your companions.

In the verse at hand, the bride ask her divine spouse as to where he pastures his flock and gives it rest during the midday heat. This burning sun contrasts with the unfading crown of glory given by Jesus as shepherd. A woman protects this glory in a symbolic way by putting a veil over her head; most likely the Song's bride did the same. A similar practice could apply to the numerous queens and concubines accompanying the bridegroom. Despite their large number, the bride alone resembles a dove who is perfect.

The human body is comprised of many members which work harmoniously as one, an image of those comprising the body of Christ (the church). Such unity prevents harassment as pertaining to sheep which lack a shepherd. Like the Song's bride they ask where the bridegroom/shepherd pastures his flock and gives it rest at noon. When he comes on the scene, the sheep, or those belonging to Jesus Christ, will receive an crown of glory which is does not fade. For the second time we have mention of a woman with veiled head which helps preserve her unfading glory.

The herd of sheep belong to Jacob, the Lord's allotted heritage, which is

distinguished from the inheritance of all the nations and set apart from each other. This particular herd (Jacob) is attentive to the Lord's voice, for he knows each one of the sheep and follow him. Those who don't believe him are not part of this herd. Within this context for the third time the bride asks her spouse where he makes his herd lay down at noon or at the beginning of the hottest time of day.

Love or *agape* for one another comes from God or more accurately, is born from him which means that the person who loves God knows him. This injunction from Jesus is based in the command to love the Lord with one's entire self which spills over into loving one's neighbor.

Origen continues the theme of sheep and shepherd in accord with the Song's verse at hand quoting extensively from Ps 23, "the Lord is my shepherd" summed up by the following ten elements: no want, lie down, restores soul, paths of righteousness, fear no evil rod and staff offer comfort, prepare a table, anoint head, cup overflows, goodness and mercy follow and dwell forever in the Lord's house. In light of these ten characteristics Jesus calls himself both the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep as well as the door by which these sheep go on and come in, the former that they may find pasture.

For those fearing the Lord's name, the sun of righteousness will rise and have healing tucked under its wings. That is to say, God will be in the midst of those who have such fear and experience divine help starting early in the morning. One such manifestation of the protective wings of God are the three men who came to Abraham at Mamre during the heat of the day just like the Song's bridegroom, they often being taken as angels. With regard to Abraham, Jesus rebukes the Jews for not doing what their patriarch had done which can apply to showing hospitality as at Mamre. Doing this is equivalent to casting off works of darkness because dawn is approaching when there's a need to put on armor of light to avoid debauchery at this time.

When Joseph as second in charge over Egypt after pharaoh met his brother Benjamin, he asked him and his brothers to dine with him at noon, that time of day when the Song's bridegroom gives rest to his flock. When all his brothers joined Joseph without knowing who he was they had brought presents.

Darkness covered the time when Jesus had been crucified, that is, from the sixth to the ninth hour. In conjunction with this Origen brings up the creation of man in Genesis. During these three sacred hours while Jesus was on the cross the secret and the wisdom of God was being manifest which none of the world's rulers could

comprehend. However, believers have no share in the world's spirit but in the Spirit of God to understand gifts bestowed upon them. Another way of describing this is that we behold the Lord's glory with faced unveiled and are transformed from one degree of glory into another without out end.

#5: Unless you know yourself, O good (or Fair) one among women, go forth in the footsteps of the flocks, and feed your goats among the shepherds tents.

This section deals with the maidens telling their mistress to follow after the shepherds since apparently she doesn't know herself, this being a kind of penalty as well as remedy to deepen her relationship with the divine bridegroom. God had created man in his image and likeness, the former being indelible and the latter subject to distortion. The bride doesn't seem to have been faithful to being made in the divine image, so she has to go out and restore the likeness to her spouse. This will preclude final judgment when the Lord will separate the sheep from the goats. So in her search for her lost likeness, the bride forgets what is past and strive forward to what is ahead. She doesn't comprehend fully her own actions; she does what she doesn't want to do and hates it as well, a result of not knowing herself and being unable to escape this quandary. At the same time she must sort through all this but not under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Those first will be last and visa versa. That is to say, we are not to be children tossed to and fro by cunning doctrines and wilful deceits which will make us come in last. Such is the duty of each person following the Good Shepherd (Christ) who gives his life for his sheep. With this stated clearly, the bride is to follow the flock of the shepherds or those who are associated with the maidens. By doing this the bride will demonstrate her love which at this stage needs some testing to see if it's genuine. While engaged in this she is to sow righteousness and gather the fruit of life until such fruit comes to her. Also she will encounter others in the same situation, those to whom the Spirit bestows wisdom and to another, knowledge. Only those persons whom the Son chooses can know the Father because all things have been handed over to the Son.

Christ lays down his life for the sheep in full knowledge of the Father. Such voluntary giving of one's life is a kind of being still and knowing God who is exalted among the nations of the earth. From it follows knowledge of the world and its elements as well as various changes of seasons, etc.

