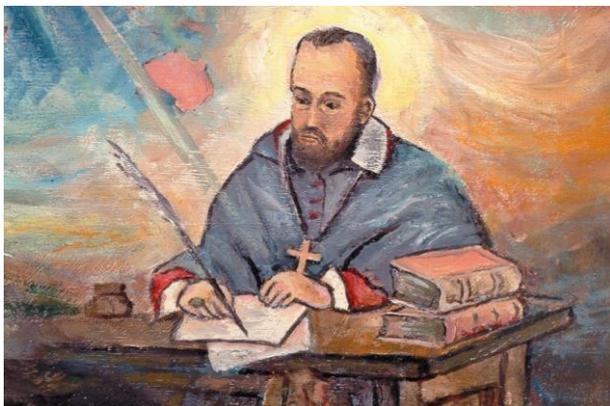


# ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



## *Mystical Exposition of the Canticle of Canticles*

(1602-1604)<sup>1</sup>

*Oeuvres de St. François de Sales*

Édition complète, Annecy (volume XXI, pages 10-39)

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Translated by THOMAS F. DAILEY, O.S.F.S.

Published by the Salesian Center for Faith & Culture at DeSales University  
<[www.desales.edu/salesian](http://www.desales.edu/salesian)>



2004 / 2008

## FOREWORD

[The Publisher to the Reader]

My dear reader, I am well aware that in order for you to esteem this tiny work which I present to you, it suffices to know that its Author is the blessed Francis de Sales -- a spirit so holy, so well-informed, and so seraphic who could speak about such material only in a manner that is most worthy and most sacred. And I do not think I would be acting contrary to his intentions by publishing it. For even though he had held it secret for a long time, this being one of the first works of his pen, it is nevertheless quite believable that if death had not prevented his design of offering other works to the public, no less useful than those which appear now for all with such benefit and approbation, his incomparable charity would have led him to present it to you himself, though no doubt with more style and perfection.

Nevertheless, here it is, just as it has come from his hand and just as it was found after his death, although some persons, having rendered themselves the guardians of it, either for their particular consolation or for some other good reason, would not have judged it *a propos* to publish it sooner. We have edited the Latin text in the margins, in order to elucidate this work more fully by comparing them.<sup>2</sup>

Souls knowledgeable and well informed in the interior life will find satisfaction here, so I hope. But I beg you, dear Reader, if you desire to draw profit from it, read it with a spirit as holy as the sanctity of its subject requires.

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## Live + Jesus

### PREFACE

In this world there are two types of unions of the soul with God: the first by grace, which is given in baptism or by means of penitence; and the second by devotion, which is accomplished by means of spiritual exercises. The one renders us innocent, the other spiritual.

Now Solomon, presuming to have taught the first type of union sufficiently in his other books,<sup>3</sup> teaches only the second type in the Canticles, where he presupposes that the Spouse, who is the devout soul, is already married to the divine Bridegroom. This work re-presents the holy and chaste loves of their marriage that are produced by mental prayer, which is nothing else than the consideration of God and of divine things.

Under this name of "consideration," four different actions of understanding are included: thought, study, meditation, and contemplation.<sup>4</sup> We think of things without any goal or intention. We study them to be more learned. We meditate upon them in order to love them, and we contemplate them in order for us to take pleasure in them. *Thought* regards a portrait simply, in order to see there colors and images, without any other goal; *study* involves learning the art and imitating it. *Meditation* seeks to love the person represented, as princes do their spouses, though often they see them only in an image; *contemplation*, because they already love the person represented, takes pleasure in looking at the portrait.

The first one of these four actions is without end; the second is of service to the understanding; the third and fourth are of service to the will, the one inflaming it, the other gladdening it. These last two are the super-mysteries of the Canticle. But between the one and the other, one can justly place "petitions," and all three correspond to the theological virtues.

Meditation is founded on faith, considering that which we believe in order to love it. Petitions are based on hope, asking that which we hope for in order to obtain it. Contemplation is founded on charity, contemplating that which we love in order to take pleasure there.

Nevertheless, the subject of this Book (the Canticle) does not comprise petitions, nor the two sole affective considerations, nor even devotion.

(Devotion is neither meditation nor contemplation, but is the effect of them; it is nothing else than a general virtue, contrary to spiritual laziness, which renders us prompt in the service of God.<sup>5</sup>) In this way, where there is faith, we are made more prompt to believe by devotion; where there is hope, we are rendered more prompt to de-sire that which God promises. By charity, we are enabled to love that which God commands; by temperance, to abstain ourselves; by fortitude, to endure; and so on with the other virtues. Devotion joins to the particular promptings that produce habits a general and common one, engendered by meditation and contemplation, in the same way that the pilgrim is more disposed for travel by taking food.

Solomon's goal in the Canticle is devotion, but its subject is mental prayer, considered as meditation and contemplation, not as thought, nor as study, nor as petition, nor as devotion, nor even as consolation and the delight one has in prayer. (This delight, not always being found there, is distinguished from prayer; instead it often happens that this delight, absent from the prayer of good persons, is found in that of great sinners.) But the pilgrim, who is healthy after being replenished with food, either with or without delight, returns always more promptly to his journey.

Now, if mental prayer is distinguished from spiritual delight as cause from effect, it is even more distinct from spiritual joy, which is engendered by the multitude of delights. The courtier who has received various favors from his prince acquires a habit with which he serves him not only promptly, but also happily. So also we must always serve God promptly; we serve him only happily when we receive the numerous spiritual delights, which result from mental prayer. The pilgrim will be more disposed for the journey if he has eaten; but if he has eaten with delight and appetite, he will be not only disposed, but joyous and happy as well.

