

Notations on the Commentary on the Song of Songs
by
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Introduction

This document consists of the **Commentary on the Song of Songs** of St. Bernard divided into three parts, the presentation of which requires some explanation. The reason? Treatment of Sermon One started off with the original intent of following a certain pattern for the entire **Song Commentary**. Then fairly quickly it gave rise to a second approach, the reason for which will be described. As for this original pattern, it advances paragraph by paragraph, the Latin text in blue coming first followed by the English translation in green. Inserted within the Latin text are a whole slew of English words in red. Inserting them was a rather tedious process but helped give birth to a change of the original intent of this document. Continuing like this for the entire eighty-six sermons would be too daunting a task.

Secondly (and this refers to Sermon Two onward), we have the same paragraph by paragraph presentation of the Latin text followed by the English translation. Inserted between the two is what this document is all about, a series of running notations in red. The original form of the Latin words are left as they are simply for convenience. Although many are familiar to English readers, they and less familiar terms have more subtle meaning, the reason for giving their definitions. Hopefully this somewhat cumbersome process brings the reader as close to the **Song Commentary** as possible.

The way Bernard uses Latin is masterful, to say the least. Anyone who has read it can't help but be on fire and wish to communicate it to other people. His command of the language and an attempt to approach is the reason why this document has come into existence. Perhaps unlike no other spiritual author, Bernard shows how our five senses correspond to spiritual reality. The way he does this is simply fascinating...enthralling, really...and never ceases to tire you out. In a way, this approach is a direct way of bringing down heaven upon earth.

All in all the way Bernard's **Song Commentary** ended up as presented here compels you to read it in low gear, if you will. It slows down your reading process radically and consumes a lot of time. Obviously this runs against our inbred desire to hurry up and get through the text as quickly as possible after which we're supposed to move on (but to where?). In other words, it's so contrary to the spirit of *lectio divina*.¹

¹ For the record, if you will...After having gone through the process of inserting translated words for the First Sermon, a more intimate picture of where Bernard is going starts to emerge. This is due in part to the varied meanings and shades of meaning of the words, many of which are noted. True, you can read the sermon in Latin, but this back and forth between the Latin and English is something you can't get otherwise.

The Latin text it is in two volumes entitled **Sermones super Cantica Canticorum** (Rome 1957 and 1958) whereas the English translation is in four volumes published by Cistercian Publications.

Postings will be made on a regular basis until the text is complete. The whole project may be taken as being in a state of evolution. That means the way the presentation of the text may evolve. Please note: the proper name Bernard is represented by the letter B.

Sermon One

De ipso titulo libri: «Cantica canticorum Salomonis.»

1. Vobis, fratres, alia quam aliis de saeculo (*saeculum*: race, generation, people of any time), aut certe aliter (compare with *aliis*, the two being along the same line) dicenda sunt. Illis siquidem lac potum dat, et non escam [1 Cor. III, 2] (*lac vs. escam*, the latter a dish prepared for the table), qui Apostoli formam tenet (holds in form or shape, appearance & to hold, grasp) in docendo. Nam spiritualibus solidiora (*more dense or compact*) apponenda (to set nearby) esse, itidem ipse suo docet exemplo, Loquimur, inquit, non in doctis humanae sapientiae (good taste, discernment) verbis, sed in doctrina spiritus, spiritualibus spiritualia comparantes; item, Sapientiam loquimur inter (in the midst, between) perfectos [1 Cor. II, 13, 6] (connotes finishing), quales vos nimirum esse confido; nisi frustra (in vain) forte jam ex longo studiis estis coelestibus (studies which are celestial) occupati (absorbed, engaged), exercitati (to keep busy, work) sensibus, et in lege Dei meditati (to reflect, muse, consider) die ac nocte. Itaque parate fauces (throat, gullet), non lacti, sed pani. Est panis apud (near, with) Salomonem, isque admodum splendidus sapidusque (to shine, be bright & well-tasted); librum (book-as-bread) dico, qui Cantica canticorum inscribitur: proferatur, si placet, et frangatur (to bring forth & to please, i.e., 1 & 2).