Human nature is mortal and will put on that which is immortal. Until that happens

the bride is follow after the shepherds' flocks because she doesn't know herself although the maidens call her fairest among women. They call her such because to one is given by the Spirit wisdom and knowledge to another. Nevertheless, the bridegroom calls her a dove and perfect, dear to her mother who similarly is praised by the accompanying queens and concubines. The bride has been given much which means that much will be required of her compared with the lowly person who can obtain ready pardon compared with someone who is powerful and will be tested.

Should anyone commit adultery, both persons are to be executed; the same applies to the daughter of a priest. This can be seen in light of the trespass of the first man which was annulled by the passion, death and resurrection Jesus Christ. Should a person hide in the ground the one talent given him in connection with this grace, he will suffer the consequences for not investing it. Such was the case of Onan who refused to take as his wife that of his deceased brother. All this comes from the fact of being ignorant of oneself which is attributed to the bride who then must follow the shepherds.

Wisdom is imparted to those who are mature, not belonging to the current age nor its rulers, both of which will pass away. It is a portion belonging to the Lord as well as to Jacob as his heritage, such persons being led by the Holy Spirit and who are called his sons. These persons did not receive the spirit of slavery but that of sonship enabling them to call God "Abba." Instead of having the spirit of the world, they have the Spirit from God to understand gifts given to them.

#6: I compare you, my love, to a mare of Pharaoh's chariots.

The bridegroom compares his spouse to a mare in Pharaoh's chariots meaning that she is an outstanding animal within the most powerful army in the world. Although the Lord caused this army to be drowned in the Red Sea, the mare alone escaped and made its way through the sea with the Israelites led by Moses. Later a similar fate awaited the army of the Syrian king which surrounded Dothan by having been blinded by the prophet Elisha. Such divine wrath is also vented against the rivers when the Lord rode upon his chariot of victory. Those following the Lord may be said to be coupled to this chariot, the yoke being easy and pulling the chariot as light.

Origen refers to several verses of chapter eleven of Revelation, a large multitude in heaven singing God's victory along with the twenty-four elders. The victory is attributed more specifically to the Word or *Logos* who was with God and was God as image of the invisible God and first born of creation. Jesus has power to lay down his

life which no one else can give or take away. A person shares in this by rejoicing in his sufferings, for by this one can make up what's lacking in Christ's afflictions, that is, by way of participation in them, all for the church. Such suffering is a cleaning by washing with the *logos* to present it cleansed from every spot or wrinkle and a making holy.

Again the divine bridegroom compares his spouse to a mare in pharaoh's chariots which as noted earlier seems inconsistent with the Exodus story. Nevertheless, what he says is trustworthy and can be accepted fully before the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen as they follow on white horses. As for the Exodus story, this section concludes with reference to the Lord's wrath against the rivers meted out to them by him on his chariot.

#7: How lovely have your cheeks become, as are the turtle-doves, your neck as necklaces!

Now the bridegroom praises his spouse's cheeks and neck which are adorned followed by a reminder about her not knowing herself and the need to pasture her kids near the shepherds' tents. A parallel image is Ruth gleaning just behind the workers of Boaz in the Book of Ruth. All form one body as the extended reference in Romans indicates with Christ as its head. This may be read in conjunction with an equally lengthy reference from Ephesians with regard to the husband being the head and his wife subject to her.

God spoke with his people in many ways throughout history, chiefly by the prophets. The intent is to sanctify Israel, image of the church and wash her with the water of the *logos* to present her without any blemish. Then the bride/church will have her cheeks adorned with ornaments and her neck with jewels. Such is the reward for taking up Christ's light yoke and learning from him. He had become like us, by assuming a human form and obedient to death on a cross. By this one obedience the disobedience of the first man is remedied.

This relatively brief section concludes with a reference to Tamar whose story is interjected within the larger one of Joseph or more specifically, when his brothers fail to recognize him. Also she and Judah are ancestors of Jesus Christ through their son Perez.

#8: We will make you likenesses of gold with silver inlays, till the King

recline at His table.

This section begins with mention of Jesus' temptation by the devil followed by the law which had been introduced by reason of transgressions and stays in effect until the promise (Jesus Christ). It was ordained by angels, but in these last days God spoke to us by his Son, heir of all things and creator of the world. While in this world, there's need to be under guardians, that is, until the coming of Christ who introduces the fulness of time. He had chosen us in love (*agape*) before the world's foundation to be his sons. Being sons of God depends upon him remembering his people whom he had redeemed and which is built upon the foundation laid down by both apostles and prophets.

The image of two spouses is a representation of Christ and the church meaning that husbands must love their wives as Christ loved his church. That makes them ministering spirits for persons destined for salvation. Such husbands are crucified with Christ enabling him to live in them.

The Lord appeared to Abraham at Mamre which parallels the angel of the Lord appearing to Moses in a bush which was on fire but not consumed. Within that fire are forged ornaments of gold while the king...the Lord...was giving off his fragrance. The Israelites, however, took a long time to be convinced it was the Lord even though he lavished upon them precious metals they used for the worship of Baal. Such metals are intended to be refined in a furnace up to seven times. This enables the person receiving them to have a tongue of silver when he speaks. Such speech, if you will, will assist in the Lord adorning the tent of meeting with two golden cherubim by the mercy seat along with a lamp stand of pure gold.