We say also that possibility, facility, promptness, and joyfulness are different things in one action. To resuscitate a dead infant is not within the possibility of the mother. To heal the child when it is extremely sick is something possible, but not easy. To set fire to its wound by order of the doctor<sup>6</sup> is possible and easy, but only with resistance and fright and not with promptness. To freshen the child's dressings is done easily, possibly, and promptly, but not joyfully. After the child is healed, to receive and welcome it between the mother's arms is done possibly, easily, promptly, and joyfully. Thus, the sinner does not, of himself, have the possibility to serve God meritoriously. Being in grace, he has the possibility, with resistance and without facility. After having progressed, he serves him easily. After he is devout, he serves him promptly. If he is contemplative, he serves him joyfully. Hence, grace gives the possibility; charity

enables the facility; mental prayer issues forth in promptness and devotion; and the multitude of delights yields joyfulness.

Above all these actions are ecstasy and rapture. For when in prayer, by meditating and contemplating, man is attached to the object which goes out from himself in such a way, he loses the use of his senses and dwells absorbed and attracted beyond himself. This alienation of understanding on the part of the object which ravishes the soul is called rapture; on the part of the power which dwells absorbed and engulfed, it is called ecstasy, which is the last effect of mental prayer here below (on earth).

In brief, mental prayer is the object of the Canticles. But one needs the knowledge of subtle things for the explanation of its terms, even when they seem quite literal, although this may happen quite rarely and it may be very difficult to know them. On the contrary, mystical terms are there in abundance and are most diverse. For example, terms such as devotion, delight, joy, rapture, ecstasy, and similar things are never found in the Canticles. But at each step along the way, words like sleep, dream, inebriation, languor, faintness, and others similar to these appear. Not even the nature or the properties of God or of the soul are at all named. But in place of all these are mentioned eyes, hair, teeth, lips, necks, vestments, gardens, anointing, and a thousand similar things which have caused confusion in the commentaries because of the liberty which commentators have exercised in explaining the sense of each of these and, which is worse, by the insupportable license which the same commentator has taken of understanding in one same page the same word in different manners and for different things.

But we have undertaken nothing without imitation of the better authors and without apparent propriety between the signifying term and what is signified. And having once given a meaning to a term, we have never changed it afterward. *Kisses* will always signify spiritual consolations; *embraces*, the unions with God; the *sweetnesses of food* are spiritual delights; the *languors* and *faintings* are gaieties and joys; the *sleeps* and *inebriations* are raptures and ecstasies. For the Spouse, when it is a question of exterior virtue, the *neck* will signify the strength needed to execute it; when it is a question of interior virtue, it will signify the irascible part, and never will its meaning change. For the Bridegroom, the *head* will signify charity. The theater of *Jerusalem* will always be the militant Church.<sup>7</sup> The *Bridegroom* will always be God, uncreated or incarnate. The *Spouse* will be the soul. And the *chorus of women* will represent worldly conversations.

In the end, mental prayer is the mystical subject of the Canticle. But what things does Solomon, or rather the Holy Spirit, have to say about it? He seeks to demonstrate to us by how many degrees a soul, being in mental prayer, can climb to the highest consideration of God, and with which remedies the soul can be aided against many obstacles.

Concerning this, one can make the following division: in prayer there are five principal obstacles, five principal remedies, and five degrees. But the sixth scene represents a soul which, having surmounted all these obstacles, has no more need of remedies. Yet in each of the five other scenes an obstacle, a remedy, and a degree are represented.

In the first scene, the distant recollection of sensible pleasures in the past is the obstacle. The remedy is the desire for spiritual things and asking God for them. The first degree is to consider God in corporeal things.

In the second, the obstacle is the distraction of the imagination by fantasies and sensible visions. The remedy is attention to inspiration. The degree is the consideration of God in spiritual things.

In the third, the obstacle is human praise. The remedy is to delight in what is divine. The degree is the consideration that the soul makes of God in itself.

In the fourth, the obstacle is the fatigue of the body and the sensible part. The remedy is spiritual conferences and conversations. The degree is to meditate on God, not in himself, but in his Humanity.

In the fifth, the obstacle is human respect. The remedy is solitude. The degree is the consideration of God in himself, as God.

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# The CANTICLE of CANTICLES

## *The Shepherd's Poem of Solomon*

### **DISCOURSE #1**

#### **First Obstacle: The Recollection of Sensible Pleasures**

Whoever determines never more to offend God encounters several occasions suggested by the devil to sin. Whoever is resolved no longer to wish for consolation except in God encounters the world, which presents new temporal pleasures to him. And not being able to separate oneself from, nor undo, old companions, conversations, and recreations is a great obstacle to comprehending the divine consolations.

Therefore, the Spouse (meaning the soul already in grace), wanting to acquiesce in the spiritual life by the kisses of her divine Bridegroom (which are spiritual consolations), suffers a great pain in being dependent on the chorus of women (old conversations) who offer her wines and perfumes (which are temporal pleasures). Whereas the soul is languishing due to the absence of her Bridegroom and desires to unite herself to him by prayer, the chorus of women wishes to comfort her with wines and perfumes, placing her again amid the memory of past pleasures. Notwithstanding this, she requests:

*Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (1:1).

#### **Remedy: Desires and Petitions for Spiritual Goods**

First, she considers that worldly goods and pleasures, in comparison with the divine, are only vanity. Second, (she considers) that God is sweet and desirable in himself. Third, (she considers) that several holy souls have led the way, not having found any pleasure except in God. Fourth, she asks God to take away all earthly affections.

Concerning the first, she says:

*Your loves are better than wine* and more *fragrant* than *perfumes*.