The instructions that I address to you, my brothers, will differ from those I should deliver to people in the world, at least the manner will be different. The preacher who desires to follow St Paul's method of teaching will give them milk to drink rather than solid food, and will serve a more nourishing diet to those who are spiritually enlightened: "We teach," he said, "not in the way philosophy is taught, but in the way that the Spirit teaches us: we teach spiritual things spiritually." And again: "We have a wisdom to offer those who have reached maturity," in whose company, I feel assured, you are to be found, unless in vain have you prolonged your study of divine teaching, mortified your senses, and meditated day and night on God's law. Be ready then to feed on bread rather than milk. Solomon has bread to give that is splendid and delicious, the bread of that book called "The Song of Songs." Let us bring it forth then if you please, and break it.

2. Nam de verbis Ecclesiastes satis (enough, sufficient), ni fallor, per Dei gratiam (favor,

esteem, friendship) instructi (to build, insert) estis mundi hujus cognoscere et contemnere (to become acquainted with, acquire knowledge & to value little) vanitatem (emptiness, absence of purpose). Quid et Parabolas? An non vita et mores (manner, custom, conduct, behavior) vestri juxta eam quae in ipsis invenitur doctrinam sufficienter emendati sunt et informati (to correct, improve & to shape, mold, fashion)? Proinde illis ambobus praelibatis (a tasting or taking away beforehand), quos nihilominus de amici arca praestitos accepistis (to take without effort, accept), accedite (to draw near) et ad tertium hunc panem, ut probetis (to make good, esteem) forsitan potiora. Cum enim duo sint mala (bad, not good), quae vel sola, vel maxime militant (to perform military service) adversus animam (living being, soul, person), vanus (empty) scilicet amor (affection, strong friendly feeling) mundi et superfluus (flowing over) sui, pesti (plague, pestilence) utrique duo illi libri obviare noscuntur (to become acquainted with); alter sarculo disciplinae (instruction, tuition, training) prava quaeque in moribus (manner, custom), et carnis superflua (more than what is sufficient) resecans (resecare: to curtail, restrain); alter luce rationis in omni gloria mundi fucum (pretense, disguise) vanitatis (emptiness) sagaciter (with keen scent, sharply) deprehendens (to take away, snatch), veraciterque distinguens (to separate, divide) a solido (undivided, whole, complete) veritatis. Denique universis (all together, all in one) humanis studiis (application, desire endeavor), ac mundanis desideriis (longing, ardent desire) praetulit (to carry in front, to hold forth) Deum timere, ejusque observare mandata. Merito quidem. Verae etenim sapientiae (good taste, discernment) primum illud, initium (a going in, entrance); secundum, consummatio (summing up, conclusion, completion) est: si tamen constat vobis non aliud veram et consummatam (connotes finishing and completeness) esse sapientiam, quam declinare (to turn downward) a malo, et facere bonum; itemque recedere (to fall back, give ground, retire) a malo neminem posse perfecte (fully, completely) absque timore (dread, apprehension) Dei, nec bonum opus (labor, toil) omnino esse praeter observantiam (attention, reverence) mandatorum.

Now, unless I am mistaken, by the grace of God you have understood quite well from the book of Ecclesiastes how to recognize and have done with the false promise of this world. And then the book of Proverbs - has not your life and your conduct been sufficiently amended and enlightened by the doctrine it inculcates? These are two loaves of which it has been your pleasure to taste, loaves you have welcomed as coming from the cupboard of a friend. Now approach for this third loaf that, if possible, you may always recognize what is best. Since there are two evils that comprise the only, or at least the main, enemies of the soul: a misguided love of the world and an excessive love of self, the two books previously mentioned can provide an antidote to each of these infections. One uproots pernicious habits of mind and body with the hoe of self-control. The other, by the use of enlightened reason, quickly perceives a delusive tinge in all that the world holds glorious, truly distinguishing between it and deeper truth. Moreover, it causes the fear of God and the observance of his commandments to be preferred to all human pursuits and worldly desires. And rightly so, for the former is the beginning of wisdom, the latter its culmination, for there is no true and consummate wisdom other than the avoidance of evil and the doing of good, no one can successfully shun evil without the fear of God, and no work is good

without the observance of the commandments.