We are to seek the Lord until the fruit of righteousness comes upon us which implies being under obedience to the law, that having been added because of transgressions while awaiting the promise ordained by angels. The law is a shadow of what's to come meaning that sacrifices offered under it can never perfect those performing them. However, they are a kind of warning until the end of ages has come, Jesus Christ being the true the high priest. He has entered a sanctuary not made by human hands but heaven itself and appears in God's presence on our behalf. Following this is mention of the ark, mercy seat, altar and table which comprise a foreshadowing of heaven. Then we have considerable detail with regard to the tent's construction and all the material that went into its construction. With Jesus, the veil over the holy of holies is removed.

Jesus was tempted by the devil while in the desert for forty days which for us is a warning not to be puffed up. One only has to recall what happened to the Israelites, another warning, upon whom the end of the age has come. With this in mind, doing to others as we wish done to ourselves is the fulfilment of the law and prophets. After all, Israel is the Lord's vineyard, but he looked there for justice and found none. This is a perfect setup for a harlot to take over with all the nations subdued under her. Oholah and Oholibah are such examples of being a harlot in the book of Ezekiel.

Jesus reflects God's glory because he bears the stamp of his nature which is revealed when the temple's curtain was torn in two at his crucifixion. At that time Jesus was on the cross, his couch. Paul later became an apostle as witness to the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and wants to know him, his sufferings and power of his resurrection. In other words, Paul always is looking to things that aren't seen but to those that aren't. He exhorts us to seek what is above where Christ is seated at God's right hand. This enables us not to regard people from a merely human point of view.

While in the Sinai wilderness the Israelites drank from the rock which was spiritual and unknown to them, that is, Jesus Christ. The reason is that they as well as their fathers were under the cloud and had been baptized in the Red Sea under the guidance of Moses. Afterwards they were fed with manna in the Sinai wilderness, a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the lamb of God to be sacrificed for those who have come through the great tribulation by having spit the veil of finely wrought material and as prepared by him who opened up a way through it for us.

St. Peter recounts how the prophets foresaw grace through Jesus Christ, the same premonition experienced by Abraham who rejoiced to see the day of Jesus coming in the flesh and also prefigured by Elijah who had to come before Jesus. They were teachers who fed the people milk, not solid food, concerning the first principles of God's *logos* which, like Jesus growing up, attains stature and favor with God.

The bride gives forth a fragrance while her spouse is laying on his couch, a kind of image of the divine temple which has no association with idols and open only to those who are humble and contrite in spirit. Such a person keeps Jesus' *logos* and is loved by the Father, the two divine persons making their dwelling with him.

#9: My nard gave forth its fragrance.

A week before Jesus' death Mary took a pound of costly nard and anointed Jesus'

feet which filled the house with the nard's fragrance. That makes those present within the house or those being saved the aroma of Christ along with being an aroma for those who are perishing. Jesus rebukes those who interfere with Mary to whom he is a bag of myrrh laying between her breasts as well as a cluster of henna blossoms. This is the treasure a merchant in search of fine pearls desires, the source of water which springs up to eternal life because from one's heart rivers of living water will flow.

Jesus also is the bread of life as solid food for the mature whose faculties are trained to discern good from evil. Finally, Jesus as bread of life speaks of himself in the same sentence as quenching the thirst of those who come to him. He exists from the beginning yet someone we can see, look upon and touch by reason of having become glory and revealed his glory.

#10

The divine bridegroom resembles a bag of myrrh lying between his spouse's breasts as well as on his couch with her giving forth the fragrance of nard. Such fragrance spreads out from Israel or to whom belong the patriarchs, and then to the Gentiles; both are destined to inherit the person of Jesus Christ. As for the myrrh and nard at hand, it is not like a vessel without a cover thereby making it and its contents unclean. If anyone touches such an unclean object as this, he becomes both unclean and guilty. Daniel's vision of a stone which smote an image composed of iron and clay breaks it, an image of such an unclean object.

Although all nations are to God as drop of water from a bucket as well as dust, he will gather them for himself, raise them up and make them sit in heaven with Jesus Christ. This makes the bride's heart overflow and sing a song to the king, her pen ready as that of a scribe and ready to sing with stringed instruments. Section #10 concludes with another verse from the Song pertinent to fragrance, that is, myrrh, aloes and cassia.

#11: My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.

This section continues the theme of the previous one, that is, as pertinent to the sense of smell which can be attributed to Jesus Christ. In other words, he gives off the scent of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. To the Jews his scent is the power of God and to the Greeks, the wisdom of God. Also Jesus calls himself

the true vine with his Father as dresser of vines which produces wine to gladden the heart. Furthermore he is oil to make one's face shine and bread to strengthen the heart. In his blessing of his twelve sons, Jacob speaks of Judah bidding his foal to the fine and colt of an ass to a choice fine while washing his garments in the blood of grapes, a symbol of fertility.