Concerning the second:

*Your name is the same perfume poured out.*

For the third:

*The young girls have loved you.*

And for the fourth:

*Draw me after you; we will follow you and will run to the fragrance of your perfumes.*

And all at once, carried away by a great confidence of obtaining what she asks for, as if it were already done, she adds:

*My King has led me into his chambers; we will leap with joy and we will rejoice in him and with him by the recollection of your loves which are better than wine; the righteous love you and esteem you (1:1-3).*

Scruples nevertheless occur unexpectedly due to the memory of past sins; for this she says:

*I am black.*

But the integrity of her present conscience causes her to add:

*But I am beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar and as the curtains of Salma.*

The seat of sin in the concupiscence brings disgrace there, but without it being a reproach to her or being imputed to her as sin:

*Do not therefore consider that I am dark,*

For my Sun has thus willed to leave me in this struggle; *the sun* has given me the tint that I have, and it has not come to me by my fault, but by that of the first children of human nature, my mother:

*The sons of my mother have battled against me.*

It was by their sin that I was given to the necessity of taking so much care of looking after myself as if I were keeping a vineyard:

*They have placed me to look after the vines,*

against the assaults of concupiscence, and all that not by my own and actual fault, but by that of others, for which I can say:

*the vineyard I have looked after was not mine* (1:4-5).

Yet still, may confidence return to me, and may I start looking for my Bridegroom where he is more easily found, through prayer:

*O, you whom my soul loves, teach me where you pass and where you sleep in the shade of midday, so that I may not run to and fro, straying in the flocks of your companions,* that is, after creatures.

Teach me where I could find you in prayer, with your lights and consolations, without stopping myself at the (level of) creatures.

## **First Degree: Consideration of God in Corporeal Things**

Do you see this sun, O my spouse, these stars, these heavens, this earth, these heights? They are so many ways and paths for finding me. They are not made themselves (cf. Ps 94:3). They are not without some principle which has made them and which is their last end, which preserves them, which keeps them. But who is this principle and this end? It is God. The mothers of all things are the ideas of them which are in me, in my power and goodness. But lambs, as soon as the door of the sheepfold is opened, run right to their mother. So man, seeing the creatures, ascends little by little to God -- it is a means of finding me.

*If you* do not yet have a complete understanding, *O most beautiful of women,* because you are still beginning, *leave* the recollection of past pleasures and *go forth following the steps of your flocks.* Look for my tracks in all creatures. Let yourself be guided and led there where they themselves return, and you will find that they will go to rest in the pastures of their first shepherd: *Make your kids graze near the lodgings of the pastors* (1:7).

You will be led to three pastures and one Pastor, to three creating ones and one Creator. All sensible creatures will lead you there, and the noblest better

still. Above all, human nature will be profitable to you in your first meditations. You will see the supernatural goods that are in it and also that it is the dwelling place of God, his throne and almost his chariot, for which God can say to it:

*O my beloved, I have made you similar to my steeds harnessed to the chariots of Pharaoh.*

You will see there natural good, for human nature is also beautiful in itself as if it had all the ornaments of the world:

*your cheeks are beautiful as* if they were adorned by some beautiful ornaments; *your neck is beautiful as* if it were adorned by some beautiful jewel.

You will see these accidental goods,<sup>8</sup> such as that all the world has been made for your use, ornament, and service:

*we will make you rings of gold* that will be *inlaid with silver*.

These are benefits so grand that the soul meditating on them is in-flamed with love and is constrained to exclaim: Since I can do no other thing, at least I will love you, O my Bridegroom, and I myself will be your royal chamber, which I will perfume with *nard*. That is, I will fill myself up with love:

*seeing that* my *King* will be *in his chamber*, my perfume, which is composed of *nard* will embalm that entire place with *the suavity of its fragrance*.

What is more, I will unite myself with him in such a way that I will carry him as a bouquet within my bosom:

*My Beloved is the bouquet of myrrh* that *I will carry* always *between my two breasts*.

He will always be my dearest balm and my greatest treasure:

*My Beloved is to me a cluster of* balm culled in the vines *of Engaddi* (1:8-13).

These affections make the Bridegroom love the soul and praise it, saying:

*O how beautiful you are, my Beloved! Behold how beautiful you are; your eyes are like those of a dove.*

The soul for its part, recognizing that all its light depends upon its Sun, which is God, confesses that He alone is beautiful by essence:

*O my Beloved, you are beautiful and graceful,*

and you embellish our essence by pleasing it in such a way that even *our bed*, which is our body, is beautiful:

behold *our bed flourishing*

and even this world, our dwelling place.

*The rafters of our houses are (made) of cedars, and our joists are (made) of cypress (1:14-16).*

Therefore, what marvel if

*I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys?*

Avowing this, the Bridegroom shows that several souls are clearly of a contrary condition by the malice of their wills, for they are like thorns:

*as a lily between thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters (2:1,2).*

Dear praises which the soul neither accepts nor refuses, but, charmed by her Bridegroom, she returns to consider him in sensible things themselves, no more by meditating in order to love him, but by contemplating in order to be delighted, confessing him the highest among all created things:

*as an apple tree is among the trees of the forest, so is my Beloved among the children of men.*

And so, having found a good so eminent above every other, she rests there without searching any more:

*I myself am at rest in the shade of that which I desired.*

And in this spiritual repose (she) is given the taste of devotion:

*and his fruit is sweet to my taste.*

And it is so sweet that it engenders holy fancies and furors in my soul, as if it were inebriated with love, for which she exclaims:

*He has led me to the cellar of his wine; he has deployed over me the standard of his charitable love.<sup>9</sup>*

But particularly by their frequent communication, they engender the habit of spiritual joy in which, languishing sweetly, they sense them-selves to swoon and faint away. And for this she says:

Ah, *comfort me again with flowers; put apples around me, for it is with love that I languish* (2:3-5).