3. Depulsis (remove) ergo duobus malis duorum lectione librorum, competenter (suitably, properly) jam acceditur (to approach, come near) ad hunc sacrum theoreticumque (observing, considering) sermonem: qui cum sit amborum fructus, non nisi sobriis (not drunk) mentibus (mind, intellect, reasoning) et auribus omnino credendus (to believe) est. Alioquin ante carnem disciplinae (instruction, tuition, training) studiis (assiduity, zeal, eagerness) edomitam (to conquer, subdue) et mancipatam (to transfer, sell) spiritui, ante spretam (spurned) et abjectam (cast away) saeculi pompam (solemn procession, parade) et sarcinam (package, bundle, load), indigne (unworthily) ab impuris (unclean) lectio sancta praesumitur (to take beforehand or first). Quomodo nempe lux incassum (in vain) circumfundit (to flow around) oculos caecos vel clausos (closed), ita animalis (animate, living) homo non percipit (to perceive, learn, know) ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei. Quippe Spiritus sanctus disciplinae effugiet (to flee) fictum (feigned, false) [Sap. 1, 5], quod est vita incontinens (lacking ability to restrain); sed nec erit ei unquam pars cum mundi vanitate, cum veritatis sit Spiritus [Joan. XIV, 17]. Quae enim societas (union for a common purpose, society) ei quae desursum (from above) est sapientiae, et sapientiae mundi, quae stultitia (folly, foolishness) est apud Deum [1 Cor. III, 19]; aut sapientiae carnis, quae et ipsa inimica (not friendly) est Deo? [Rom. VIII, 7.] Puto (to arrange, settle, judge) autem quod jam non habebit unde adversum nos murmuret (to mutter, roar) is, qui nobis de via venit amicus, cum et tertium istum insumpserit (to take for anything) panem.

Taking it then these two evils have been warded off by the reading of choice books, we may suitably proceed with this holy and contemplative discourse which, as the fruit of the other two, may be delivered only to well prepared ears and minds. Before the flesh has been tamed and the spirit set free by zeal for truth, before the world's glamour and entanglements have been firmly repudiated, it is a rash enterprise on any man's part to presume to study spiritual doctrines. Just as a light is flashed in vain on closed or sightless eyes, so "an unspiritual person cannot accept anything of the Spirit of God." For "the Holy Spirit of instruction shuns what is false," and that is what the life of the intemperate man is. Nor will he ever have a part with the pretensions of the world, since he is the Spirit of Truth. How can there be harmony between the wisdom that comes down from above and the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness to God, or the wisdom of the flesh which is at enmity with God? I am sure that the friend who comes to us on his travels will have no reason to murmur against us after he has shared in this third loaf.

4. Sed quis franget (to break or shatter into pieces)? Adest (to be present, attend) paterfamilias (male head of a family or household); cognoscite (to become acquainted with, acquire knowledge) Dominum in fractione panis. Quis enim alter idoneus (fit, meet, proper)? Non equidem ego mihi istud temere (to treat rashly, violate) arrogaverim (to claim). Sic spectetis (to watch, observe) ad me, ut ex me non exspectetis (root of specto with *ad* prefaced to it). Nam et ego unus sum de exspectantibus, mendicans (to beg) et ipse vobiscum cibum animae meae, alimoniam (food, nourishment) spiritus. Revera (in fact)

pauper et inops (destitute) pulso (to push, strike, beat) ad eum, qui aperit et nemo claudit, super sermonis hujus profundissimo (deep) sacramento. Oculi omnium in te sperant (to hope), Domine. Parvuli petierunt (to seek) panem; non est qui frangat eis; speratur id a benignitate (kindness, benevolence) tua. O piissime (devout, loyal to family, state & God), frange esurientibus (to hunger) panem tuum, meis quidem, si dignaris (to deem worthy), manibus, sed tuis viribus (force, power, strength).