Some people may complain at the extravagance of all this precious material being poured out as they did with Mary anointing the feet of Jesus. Nevertheless, for those so attuned to his message, their hearts burned as they sat with Mary listening to Jesus' words as on the road after the resurrection when he opened the scriptures. Such opening is parallel to Mary breaking the jar of previous ointment.

While a person may have hard service as that of a hireling throughout his entire life, the Lord blesses his work and possessions. The ultimate goal is to be like Mary while the king lay on his couch and the person giving forth the fragrance of his work as nard so that he may be a bag of myrrh laying between his breasts.

Book Three

#1: Behold, you are beautiful, my Love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

The bride's maidens exhort her to follow the tracks of the flock and pasture her own flock by the shepherds, that is, taking advice which went against her desire. Parallel to this Jesus went into the desert after having been baptized by John, the sign to do this being the Holy Spirit descending upon him as a dove. Thus he fulfilled the psalmist's words who wished to have wings as a dove and fly away into the desert for refuge. There the maidens divide the enemy's spoil among the sheep folds, the wings of the dove, image of the bride, adorned with silver and metal.

Although a woman must have her head covered while at prayer, this is secondary to taking delight in God's law. In contrast to this, an unspiritual person receiving the Spirit's gifts is subject to folly because they must be discerned in a spiritual fashion. Associated with this discernment is offering a lamb without blemish; if not that, two turtle doves or two pigeons.

Jesus prays for another Counselor (Holy Spirit) suggesting that he too is such a Counselor though not called that directly. However, the world can't receive this

second Counselor because it neither see nor knows him but delights in those whom Jesus had favored. Such persons are little children who are fortunate to have an advocate, another name for counselor.

This section concludes with the two olive trees in Zechariah which pertain to completion of the Jerusalem temple by Zerubbabel.

#2

The suffering servant in Isaiah grew up with everyone around him knowing him. However, he was not desirable to behold and therefore rejected and despised, the reason for which isn't specified. One thing is for certain, namely, that he had done no wrong. This image of Jesus Christ applies to his followers who also are his members. Despite such affliction they won't be struck as by the sun and moon, that is, day and night. Even Satan who takes the disguise of an angel of light can't harm them even though their outer nature is wasting away. And so such persons rejoice in their sufferings and make up for what is lacking in Christ's afflictions because they are members of his body, the church. Christ therefore is the sole mediator between God and men through whom we have receive the grace in which we are in possession enabling us to rejoice in our sufferings which produce endurance.

#3: The beams of our house are cedar, our rafters are pine.

Even though Paul may be delayed in coming to his congregation, he wishes them to know they are the church of the living God and bulwark of truth. This is because the Father gave Jesus his son everything who in turn will declare it to them. However, should anyone be contentious with regard to this or the practice of worship, they aren't recognized.

John the Evangelist addresses the seven churches in Asia, the parallel of which are the seven spirits before God's throne. Such churches had been brought out of Egypt as a vine after which the mountains were covered by the branches of cedars.

#4: I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among the thorns, so is my neighbor among the daughters.

This reference to a flower and lily (the latter being among thorns) is an image first of Jesus Christ among his people, some of whom drew near to him and others who did not. Compare this with Christ's image of the lilies of the field adorned more handsomely than King Solomon who, by the way, is author of the Song of Songs. On

the other hand are those who had left the Christian community because from the beginning they weren't a part of it. They are like seed sown among thorns; having heard the word of God, they allowed worldly cares to choke the word and produce no fruit.

#5: As the apple tree is among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. In his shadow I desired and sat, and his fruit was sweet in my throat.

The apple tree among the trees is like Jesus among his people who makes them as gods, sons of the Most High. However, some of them will not consent to this and perish like any earthly prince. The Lord is sovereign in this regard; no heavenly being can be compared with him. By way of preparation for this exultation, wisdom has built her house and slaughtered her beasts, thus having set her table for the impending banquet. It is a feast where Jesus is the bread of life where no one will hunger who comes to him. However, others will have an axe laid to their root, being cut down by reason of not bearing fruit.

The house built by wisdom is a shelter where a person will dwell with the Most High and thereby delight in the divine law, meditating it freely day and night. An archetypical image of this is the Virgin Mary whom the Holy Spirit will overshadow and dispel the darkness that has come over the people sitting in death's shadow. Thus Mary is a great light which has dawned by reason of the Holy Spirit. As for the law, it too was a shadow but one of protection destined to fade away, for sacrifices are no longer required to perfect those offering them. The laws concerning food, festivals and so forth are a shadow of what is to come whereas the substance belongs to Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the law itself serves as a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary.

There is the question as to committing sin if under the influence of divine grace instead of the law. However, this is superseded by reason of our living under God's shadow among the nations. There is Jesus as the way, truth and life enabling those living there to access his Father. This access is seeing face to face, not previously as in a mirror when we lived without true knowledge thereby making our days as but a shadow.