What more? There is rapture, mystically signified by sleep. The soul, sensing it coming suddenly upon her and not wanting to sleep else-where than between the arms of her Bridegroom, says:

*Let his left hand be under my head and let his right hand embrace me tightly.*

Then God takes care that base things do not impede this divine consolation, for which he says to the chorus of ladies:

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the goats and by the stags of the fields, that you not awaken nor cause to awaken my beloved until she would will it* (2:6,7).

Then the soul beings to experience and to understand that there is no sweetness that equals that which is found in mental prayer.

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## DISCOURSE #2

### Second Obstacle: Imaginative Distractions

The more a path is known to us, the more we frequent it. The more we know people there, the more voluntarily and easily we also walk there. But likewise, by such paths we arrive later at the destination, because having many acquaintances, here we speak to one, there to the other; here we enter into the shop of one, there we pause with a friend. For the consolation of God, no path is for us more trodden, known, and familiar than that of the corporeal things among which we live. None has in itself more facility, but also, none has more distractions. When I meditate on God in the Angel, which is an invisible thing and which is in no way familiar to me, it engenders in me only fear of phantasms and of distractions. But if I consider God in man, my imagination descends from the universal to the particular, and, under the name of man, represents to me Peter, Paul, or any of them with whom we do this or that thing. However, since on this path that is so familiar to us we pause at all the shops of our knowledge, either we arrive at our goal late, or never.

In the same way that the multitude of dreams lets us sleep pleasantly, but causes us to awaken with a start while sleeping, so prayer arrives in the drowsiness of ecstasy, which is like its resting place. It can even be called sleepiness itself. But when it is interrupted by fantastic distractions, it is a sleepiness full of dreams. And then, our Bridegroom speaks to us and comes to us, but not in order to dwell there and rest. Instead, he comes by leaps and bounds:

*It is the voice of my Beloved; behold him who comes upon the mountains, leaping over and crossing the hills.*

It seems that often he would come and that often he would flee:

*My Beloved is similar to a roe and to a fawn of a stag.*

Now he is shown, now he is hidden:

*Behold him who stands upright behind our walls.*

And even though it seems that he turns to see, *looking in by the windows*, nevertheless the vision is neither clear nor fixed, and one can say that the windows have crossbars and that

*he looks in through the lattices* (2:8,9).

## Remedy: Attention to Inspiration

Now, it is not necessary to feel inordinately dulled by these distractions, for they are conjoined to our nature, and we cannot be taken aback by them if they do not come from our fault. Nevertheless, it is necessary to use a remedy, which is to draw the self back often and to listen in order to hear the inspirations:

*Behold my Beloved who calls me and says to me: Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beauty, and come to me.*

Doing this, moreover, remember the innocence by which she can piously believe to have arrived, not sensing herself burdened with any mortal sin.

O how sorrowful is the winter of sin, *for already the winter is passed; its rain has gone.*

He rejoices in the fact that the flowers of devotion are beginning to emerge and bud forth:

*Already the flowers appear on our land.*

Likewise, he rejoices in the fact that she has begun to curtail her vicious superfluities:

*the time of pruning* and of cleaning the trees *is come.*

He also rejoices that she, much the same as a turtle dove, has caused her wail and her groan to be heard through prayer:

*One has heard the voice of the turtledove* in this region.

But what is more, he rejoices in the fact that she has already produced flowers of good works and fragrances of good example:

*Already the fig tree bears its fruit; the vines have flowered and are casting their good fragrance.*

He admonishes her, beyond that, to pass farther ahead, and, in beginning, when she is concerned with her own interests, he says again:

*Arise, my beloved, my beauty, and come* (2:10-13).

And because it is only beginning (along the way), it seems to the soul that it is situated among numerous difficulties, as between stones or thorns:

*my dove, which is in the caves of stone and in the hollow of the wall.*

For this reason, he assures her that she does not, however, quit of being very agreeable to him:

*Alas, show me your face; let the sound of your voice come to my ears, for your voice is sweet and your face most beautiful* (2:14).

This discourse is so sweet that it should chase away all other thoughts. Yet, if these thoughts return, she will say as in dreaming:

*Take these small fox cubs which dig up and spoil the vines, for our vineyard is in bloom.*

And being reunited with her object, she will say:

*My Beloved is to me and I to him.*

And she will pray to him that he return to her

*as long as the day lasts and until the time when the shades lower themselves: Return, my Beloved, and be similar to a roe or to a fawn of a stag on the mountains of Bether* (2:15-17).

And thus does she surmount this second obstacle.

## Second Degree: The Soul Considers God in Spiritual Things, Outside of Himself

This kind of considerations is less familiar, but also less subject to distraction. In the preceding degree, it seems that one does not find God, or (only) that one may have found him. But along this way, one recognizes at once that God has been found:

*At night, in my bed* (that is, in human bodies, which are the beds of souls), *I have searched for Him whom my soul loves, and I have not found Him. I will arise, and I will return to the city* of this world.

And running sometimes by the earthly bodies, sometimes by the heavenly (ones),

*I have searched for him, and I have not found him there.*

At least the distractions have been so great that in pain she seems to me to have encountered him again:

I will search *by the streets and by the squares for Him whom my soul loves; I have searched for him, and I have not found him* (3:1,2).

My goodness has willed that I remind myself of the Angels who are like the sentinels of the world:

*The sentinels who guard the city have found me.*

And I resolve to see if in them I would find the consideration of God firmer:

*Have you not seen the Beloved of my soul?*

Above the angelic nature, I have immediately found the divine:

*A little after having passed them, I have found Him whom my soul loves.*

And this (occurs), without sensible distractions, so strongly that it seems that I must never lose him:

*I hold him and I will not let him go, until* I enter into the heavenly glory, true house of human nature.