But who is going to divide this loaf? The Master of the house is present, it is the Lord you must see in the breaking of the bread. For who else could more fittingly do it? It is a task that I would not dare to arrogate to myself. So look upon me as one from whom you look for nothing. For I myself am one of the seekers, one who begs along with you for the food of my soul, the nourishment of my spirit. Poor and needy, I knock at that door of his which, "when he opens, nobody can close," that I may find light on the profound mystery to which this discourse leads. Patiently all creatures look to you, O Lord. "Little children go begging for bread; no one spares a scrap for them;" they await it from your merciful love. O God most kind, break your bread for this hungry flock, through my hands indeed if it should please you, but with an efficacy that is all your own.

5. Dic, quaeso (to entreat), nobis, a quo, de quo, ad quemve dicitur: Osculetur me osculo oris sui? [Cant. 1, 1] aut quale est istud ita subitaneum (without warning), et factum repente (suddenly) de medio sermonis exordium (commencement, origin)? Sic quippe in verba prorumpit (to break, burst forth), quasi quempiam loquentem praemiserit (to send forward or ahead), cui consequenter (consequently, suitably) respondentem (to answer) et hanc introducat personam (person; originally as mask or character), quaecunque est ipsa quae osculum flagitat (to demand, entreat). Deinde si se osculari a nescio (not to know, be ignorant) quo vel petit (to seek), vel praecipit (to anticipate, enjoin, inform); cur signanter (expressly, clearly) et nominatim (by name, expressly) ore, et ore suo; quasi aliud quam os, aut alienum, et non potius suum, exhibere (to hold forth, present) sibi soleant (to be accustomed, tend to) osculantes? Quanquam ne hoc quidem dicit: Osculetur me ore suo: sed aliud profecto (actually, indeed) inusitatus (uncommon, extraordinary): Osculo, inquit, oris sui. Et quidem jucundum (pleasant, agreeable) eloquium (eloquence, utterance), quod ab osculo principium (beginning, origin) sumit (to take up, understand, claim), et blanda (pleasant, agreeable) ipsa quaedam Scripturae facies facile afficit (to treat, manage, handle) et allicit (to entice, lure, attract) ad legendum (chosen, select), ita ut quod in ea latet (to conceal), delectet (to delight, charm, please) etiam cum labore investigare (to examine), nec fatiget (to tire, exhaust) inquirendi (to seek after, search) forte difficultas, ubi eloquii (eloquence, speech) suavitas (pleasantness, agreeableness) mulcet (to handle roughly, beat up). Verum quem non valde attentum (attentive, careful) faciat istiusmodi principium sine principio. et novitas (novelty) locutionis (the act of speaking, discourse) in veteri libro? Unde constat (to stand together, agree) hoc opus non humano ingenio (innate or natural quality), sed Spiritus arte (art, skill) ita compositum (ordered, arranged), ut quamvis difficile intellectu (comprehension, understanding), sit tamen inquisitu (a search) delectabile (enjoyable, delightful).

Tell us, I beg you, by whom, about whom and to whom it is said: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.” How shall I explain so abrupt a beginning, this sudden irruption as from a speech in mid-course? For the words spring upon us as if indicating one speaker to whom another is replying as she demands a kiss— whoever she may be. But if she asks for or demands a kiss from somebody, why does she distinctly and expressly say with the mouth, and even with his own mouth, as if lovers should kiss by means other than the mouth, or with mouths other than their own? But yet she does not say: “Let him kiss me with his mouth”; what she says is still more intimate: “with the kiss of his mouth.” How delightful a ploy of speech this, prompted into life by the kiss, with Scripture's own engaging countenance inspiring the reader and enticing him on, that he may find pleasure even in the laborious pursuit of what lies hidden, with a fascinating theme to sweeten the fatigue of research. Surely this mode of beginning that is not a beginning, this novelty of diction in a book so old, cannot but increase the reader's attention. It must follow too that this work was composed, not by any human skill but by the artistry of the Spirit, difficult to understand indeed but yet enticing one to investigate.