After his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at once which was not unlike a shadow under which he sat with great delight. This shadow prevents the sun from scorching any seed among those imitating Jesus as well as from withering away

due to lack of root. Even more suddenly that this withering was Satan's fall from heaven which Jesus had witnessed. So as long as a person abides in the shadow of God's wings, he will sing for joy and exclaim that the beloved of the Song is his while he pastures among the lilies, this he does until the day breathes and shadows flee. Those who aren't in this shadow have destruction latent in their heart and their tongue like an open grave as they engage in flattery. This differs from the sweetness of divine words to one's taste which one pants after with open mouth.

#6: Bring me into the house of wine.

Concomitant with this desire is the bride wishing to be drawn after her divine spouse where reference to Wisdom is made as having prepared her feast and having extended an invitation to eat of it. Many will come to the feast in order to join the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Those serving table are ministering spirits.

Jesus is the true vine and his Father, the vine dresser. Those at wisdom's table are to abide in Jesus as a branch so as to bear fruit. In contrast to this, Noah drank wine, became drunk thus and exposed himself as naked to his sons. Instead, those with wisdom have their heads anointed with oil and their cups overflowing, this far better than the transitory enjoyment obtained from stolen water and bread. It turns out to be as the vine of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah which produce poison for wine, the poison of serpents and asps.

This section concludes with Jesus saying just before his arrest that he won't drink the fruit of the vine (i.e., the Eucharist just celebrated) until that day when he drinks it anew in the kingdom of his Father.

#7: Set in order charity in me.

The Lord points out the path of life from which we are to swerve neither to the left nor to the right but are to keep ourselves walking straight ahead, that is, away from evil. In this way we will not taste death before seeing the kingdom of God. Essential to this is are the two commandments of love, the second with regard to one's neighbor since we are all members of one body, that of Jesus Christ. Such holding of others in esteem creates peace among all members, making us righteous before God and walking in his commandments.

Origen gives some examples of a person being so established in love. That is to say,

love concerning our enemies, a form of maturity associated with older persons who are temperate, sound in faith and in love, the love between two spouses, love of all things because God had made them by measure, number and weight. Paul once persecuted the church and is the least of the apostles. He later experienced persecution but was not destroyed while bearing daily anxiety for all the churches in his care. Being attentive to God's voice will get him on our side instead of supporting those who are wicked which will turn the tables against us.

While God bids us to honor our parents, Jesus speaks of hating them in preference to loving him. Hence a rhetorical question such as the commonality of light with darkness applies. Once a person prefers Jesus over this intimate bond of natural love, God will bring him into his house of wine and set his banner of love over him. Such love never ends compared with gifts of prophecy and knowledge. They strengthen a person with divine ointments and apples him who is wounded with love.

Angels of God worship him as well as encamp around anyone who fears the Lord, that is, someone who is little and whom these same angels behold the Father's face in heaven. Before this face is the Son of God with eyes as flames of fire, etc. He knows the works of everyone and their excellence. Such persons loves the brethren and prays for the holy city of Jerusalem which is not unlike the house of wine where one is strengthened with perfumes and stayed with apples.

#8: Strengthen me with perfumes, stay me with apples, for I am wounded with love.

The banquet house where the bridegroom sets his banner of love over his spouse is the one built by Wisdom who has set her table. Also on this table are a variety of plants and roots, they as well as other trees which are known by their fruits. If they produce bad fruit, an axe is laid to their root. On the other hand is Jesus who is the true vine with his Father as dresser of the vines, an image going back to the garden of Eden. In this second garden the Father will root out any plant not put there by himself. Also he will allow those to flourish who have put on a new nature renewed in knowledge after the image of the creator. The beloved is likened to an apple best among other trees, he allowing to eat of the tree of live the person who is victorious over evil.

John the Baptist calls Jesus the lamb of God who takes away the world's sins, having descended into humanity as the manna in the desert which nourished the Israelites in their distress. Such food of angels once consumed makes one's mouth as a sharp

sword hid in the hand of God.

God is love or *agape* as well as light and salvation enabling elimination of fear. Along with it is the shield of faith giving protection against arrows of the wicked who shoot the upright of heart in the dark. The entire armor of God is required to resist the devil's wiles, this armor being God's left hand under one's head and right hand as embracing.

#9: His left hand will be under my head, and his right hand will embrace me.

The two hands are as two extremes of salvation history stretched out and representative of the first man and the second man or Adam and Jesus Christ embracing all humanity between them. Here there's no room for neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus who know his grace. And that consists of knowing that he had emptied himself and became poor that we may become rich. Jesus anticipated this when he raised his eyes to heaven asking the Father to glorify him that he in turn may glorify the Father.

Jesus was the *Logos* in the beginning as God, so he and the Father are both divine. Now Jesus as being gentle and in full control, can go forth bearing our sins on the tree of the cross that we may die to sin and be healed by his wounds. Thus he redeems us from the law's curse as having become a curse for us.

Jesus came into the world as light of the world so that anyone believing in him might not remain in darkness. This light is the glory of God and stamp of his nature as it upholds the universe.

#10: I have charged you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the powers and by the virtues of the field that you do not rouse or wake my love until he pleases.