My mother is in her chamber, that is, in the assembly of the Angels that is prepared for me. Then, in this enigmatic view, a clear vision will occur:

when I will introduce him, but more so when he will introduce me *into the house of my mother, and into the chamber of she who has engendered me* (3:3,4).

This holy consideration of God in spiritual things, which, by its nature does not engender phantasms, also does not engender dreams. The consideration of the first degree is more interrupted, while this second is more stable and more lofty, for which it produces all its effects with more excellence, namely, a love more living and a joy more spiritual. In this state, God, by adding his grace, demands with a more particular care that one not arouse her, saying:

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the goats and stags of the fields, that you not awaken nor cause to awaken my beloved until she would will it* (3:5).

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## DISCOURSE #3

### Third Obstacle: Human Praises

The soul, making its way degree by degree in holy prayer, is rendered so resplendent that it is impossible that it not be admired. And it is impossible that, seeing the soul walk aright in the midst *of the desert* entangling it, in the same way *as a column of* scented *perfume* which is raised toward heaven, even the world should not exclaim:

*Who is this who walks by the desert in the same way as a ray of perfume, or aromatic spices, of myrrh and of incense and of all sorts of powders for embellishing* (3:6)?

Now, this public applause is a hidden and sweetened venom, which quite often causes the most holy and devout to lose their justice and their devotion.

## Remedy: To Be Attentive to the Praises of God

Whoever hears his own praises, let him turn toward those of God. Let him persuade the one who praises him to not wish to praise a thing of such small merit, but (rather) that he should raise up the praises of God from our baseness and littleness. And if he cannot fix his eyes so much on the Divinity, let him at least praise Jesus Christ the man, our true Solomon, and this principally in three things -- the flesh, the cross, and the glory -- saying:

See how worthy is his flesh, the bed of his Divinity and of his soul, surrounded by more than *sixty valiant soldiers* who defend it against whoever, by night, could make him fear.

This flesh, which is not inclined to sin as ours, but, by the hypostatic union<sup>10</sup> and by the empire it holds over the Angels, is entirely infallible and impeccable:

*Behold that sixty of the strongest men of Israel surround the bed of Solomon, all holding swords and also skilled in war, each of whom holds his sword upright over his thigh for the fears of the night (3:7,8).*

As for the cross, O how holy it is! It is made of wood, but *of the wood of Lebanon*, meaning incorruptible:

*King Solomon has made himself a litter of the wood of Lebanon.*

Justice and mercy are the two columns that sustain this cross:

*He has made the columns out of silver.*

Its support or *resting place* is made of gold, seeing that all is done to lead souls to glory, the support of gold. Its *beam is made of purple*, for he leads us to the glory by his blood. And all this (is done) for the souls of the Church, of whom it is said:

*In the midst it is ornamented by charity for the daughters of Jerusalem.*

From that, there follows for this Lord the crown of glory of his Resurrection and Ascension, which must enrapture all the world in his praise:

*Go out, daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the diadem with which his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals and on the day of the joy of his heart (3:9-11).*

### **Third Degree: The Soul Considers God in Itself**

Therefore, the soul, again casting its praises to those of God, takes care to adorn itself in all its parts in order to be pleasing to Him who alone it esteems worthy of all praise. Now its mystical parts are these: the *eyes*, meaning the intentions which move it; the *hairs*, meaning the affections (love, hate, desire, and others) which, like hairs, are neither good nor evil, except insofar as they are employed for good or for evil; the *teeth*, meaning the senses which chew all the foods that must enter into the stomach of the understanding; the *lips* and the *speech*, meaning the thoughts which, in the fashion of interior words, produce inaudible discourses. The *cheeks* are the two rational powers, which are the understanding and the will. The *neck* (is) the irascible force that drives away and repels the obstacles. The *breasts* are the two actions of the concupiscent part, namely, to follow the good (and) to avoid the evil. All (of) that must be ornamented and embellished, so that God may love the soul and that he could say:

*How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful you are!*

The intentions must be simple, pure, and interior, so that it could not be said that the one is on the outside and the other on the inside, and that they are crossed and diverse:

*Your eyes are those of a dove, without that which is hidden within.*

The affections must not be dispersed, but gathered and united as a flock under the staff of the sovereign Pastor:

*Your hairs are like flocks of sheep that come from Mount Gilead.*

The senses must be guarded as in prison, such as the teeth are under the lips, or as ewes newly washed. And their twins, meaning the apprehensive and the appetitive faculties, must be held in rank and regulated:

*Your teeth are like flocks of ewes freshly shorn which return from the washing, each with two twins, and not one of them is sterile.*

The thoughts must be so well accommodated that all the conceptions be dyed in the blood of the Savior. And the words and discourses (must be) full of sweetness and profit for the neighbor:

*Your lips are like a band of purple color, and your speech is very sweet.*

The understanding and will must demonstrate the ability of comprehending the good and choosing to do it. And, as in an open pomegranate, all will be discovered there; nothing will appear there unsightly and disagreeable. And these two powers must always be humble and subdued:

*Your cheeks are like a freshly cut pomegranate, without that which is hidden within.*

The irascible part must be so valiant against temptations that one will be able to say:

*Your neck is like the tower of David, fortified with bulwarks; a thousand bucklers are hanging upon it and all sorts of arms for the strong men.*

And concerning the concupiscent part, it must exercise its desire for good and its flight from evil so simply that one will be able to say:

*Your two breasts are like two fawns of goats that one grazes among the lilies (4:15).*

Finally, (there is) the Bridegroom who, after his Ascension, has gone *to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense* in Heaven, at the right hand of the Father, as he had predicted:

*Before the day declines and the shades lower themselves, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense --*

he will praise the soul, saying:

*You are entirely beautiful, O my beloved, and there is not one small mark on you.*

And he will invite her to pass from the militant Jerusalem to the triumphant, saying:

*Come from Lebanon, my spouse, come from Lebanon, come.*

And he will promise her the crowns and thrones from which the demons were chased:

*You will be crowned on high on Mount Amana, upon the summit of Sanir and of Hermon, on the thrones of lions, on the mountains of leopards (4:6-8).*

All these ornaments are agreeable to God, but above all is the clarity and purity of intention, which must be so great that all our aims are reduced to one aim, all our intentions to one intention, all our desires to one desire -- that of loving and serving God, in such a way that there will not be more than one eye:

*You have broken my heart, my sister, my spouse, you have broken my heart with one of your eyes,*

and that there will not be more than one hair, for which it follows:

*and by one of the hairs of your neck (4:9).*

The intention being well dressed with desire, the breasts of concupiscence will be well ordered:

*How beautiful are your breasts, my sister, my spouse! Your breasts are more beautiful than wine.*

The examples will be of good fragrance:

*The fragrance of your perfumes is beyond all aromatic spice.*

The thoughts and words will be most devout and sweet:

*Your lips are a ray of honey that drips; that which is under your tongue is milk and honey.*

The actions will be most exemplary:

*The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of incense (4:10,11).*

Let us say thus: the actions pertaining to a soul are interior or exterior; the exterior ones are made by the commandment of the interior ones. Concerning the interior actions, it is necessary that they be fastened to God without the world seeing them. This is why he says:

*A closed garden is my sister, my spouse; she is a garden closed and firm; she is a sealed fountain.*

Concerning the exterior actions, it is necessary that they be like a beautiful paradise:

*That which you put forth and place outside is like a paradise in which one may see all virtues: pomegranate, the fruits of apples, balm with nard and saffron, sugar and cinnamon and all sorts of fruits of the trees of Lebanon, myrrh and aloes, with all sorts of the most excellent perfumes.*

In sum, the soul is a fountain of good works that rises up to heaven with impetuosity, similar to the waters that come from Lebanon:

*fountain of the gardens, streams of living waters, which flow impetuously from Lebanon (4:12-15).*

But in all this, two things are required. On the part of God, that he chase away the winter wind of temptation and that he send the midday breeze of his prevenient grace,<sup>11</sup> saying:

*Flee, Aquilon, and come, O Midday; blow in my garden, and the fragrances of it will be spread about.*

On the part of the soul, that it accept this grace and cooperate with it, saying:

*Let my Beloved come into his garden, and let him eat of the fruit of his apple trees (4:16; 5:1).*

Thus, after the myrrh of penitence, God will draw the soul by means of holy exercises, in the aromatic fragrances of prayer, with the honey and milk and wine of meditation, love, and contemplation. But (it is) a contemplation that will produce delights, joys, and ecstasies that not only will quench the thirst, but will inebriate. And our Lord will be able to say:

Behold, that I await you. *Come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have culled and reaped my myrrh with my flowers and fragrances spread about. I have eaten a ray of honey with the honey itself, and I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, my friends; drink and inebriate yourselves, my most dear ones* (5:1).

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## DISCOURSE #4

### Fourth Obstacle: Bodily Travail

The soul that attains these previous degrees quite often finds herself with a weary and fatigued body, which is why it happens that if God invites her to new considerations and higher degrees, she is in a state of perplexity. She would surely wish to advance, but the pain frightens her. And if the Bridegroom calls her anew, she lifts herself to go to prayer, yet with resistance in the sensitive part, which deprives her of delight and makes her scarcely able to think that God is with her. And, as it happens to those who are extremely weary, she sleeps while awake:

*I sleep, but my heart lies awake.*

Then, turning toward her Bridegroom who strikes her heart,

*It is the voice of my Beloved who knocks,*

she is excited by him to the end that she opens to him and begins anew her prayer:

*Open to me, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my all beautiful one,*

and with a fourth degree of prayer, meditate a little on my Passion. You will find that I have my *Head full of* the heavenly *dew* of my blood, *and* my *hair* bloodied by the nocturnal points of the thorns:

*For my head is full of dew and my entangled hairs are thoroughly drenched with the drops of the nights* (5:2).

The soul would surely love to obey, but weariness causes her to desire a little rest, which makes her say to him:

*I have cast off my robe; how will I redress? I have washed my feet; in what way will I dirty them?*

Most sweet Jesus, notwithstanding this resistance, you still do not cease to entreat in order to enter. And, as with the hand of a stronger inspiration, it seems that he would wish, without any help, to take away the bolt of the sensuality which poses an obstacle to him and to enter by the narrow opening of the heart:

*My beloved has put his hand through the narrow opening.*

In this great vocation, the soul is excited:

*My insides have trembled at his very touch.*

The soul resolves that she must open to her Bridegroom and begin a new meditation:

*I arise in order to open to my Beloved.*

But on the other hand, she senses so great a sorrow at not having opened at the first knock, that she overturns the vase of myrrh, meaning that she fills herself up entirely with penitence, by bathing with tears as far as the bolt, that is, by making her sorrow pass as far as her sensuality:

*My hands have exuded myrrh and my fingers are full of true myrrh and of honey (5:3-5).*

By means of this sorrow, the soul opens to her Lord, but does so in default of the corporal and sensitive part

*I have opened the bolt of my door to my Beloved;*

Nevertheless, because of this repugnance, she finds so little delight in prayer that it appears that God is not with her:

*but he has turned away and has already passed.*

From this, reminding herself to have been so called and yet so lazy, she is grieved and consumed by sorrow:

*My soul is entirely dissolved since my Beloved has spoken.*

She tries to find delight in the first degree of consideration, by means of sensible things, but the travail does not permit her to find him there:

*I have searched for him and have not found him; I have called him, and he has not responded to me.*

She passes to the second degree, (the consideration) of spiritual and angelic things:

*The guards who surround the city have found me.*

But when she compares their promptitude with her laziness, she remains transpierced by sorrow:

*They have beaten and distressed me.*

And, what is worse, if she enters into the third degree, to consider herself in her relation toward God, she effects the same resistance, for which she is displeased with herself. It seems to her that her face is too unsightly in comparison with that of the Angels, and that, in a sense, they take away all her luster:

*The guards of the walls have taken away my cloak (5:6,7).*

In such a way, wherever she finds herself, she encounters again great difficulties, excited by this fourth obstacle of bodily travails.