6. Sed quid? titulum praeterimus (to disregard)? Non oportet (it is necessary, proper) ne unum quidem iota [Matth. V, 18], quando et minutias jubemur (to order) colligere (to gather, assemble) fragmentorum, ne pereant [Joan. VI, 12]. Titulus talis est: Incipiunt (to begin) Cantica canticorum Salomonis. Observa (to observe) in primis Pacifici nomen, quod est Salomon, convenire (to convene, assemble) principio (beginning, origin) libri, qui incipit a signo (mark, symbol) pacis, id est ab osculo; simulque adverte hujuscemodi principii solas ad hanc intelligendam (to come to know, perceive) scripturam mentes (mind, disposition, character) invitari (to invite) pacificas, quae sese jam a vitiorum vindicare (to assist a claim to, demand) perturbationibus (confusion, disorder) et curarum (care, attention) tumultibus (commotion, bustle) praevalent (to be stronger).

So now what shall we do? Shall we by-pass the title? No, not even one iota may be omitted, since we are commanded to gather up the tiniest fragments lest they be lost. The title runs: “The beginning of Solomon's Song of Songs.” First of all take note of the appropriateness of the name “Peaceful,” that is, Solomon, at the head of a book which opens with the token of peace, with a kiss. Take note too that by this kind of opening only men of peaceful minds, men who can achieve mastery over the turmoil of the passions and the distracting burden of daily chores, are invited to the study of this book.

7. Dehinc ne hoc quoque otiosum (idle, free from office) putes (to value, esteem), quod non simpliciter Cantica, sed Cantica canticorum habet inscriptio. Multa quippe legi cantica in Scripturis, et nullum illorum memini (to remember) taliter appellari (to address, call by name). Cecinit (to sing, make music) Israel carmen (song, poem, play) Domino, quod gladium pariter et jugum evaserit (to pass over, flee) Pharaonis, gemino maris mirabiliter (wonderfully, marvelously) liberatus simul et vindicatus (to avenge, claim, punish) obsequio (complaisance, allegiance). Non tamen quod cecinit, dictum est Canticum canticorum; sed,

si bene recolo (to reconsider, reflect): Cecinit, ait Scriptura, Israel carmen hoc Domino [Exod. XV, 1]. Cecinit etiam Debbora [Judic. V, 1], cecinit et Judith [Judith XVI, 1], cecinit et mater Samuelis [I Reg. II, 1]; prophetae quoque aliqui cecinerunt, et nemo eorum legitur appellasse canticum suum Cantica canticorum. Sane omnes, ni fallor (to mistake, deceive), cecinisse reperies (to find out, discover) pro quocunq; suo, suorumve percepto (to perceive, observe) commodo (advantage): verbi gratia, pro obtentu victoriae, pro evasione (escape) periculi (danger), aut pro percepto rei qualiscunq; adepto (obtained) beneficio. Ita ergo plerique cecinerunt, singuli pro singulis causis, ne ingrati (ungrateful) divinis beneficiis invenirentur (to find, discover), juxta illud: Confitebitur (to agree, acknowledge) tibi, cum benefeceris ei [Psal. XLVIII, 19]. At vero rex iste Salomon, sapientia singularis, sublimis gloria, rebus affluens (flowing, running), pace securus (quiet, composed), nullius talium eguisse (to need, lack) cognoscitur (to recognize), pro quo accepto ista decantare libuerit (to be pleasing, agreeable). Sed nec Scriptura ipsa sui uspiam tale aliquid significare (to show, express, call) videtur.