On his deathbed Isaac is deceived by the scent of his son Jacob, that is, his mother Rebekah uses the garments of his brother Esau as a disguise. Despite this, Jacob becomes a worker for God and his field as well as building over Esau. By deception Jacob's father has imparted the spiritual gift of his paternal blessing in order to strengthen him. In contrast with Esau, Jacob is a member of Jerusalem above which is free, she being his true mother over Rebekah.

Instead of being subject to slavery which is associated with fear, Jacob has received the spirit of sonship, the same spirit which enables us to call God "Abba" or

“Father.” Love lacks fear and casts it out, for God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and brought us over into the kingdom of the beloved Son, the home of that kingdom being the Jerusalem above. Now being born of God and knowing him, we can love each other. Such love or *agape* is a true rising from the sleep of death when Christ gives us light.

#11: The voice of my beloved.

The fig tree and vines have put forth their fruits which makes the beloved rise and come to her divine spouse. She comes as a dove from the shelter of her rock by the wall and shows her face as well as making herself known by the sweetness of her voice. That is to say, the bride comes as a roe or young hart taught to observe what her divine spouse has commanded, he being with her until the end of the ages. And so the bride is like a man going into a distant country. While away, she heard a voice saying that the divine bridegroom has appeared suddenly and to everyone’s surprise. Any question such as how the Lord will manifest himself to his disciples and not to the world are irrelevant in this situation. Jesus responds to such a question that a person loving him will keep his *logos* which will make the Father love him and dwell with him.

The bride sees her spouse behind the wall peeping in through the lattices after which he puts his left hand under her head and his right one embracing her. This is a sign that the winter has past, that the bridegroom can put his left hand under his spouse’s head and right hand can embrace her. Such is the way he imparts spiritual gifts and be well thought of by outsiders while escaping any snares set by the devil. As for the divine bridegroom’s embrace, it is a way of setting her apart which parallels the way he fixes the world’s bounds and marks the seasons.

#12: The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.

The Lord comes leaping over the mountains and hills enabling one to finish the good fight and win the race. Such is a way of stating the mission commissioned by the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders began at Jerusalem and extended outward from there. At the same time some minds remained hardened as when reading the old covenant, a veil which remains over them which only Jesus Christ can remove. Jesus removes this veil, if you will, from Peter, James and John by being transfigured on a mountain when his face shone and his garments became white as light. Upon this mountain there will be founded later a city to which people will lift up their eyes.

Coming down from the mountain of transfiguration enabled the three disciples to become fishers of men as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah. They are to embark upon this at once, not coming down from the roof of their houses, symbolic of being present at the transfiguration. Such persons will increase in wisdom and stature in imitation of Jesus and fill every valley with his message of salvation. Those who humble themselves to hear it will be justified and therefore be exalted by God. Such exultation reaches the height of Mount Zion in Jerusalem which is surrounded by mountains. It will become manifest at the proper time by the king of kings. In the meanwhile, we have as a continuous intercessor Jesus as high priest who had passed through the heavens and from there enables us to hold fast to our confession of faith. He makes us drink of water only he can bestow and which will never makes us thirsty because we will have as spring in ourselves welling up to eternal life.

#13: My beloved is like a roe or a young hart on the mountain of Bethel.

The law contains a list of animals the Israelites may eat which includes a hart though there's no mention of a roe (deer), both being images of the divine bridegroom. As for the hart, it longs for flowing streams, an image of pining after God. Upon hearing the Lord's voice, hinds give birth, this voice having the capacity to flash flames of fire and to shake the wilderness. Such was the way the Lord addressed Job from the whirlwind who was reduced to silence. As for the hind, it is an image of a wife whose affection will fill the heart of her husband with wisdom imparted by the Spirit and enabling the interpretation of spiritual truths.

Although God's nature is invisible, we can perceive it in creation not unlike copies of heavenly things which had been purified by rites. Now they are superceded by the blood of Christ shed on behalf of man who is made in the divine image and likeness with dominion over creation. This image and likeness is not unlike a mustard seed which grows into a tree by faith which will become able to move mountains. Also it enables one to learn both what is both secret and manifest, something which Paul exhorts his listeners to do.

God's promise to Abraham to multiply his descendants as stars of heaven and sand on the seashore will make the glory of each one shine as the moon and the stars. However, the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to John for baptism were rebuked for their hypocrisy, they being like well-fed stallions lusting after the wives of their neighbors. Furthermore, they resemble beasts that perish as well as having venom as a serpent. Like children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, from them issue evil thoughts, adultery and murder. Judas was also one

such example who betrayed Jesus.

Those who trust in the Lord's strength have their hearts set on the road to Zion, advancing there while giving thanks and having their inward thoughts as a feast to him. Moses wished Israel to set out on such a journey but was prevented by pharaoh. Finally the people made their way first through the Red Sea and later through the terrible wilderness of Sinai. Thus thy resembled the roe and young heart on the mountain of Horeb which is akin to Bethel, the house of God.

Paul is in travail until Christ is formed in his listeners, wishing them to cast their burden upon the Lord that he may sustain them. If not, they are pregnant with longing while bringing forth wind, having pride as their necklace. If so, they return home with shouts of joy even though they go forth weeping.