## **Remedy: Spiritual Conferences and Conversations**

Vocal prayers, or rather spiritual conversations, serve as remedies to the tedium of work. Thus, one sees that the one who by sickness has lost delight and appetite recovers it by changing food, and that in contemplative congregations one interjects some spiritual conferences in prayer. The soul,

therefore, disgusted by the work of prayer, should address herself to some spiritual persons and ask them to aide her in finding her Bridegroom:

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that if you find my Beloved, you would tell him that I languish of love for him.*

And they, knowing her need, will lead her to discourse about the qualities of the Bridegroom:

*Who is your Beloved, O beautiful one among women, that, for him, you have so strongly adjured us? (5:8,9)*

Then she proposes Jesus Christ, so well in what is natural that it is not possible to represent him better. He is God, *brightness of the light* itself (cf. Wis 7:26), but made man for us in order to be able to redeem us in the purple<sup>12</sup> of his blood:

*My Beloved is white and red.*

And, as man, he is so singular that one can know him *among thousands, chosen of thousands*, because charity, the chief of the virtues, can be said to be of gold in him, meaning precious:

*his head is a purest and finest gold.*

And the graces and benefices, like innumerable *hairs* proceeding from it, are the first fruits *of the palm trees* and are *black as crows*. These are the effects of the victory that he accomplished on the tree of the cross, as worthy of being admired as the black in a horse:

*His head of hair is like branches on high, leafy palm trees, black as a crow.*

He is like a white dove which has in itself all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, represented by the eyes:

*His eyes are like those of doves on the banks of the waters, that one has washed in milk.*

The Holy Spirit, called in another fashion a "stream," is given to him not by some measure but with all plenitude:

*and they reside in the full bodies of the waters.*

Hence, if you contemplate his examples, as cheeks full, open, and put in view of all, as scented as vases full of aromatic perfumes, they will make themselves felt on all sides:

*His cheeks are like beds of aromatic flowers that the perfumers themselves have planted.*

His doctrine seems to be precious myrrh that sprouts like lilies from his holy lips:

*His lips are like lilies that exude the most singular myrrh.*

His miracles are such that it seems that from his hands hyacinths flow and fall abundantly:

*His hands are ringlets of gold, full of hyacinths (5:10-14).*

What more? Whether on the inside or outside, this Bridegroom is admirable. His heart is of ivory, enriched by precious stones; his deliberations are simple, but prudent:

*His insides are of ivory, sown with sapphires on the outside.*

His actions are strong, but with discretion:

*His thighs are columns of marble founded on bases of gold.*

And, in order to finish here, he is all most dear, all most handsome:

*His beauty is like that of Lebanon; his bearing like that of a cedar (5:14,15).*

## **Fourth Degree: Consideration of God in Himself, But Made Human**

Seeing that the soul discovers God in His humanity, the delights come again to her, and she is constrained to cry out:

*Alas! His throat is most suave and it is quite desirable; such is my Beloved, and he is my most dear one, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

And the persons whom she is with wish to follow and say to her:

*Where has your Bridegroom gone, O most beautiful one among all women? Where has he turned away? We will search with you.*

She wishes no more to entreat them. But, recognizing that although the travails should make it seem to her that her Bridegroom has with-drawn very far, nevertheless he had not gone. On the contrary, he had always dwelled with her as in his garden or as in a cabinet of perfumes. And drawing from this the greatest occasion of merit, she can say that he has culled some most scented lilies:

*My Beloved has come into his garden, to the bed of aromatic flowers, in order to delight in the gardens and there to cull some lilies.*

And for this, since she knows that he had always been with her and is still present there, she says:

*I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me, who delights among the lilies.*

She has no more need of any other thing than of talking with him, saying: O Lord, when could I please you by my beauty, sweetness, good grace, strength, innocence, devotion, and discretion? When will it be, therefore, that you say to me:

*O my beloved, you are beautiful, sweet, and graceful like Jerusalem, strong as a well-arrayed army?*

Already, Lord, you have shown me by a thousand signs that my eye-lids have blessed you, meaning that my intentions are not displeasing to you:

*Turn your eyes away from me, for they have caused me to go forth from myself;*

that my hairs, meaning desires, are pure and spotless:

*Your hairs are like a flock of kids who appear on the mount of Galaad;*

that my senses, just as flocks, have been faithfully guarded:

*Your teeth are like flocks of sheep that go out from the washing, each having two little ones, and none of them is sterile;*

and that the strengths of my concupiscent part, desiring the good and fleeing the evil without dissimulation, are dear and agreeable to you like two cheeks well colored:

*Your cheeks are like an opened pomegranate, without that which is hidden within (6:1-6).*

But, O God, says the soul, already here before you, you have praised me for nearly all these parts. I would desire now to advance and to surpass in devotion so many other devout souls, or those who think themselves to be, and that you would be able to say to me:

*There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and some young daughters without number, but my dove is all alone.*

How do I know? Could it be that I desire too much? I would like that you should be able to call me *my perfect one*. I would like to have some rarity in my nature, which is my mother, and that one would say of her:

*She is unique to her mother; she is the chosen of that one who has engendered her.*

I would like that one could say further:

Behold her whom *the daughters have seen and have said to be most blessed; the queens and the concubines have praised her*

for her innocence, having gone forth from the night of sin.