Again, the title is not simply the word “Song,” but “Song of Songs,” a detail not without significance. For though I have read many songs in the Scriptures, I cannot recall any that bear such a name. Israel chanted a song to Yahweh celebrating his escape from the sword and the tyranny of Pharaoh, and the twofold good fortune that simultaneously liberated and avenged him in the Red Sea. Yet even though chanted, this has not been called a “Song of Songs”; Scripture, if my memory serves me right, introduces it with the words: “Israel sang this song in honor of Yahweh.” Song poured from the lips of Deborah, of Judith, of the mother of Samuel, of several of the prophets, yet none of these songs is styled a “Song of Songs.” You will find that all of them, as far as I can see, were inspired to song because of favors to themselves or to their people, songs for a victory won, for an escape from danger or the gaining of a boon long sought. They would not be found ungrateful for the divine beneficence, so all sang for reasons proper to each, in accord with the Psalmist's words: “He gives thanks to you, O God, for blessing him.” But King Solomon himself, unique as he was in wisdom, renowned above all men, abounding in wealth, secure in his peace, stood in no need of any particular benefit that would have inspired him to sing those songs. Nor does Scripture in any place attribute such a motive to him.

8. Itaque divinitus inspiratus (inspired, instilled), Christi et Ecclesiae laudes, et sacri amoris gratiam (grace, thankfulness), et aeterni connubii (marriage) cecinit (to sing, play) sacramenta; simulque expressit (to copy, pronounce) sanctae desiderium animae, et epithalamii (marriage) carmen, exsultans (leaping up, boasting) in spiritu, jucundo (pleasant, agreeable) composuit (to arrange, organize) eulogio, figurato (to form, fashion, shape) tamen. Nimirum velabat (to cover, wrap) et ipse instar (example) Moysi faciem suam [Exod. III, 6], non minus forsitan in hac parte fulgentem (shining, glittering), eo quod illo adhuc in tempore nemo, aut rarus (scattered, few) erat, qui revelata (to uncovered) facie gloriam istam speculari (to watch, observe, examine) sufficeret (to supply, provide). Igitur pro sui excellentia reor (to reckon, calculate) nuptiale hoc carmen hujusmodi titulo praesignitum (special?) [alias praesignatum], ut merito Cantica canticorum singulariter

(particularly) appelletur (to address, call by name), sicut is quoque cui canitur, singulariter (singularly, especially) est dictus: Rex regum, et Dominus dominantium [1 Tim. VI, 15].

We must conclude then it was a special divine impulse that inspired these songs of his that now celebrate the praises of Christ and his Church, the gift of holy love, the sacrament of endless union with God. Here too are expressed the mounting desires of the soul, its marriage song, an exultation of spirit poured forth in figurative language pregnant with delight. It is no wonder that like Moses he put a veil on his face, equally resplendent as it must have been in this encounter, because in those days few if any could sustain the bright vision of God's glory. Accordingly, because of its excellence, I consider this nuptial song to be well deserving of the title that so remarkably designates it, the Song of Songs, just as he in whose honor it is sung is uniquely proclaimed King of kings and Lord of lords.

9. Caeterum vos, si vestram experientiam (experience, trial, proof) advertatis (to turn to, give attention), nonne in victoria, qua vicit (to conquer) mundum fides vestra, et in exitu vestro de lacu (pit, expanse of water) miseriae et de luto (soil, mud) faecis, cantastis et ipsi Domino canticum novum, quia mirabilia (wonderful, astonishing) fecit? Rursus cum adjecit primum supra petram statuere (to set up, station, decide) pedes vestros, et dirigere (to lay straight, arrange) gressus (a stepping, going) vestros; puto quod et tunc nihilominus pro indulta (to allow, grant, permit) novitate (newness, strangeness) vitae immisum (sent in, inserted) sit in os vestrum canticum novum, carmen Deo nostro. Quid cum poenitentibus (repenting) vobis non solum peccata dimisit (send away, dismiss), sed insuper promisit (to send forth, promise) et praemia (prize, reward, bribery); non multo magis spe gaudentes (to rejoice) futurorum bonorum, cantastis in viis Domini, quoniam magna est gloria Domini? At si cui forte vestrum clausum (enclosed, sealed) vel obscurum (dark, shadowy) aliquid de Scripturis interdum eluxerit (to shine forth, glitter), tunc prorsus necesse est pro percepta (perceived, observed) coelestis panis alimonia (nourishment) divinas mulceat (to touch lightly, be sweet) aures in voce exultationis et confessionis sonus epulantis (feasting). Sed et in quotidianis exercitiis (exercise, practice) et bellis (war), quae nulla hora pie in Christo viventibus desunt (to be wanting, lacking) a carne, a mundo, a diabolo, sicut militiam esse vitam hominis super terram [Job VII, 1] incessanter experimini (to test, experience) in vobismetipsis, quotidiana (daily) necesse est cantica pro assecutis (followed, pursued, overtaken) victoriis innovari (to renew, restore). Quoties tentatio (temptation, trial) superatur (to surmount, overflow), aut vitium (crime, vice) subjugatur (to put under the yoke), aut imminens (overhanging, menacing) periculum (danger) declinatur (to bend, turn aside), aut laqueus (snare) insidiantis (ambushing, lurking) deprehenditur (to seize, snatch, comprehend), aut annosa (age-old) et inveterata (ingrained) quaecunque animae passio semel perfecteque sanatur (to heal, cure, correct), aut multum diuque cupita (eager, passionate) et saepius (more often) petita (to ask, demand) virtus (manliness, courage, character) tandem aliquando Dei munere (service, burden) obtinetur (to occupy, preserve), quid nisi toties, juxta prophetam, personat (to resound) gratiarum (grace, thanks) actio et vox laudis [Isai. LI, 3], et ad singula quaeque beneficia benedicatur (to bless) Deus in donis suis? Alioquin ingratus (unpleasant, thankless) reputabitur (to count, calculate, ponder), cum