Lot's wife looked back at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned into a pillar of salt. Such will be the fate of anyone who puts his hand to the plow and looks back, not fit for the kingdom of God. Instead, one is to forget what is behind and strain forward to what lies ahead as they prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his paths which is in accord with the message of John the Baptist. Those who do this lack dissension and are united in the same mind and judgment compared with a false witness breathing lies and sowing discord. Along the way a person is to avoid the serpent who had deceived Eve and turns attention away from being devoted to Christ who is our peace and has broken down the wall of hostility, creating one new man in place of the two.

The divine bridegroom likened to a roe and young hart longs for his bride as for flowing streams and wishes her not to fall prey to the serpent's deception as did Eve. In the way she will have him as her peace who had broken down the wall of hostility, making the two as one. The bridegroom as Christ was in the form of God but disregarded this dignity in order to win his bride's favor, this having been intuited long ago by Israel's patriarchs.

High mountains are favored by goats, and with this in mind, Isaiah exhorts Zion which is located within Jerusalem to ascend a similar mountain in order to give voice to good tidings. In this way people will be able to see the Father made known by his Son, for they are blessed in purity of heart. All things have been given to the Son who will enable the Spirit to rest upon believers with wisdom, understanding and fear of the Lord. Such wisdom fashions all things and will be the teacher. In contrast to such believers are the Pharisees and scribes are hypocrites who do their best to shut the

doors to the kingdom of heaven.

Christ is no longer to be regarded from a human point of view which transfers over to regarding persons in a new way. The woman with a flow of blood became such a one when she touched Jesus' garment. She has seen and bears witness that Jesus is the *Logos* of God, having drawn near to him as a roe or young hart.

#14: Behold, he is behind our wall, looking through the windows, peeping through the lattices. My beloved answers and says to me.

This verse intimates a certain slyness mirrored by Rebekah who hatched a plan to deceive her husband Isaac to favor Jacob over Esau by preparing savory food. Although Jacob couldn't disguise his voice, his presence was gracious as seasoned with salt, prepared to answer any question his father might ask. It worked, for he received the blessing destined for Esau.

In the Song of Songs the king has brought his spouse into the house of wine which can be a symbol of God's household the church and mirroring God's glory as chanted by the mouths of children and babes. The bride had been responsive to the shepherd of Israel and thus entered the loveliness of his dwelling where in the beginning the *Logos* was the Lord which was with God and God. Before entering this sacred place we have the beloved standing as a gazelle as he peeps inside. He does this in order to give through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and knowledge, pearls which aren't to be cast before swine for trampling.

Currently we see dimly in a mirror made of polished metal but later will see face to face. The act of rising and coming as a dove is the way such seeing will be realized. Contrary to this seeing is looking at a woman with lust which means that such a person already has committed adultery. Such a tendency is a warning not to look to what is seen but to what is not seen. It enables the bride to say that her divine spouse is hers and she is his, he having hidden in himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Once in the house of wine, the bride is able to drink some wine which gladdens her heart, knowing that while in there the winter is past and the rains have gone. Instead of this rain, she enjoys the rain of righteousness and showers in due season.

The law and prophets were in force until the appearance of John the Baptist and after him there comes the good news of the kingdom of God which forms a river

gladdening the city of God. It provides water welling up to eternal life. To maintain this flow of water nourishing the vines the bride asks that the little foxes be caught which spoil them. Such vines form the aroma of Christ among those being saved as well as for those who are perishing. To catch these foxes the divine bridegroom will be as a mighty hunter, Nimrod being a prime example.

All have sinned and fall short of God's glory which to some extent was experienced by Jesus when he was tempted in the wilderness. However, he committed no sin nor was guile found on his lips compared with all those dwelling upon the earth who are unable to bring a clean thing out of what is unclean. Jesus takes this identity with us a step further, that is, by being made sin although he did not know it. In this way God did what the law could not do, enabling us to escape as a bird from the fowler's snare.

Jesus partook of human nature in order to destroy through death him who has the power of death, the devil. So when he ascended into heaven, he led captives and gave them gifts. Along with Jesus are we who are to sit with him in such heavenly places. There are present angles in the city of God, the new Zion, dressed in festal garments. Even before this happens the centurion at Jesus' crucifixion realized his divinity.

Book Four

#1: Rise up, come, my companion, my fair one, my dove. For behold, the winter is past, the rain is gone, it has departed. The flowers are seen in the land; the time of pruning has arrived; the voice of the turtle-dove has been heard in our land. The fig tree has put forth its young figs, the vines put forth the tender grape; they yield a smell.