discussio venerit, qui non poterit dicere Deo: Cantabiles mihi erant justificationes tuae in loco peregrinationis (**wandering, pilgrimage**) meae [Psal. CXVIII, 54].

Furthermore if you look back on your own experience, is it not in that victory by which your faith overcomes the world, in “your exit from the horrible pit and out of the slough of the marsh,” that you yourselves sing a new song to the Lord for all the marvels he has performed? Again, when he purposed to “settle your feet on a rock and to direct your steps,” then too, I feel certain, a new song was sounding on your lips, a song to our God for his gracious renewal of your life. When you repented he not only forgave your sins but even promised rewards, so that rejoicing in the hope of benefits to come, you sing of the Lord's ways: how great is the glory of the Lord! And when, as happens, texts of Scripture hitherto dark and impenetrable at last become bright with meaning for you, then, in gratitude for this nurturing bread of heaven you must charm the ears of God with a voice of exultation and praise, a festal song. In the daily trials and combats arising from the flesh, the world and the devil, that are never wanting to those who live devout lives in Christ, you learn by what you experience that man's life on earth is a ceaseless warfare, and are impelled to repeat your songs day after day for every victory won. As often as temptation is overcome, an immoral habit brought under control, an impending danger shunned, the trap of the seducer detected, when a passion long indulged is finally and perfectly allayed, or a virtue persistently desired and repeatedly sought is ultimately obtained by God's gift; so often, in the words of the prophet, let thanksgiving and joy resound. For every benefit conferred, God is to be praised in his gifts. Otherwise when the time of judgment comes, that man will be punished as an ingrate who cannot say to God: “Your statutes were my song in the land of exile.”

10. Arbitror (**to judge, witness**) vos in vobis ipsis illa jam recognoscere (**to know again, examine**), quae in psalterio, non Cantica canticorum, sed Cantica Graduum appellantur, eo quod ad singulos profectus (**advance, increase, growth**) vestros, juxta ascensiones quas quisque in corde suo disposuit (**to dispose, arrange**), singula sint cantica depromenda (**produced, fetched**) ad laudem et gloriam promoventis (**to propel, advance**). Quonam modo impleatur (**to fill up, satisfy**) aliter ille versiculus non video: Vox exultationis et salutis in tabernaculis justorum [Psal. CXVII, 15]; aut certe Apostoli illa pulcherrima (**most beautiful**) saluberrimaque (**most salubrious, healthy**) exhortatio: In psalmis, hymnis, 1270 et canticis spiritualibus cantantes, et psallentes in cordibus vestris Domino [Ephes. V, 19].