The divine bridegroom bids his human spouse (the church) to rise because she isn't in the flesh but in the Spirit. She forms one body and one Spirit. In the act of rising she doesn't lose heart even though her outer nature may be wasting away because her inner nature is being renewed. The Holy Spirit experienced something of this but in reverse form, if you will, when having descended in bodily form or as in a dove upon Christ who later at his ascension will fly away and be at rest. It is in Christ that all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

This rising to the bridegroom makes us united with Christ in a death not unlike his which will apply to the resurrection when winter is past and the rain is gone. Once

this has happened, we won't be children tossed about by every doctrine but will listen to the voice of the turtle dove. Such a voice imparts wisdom not of this age but one which is secret and hidden decreed by God before the ages.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and other gifts similar to these, young figs put forth, if you will, which is not like those plants not planted by the Father which he will root up from us, God's field and building. As for planting, Paul had done this with regard to the churches while Apollos watered them, each church as a plant revealing itself by its own fruit. At the same time Christ is the true vine and the Father the dresser of vines with regard to each church. He is the one who will do the actual pruning to allow forth the aroma of Christ for those being saved and an aroma for those who are perishing. For the former, winter has past but for the latter, it is permanent.

The trespass of Israel allowed salvation for the Gentiles and to make Israel jealous of them. God will not allow any rain to fall on that nation, allowing thorns to spring up in order that the Gentiles may know his name, and that it is the Lord who speaks. As for Israel, she handed Christ over to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged and crucified, yet he as a fig tree will put forth figs at his resurrection three days hence. This will give birth to a vineyard putting forth tender grapes, this comprised of Israel as well as the Gentiles, both being the Lord's pleasant planting. Now both will be ministering spirits to serve those destined for salvation.

Jesus won't drink of the fruit of the vine until he does it anew in his Father's kingdom when we shall be his aroma for those being saved and an aroma for those perishing. This aroma spreads forth when we are bidden as in the Song verse at hand to rise up at the time of pruning when the turtle dove is heard. Now the axe is put to unfruitful root to clear the ground that the meek may inherit the earth and prosper in it.

Although we see dimly as in a polished mirror, later we will see face to face, that is, in the resurrection where no longer will be the giving and taking as in marriage. Instead, the church as dove will show her face within the cleft of the rock and give forth her sweet voice to her divine bridegroom. She is looking not to things seen but to what is unseen which is behind her statement of her spouse not to look at her though she is dark. She drinks from the spiritual rock, Jesus Christ, and with her veil removed, beholds the Lord's glory as she is changed...raised...from one degree of glory into another.

Such things are too marvelous for the human bride, the church, even though she remains as a dove sheltered in the rock's cleft. However, she knows that her divine spouse is the way, truth and life, a forerunner on our behalf, and high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Thus he can allow his glory to pass before his spouse in the cleft, allowing vision of his back, not face, for no one knows the Son except the Father. This looking from the rock's cleft is a looking to what's not seen, those seen being transient, for the *Logos* himself became flesh and dwelt with us.

While dealing with her divine spouse, the bride wishes her meditation to be pleasing to him, for on the day of judgment he will render an account for every foolish thing that has been uttered or during the time when we saw in a mirror dimly, not face to face. Now our outer nature is being wasted away while our inner one is being renewed as we put on a new nature renewed in knowledge after the creator's image. Thus the bride is presented to God in splendor and without any blemish. As a result the church has a cheerful face compared with a sorrowful heart which can break one's spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is *agape* and related gifts which comprise a strong city with salvation as its bulwark. To that the bride arises and comes with the wings of a dove covered with silver and whose pinions are gold. In this way she will flee the hardening of heart that has come upon Israel while the full number of Gentiles is coming in. Her presence among the nation is guarded by living in God's shadow while she awaits her bridegroom to be awakened. When he does, she will acknowledge him before men while he does the same before the Father. Thus the bride can ensure being scoffed at as well as experiencing malice while judging all things and not being judged by anyone.

The unspiritual person doesn't receive gifts of the Holy Spirit, not being able to comprehend them. After all, no one has ever seen God except the Son in the Father's bosom. Nevertheless, he calls us friends and makes know what he has heard (not seen) from the Father. To the Father he prays to have his friends be with him to behold his glory given in love before the world's foundation.

Elijah is determined to show himself to King Ahab as a ministering spirit and one with the gift of prophecy. Compare this with Judas at the last supper about to betray Jesus who cared not for the poor but was a thief. He sought to destroy Jesus but instead will be handed over to the power of the sword and be prey for jackals. Jesus knew the mind of his enemies which resembled that of a crafty fox threatening to spoil the vineyard or the church he is forming for himself. Even though a scribe

asked to follow Jesus, he responds by saying that he lacks a place to lay his head even though he can cure people and cast out demons. As for his enemies, they will become the prey of jackals and their mouths shall be stopped.

He who comes from above is above all on earth, those subject to hearing the blasts of trumpets to blown by three angles, perhaps those cherubim who have been stationed to guard entrance to the Garden of Eden. This garden may be taken as the portion given to the Lord's people, Jacob's allotted heritage and is protected against being ravaged by foxes by those who are given authority to tread upon serpents and the enemy's power. Thus Babylon, Israel's destroyer, will be requited for what she has done. She had caused the little ones to sin and will have a great mill stone put around her head and therefore will be drowned. Thus with her destruction will be great peace for those who love God's law, for nothing can make them stumble.

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