Again I think that your own experience reveals to you the meaning of those psalms, which are called not Songs of Songs but Songs of the Steps, in that each one, at whatever stage of growth he be, in accord with the upward movements of his heart may choose one of these songs to praise and give glory to him who empowers you to advance. I don't know how else these words could be true: “There are shouts of joy and victory in the tents of the just.” And still more that beautiful and salutary exhortation of the Apostle: “With psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts.”

11. Sed est canticum, quod sui singulari dignitate et suavitate (sweetness, charm) cunctis merito (deservedly, justly) quae memoravimus (to bring to mind), et si qua sunt alia, antecellit (to surpass, prevail): et jure hoc appellaverim Canticum canticorum, quia caeterorum omnium ipsum est fructus (fruit). Istiusmodi canticum sola unctio (anointing) docet (to teach, inform, demonstrate), sola addiscit (to learn in addition) experientia (trial, proof). Experti (without, lacking) recognoscant (to know again, call to mind), inexperti (untried, inexperienced) inardescant (to burn in or within) desiderio, non tam cognoscendi (to be known, recognized), quam experiendi (to be tested, proved). Non est enim strepitus (noise, din) oris, sed jubilus cordis; non sonus labiorum, sed motus (motion, advance) gaudiorum; voluntatum (free will, choice), non vocum consonantia (sounding together). Non auditur foris (outside), nec enim in publico personat: sola quae cantat audit, et cui cantatur, id est sponsa et sponsus. Est quippe nuptiale carmen, exprimens (to express, squeeze out) castos (chaste, pure) jucundosque complexus (embrace) animorum, morum (custom, practice) concordiam (harmony), affectuumque (affection, feeling) consentaneam (agreeing, proper) ad alterutrum charitatem (love, esteem).

But there is that other song which, by its unique dignity and sweetness, excels all those I have mentioned and any others there might be; hence by every right do I acclaim it as the Song of Songs. It stands at a point where all the others culminate. Only the touch of the Spirit can inspire a song like this, and only personal experience can unfold its meaning. Let those who are versed in the mystery revel in it; let all others burn with desire rather to attain to this experience than merely to learn about it. For it is not a melody that resounds abroad but the very music of the heart, not a trilling on the lips but an inward pulsing of delight, a harmony not of voices but of wills. It is a tune you will not hear in the streets, these notes do not sound where crowds assemble; only the singer hears it and the one to whom he sings - the lover and the beloved. It is preeminently a marriage song telling of chaste souls in loving embrace, of their wills in sweet concord, of the mutual exchange of the heart's affections.

12. Caeterum non est illud cantare seu audire animae puerilis (boyish, youthful) et neophytae (newly planted or converted) adhuc, et recens (fresh, new) conversae (turned, rotated) de saeculo (race, generation, lifetime), sed provectae (carried forward) jam et eruditae (instructed, educated) mentis; quae suis nimirum profectibus (advanced, those who have progressed). Deo promovente (to promote), in tantum jam creverit (to increase), quatenus ad perfectam aetatem (lifetime, age), et ad nubiles (of marriageable age) quodam modo pervenerit (to go or come through) annos, annos dico meritorum (service, value), non temporum; facta nuptiis coelestis sponsi idonea (suitable, proper), qualis denique suo loco plenius describetur. Sed praeterit (to pass by, disregard) hora, qua nos exire urget (to press, force) ad opera manuum et paupertas et institutio (disposition, arrangement, custom) regularis. Cras (tomorrow) in nomine Domini quod coeperamus (to begin) prosequemur (to pursue, follow) de osculo, quia de titulo hodiernus (belonging to today) sermo nos expedit (to bring forward, dispatch).

The novices, the immature, those but recently converted from a worldly life, do not normally sing this song or hear it sung. Only the mind disciplined by persevering study, only the man whose efforts have borne fruit under God's inspiration, the man whose years, as it were, make him ripe for marriage years measured out not in time but in merits - only he is truly prepared for nuptial union with the divine partner, a union we shall describe more fully in due course. But the hour has come when both our rule and the poverty of our state demand that we go out to work. Tomorrow, with God's help, we shall continue to speak about the kiss, because today's discourse on the title sets us free to resume where we had begun.