*Who is this here who marches in devotion, as does the dawn when it arises, beautiful as the moon, [full of] of prudence and good election, chosen as the sun,*

and finally of invincible strength,

*terrible as the squadrons of a well-arrayed army? (6:7-9)*

But, besides this, the soul adds: Where have you been, my Lord, that it has seemed to me that you had left me, when travail and fatigue did not permit that I should have any delight? I have been, he responds, in you who are my garden, and there I have been with more profit for you than I would have been if, at the first knock, I would have given you some delights, giving you an occasion of merit, for which I have drawn from my garden a greater fruit of merit:<sup>13</sup>

*I have gone down to my garden of walnuts in order to see the apple trees of the valleys, and to see if the vine had flowered and if the pomegranates had germinated.*

Therefore, may you be blessed, O Lord, responds the soul, that in such fashion, making me believe that you were absent, you have given me an occasion of merit and have made me walk in a short time farther than the coaches of princes. And for this, *since I had not known* that you were with me, I can say that:

*my soul has troubled me because of the chariots of Aminadab (6:10,11).*

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## DISCOURSE #5

### Fifth Obstacle: Human Respects

When someone achieves some rare and uncustomary manner of living, not only do individuals praise her, but also it seems that they desire to see her, and they cry out after the soul:

*Come back, come back, O Sulamite, come back; come back, so that we may see you (6:12).*

And it is not enough that the spiritual person should make light of that which is in herself:

*What do you see in this Sulamite, except troops of arms?*

For, notwithstanding this, those who see her praise her for her feet and manner of walking, meaning for the obedience with which they see that this soul keeps the commandments of God:

*How beautiful are your feet in their sandals, O daughter of the prince!*

They praise her for her spiritual chastity, which makes it recognizable that God is cooperating there:

*The joints of your thighs are like jewels arranged by the hand of a good jeweler.*

They praise her for a rich poverty, which never has need of anything:

*Your navel is like a round goblet, which never needs any beverages.*

They praise her for the fasts that, by replenishing the stomach with bread alone, crown the soul with beautiful and rich lilies:

*Your stomach is like a heap of wheat surrounded by lilies.*

They praise her for the study of the two Testaments:

*Your two breasts are like two fawns of a goat;*

for her strength:

*Your neck is like a tower of ivory;*

for her prudence:

*Your eyes are like the baths of Hesebon which are at the door of the daughter of the multitude;*

for an exact justice:

*Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon that looks toward Damascus.*

They praise her for her mastery of her affections and conformity to the will of God, known by the channels of revelation:

*Your head is like Mount Carmel, your braids like royal purple that is not yet drawn from the dye (7:1-5).*

In brief, this soul is the object of the tongues that say to her in praising her:

*How beautiful you are, how graceful you are, my dearest one, in delights.*

But she, believing always in charity and bearing [good] fruit amid her neighbors, she is like the palm and the vine:

*Your stature and your bearing are like that of a palm, and your breasts are full like clusters of grapes.*

Those in need, either of spirit or of body, say:

*I will climb up your palm tree and will take from its fruits, and your breasts will be like clusters of grapes.*

And for her good examples, one says to her:

*The fragrance of your mouth is like that of apples.*

For her good words, one says:

*your throat is like a wine, best to drink, worthy of my Bridegroom, and of being savored by his lips and by his teeth (7:6-9).*

In brief, behold, a great inquietude in the devout soul.

## **Remedy: Solitude**

O how good it is, therefore, to withdraw oneself into solitude, where the soul can say:

*I (am) to my beloved, and his look is toward me; come, my Beloved, let us go out to the fields, let us dwell in the village (7:10,11).*

Now the fruits of solitude are four. First, one awakens better to the examination of conscience:

*Let us arise in the morning to go to the vines; let us see if the vineyard is flowering, if the flowers bear fruit, if the pomegranates are flowering.*

Second, in solitude one makes a more complete resignation of the concupiscent faculty and of its desires:

*There, I will give you my breasts.*

Third, devotion increases:

*The mandarins have given off their fragrance.*

Fourth, in solitude one presents more humbly to God our small merits, past and present:

*I have locked up for you, O my Beloved, behind our doors, all sorts of fruits, old and new (7:12,13).*

## **Fifth Degree: The Consideration of God in Himself, But as God**

But among the fruits of solitude, what is eminent is that one can there consider more easily God as God. This is what causes the Bride to make use of these two words, "alone" and "without" (meaning without any creature):

*Who will give you to me, my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, and that I find you without, all alone?*

This consideration, which holily infatuates men, makes them dance before the Ark (cf. 2 Kings 6:14-16). From this it happens that, until the soul has arrived at the affection of the contempt of even herself, she always has some shame. This is why she desires solitude, so, she says:

*that I may kiss him without anyone being able to see us (8:1).*

This consideration is a pledge of the joyousness of Heaven, for which it seems to the soul that she be there already, saying:

*I will take you (8:2); I will see you face to face (cf. 1 Cor 13:12).*

O God, when will we be in the true house and in the true chamber of human nature, which is in Heaven, when

*I will lead you into the house of my mother and into the chamber of her who has engendered me (3:4; 7:2)?*

There I will see all that belongs to my goodness *as in a mirror* (cf. 1 Cor 13:12):

*There you will teach me.*

and when you will have drawn from me, for my felicity, the wine of the vine *and the must<sup>14</sup> of the pomegranates*, the essential and accidental glory<sup>15</sup> --

*and I will give you some beverage of spiced wine, and (some) of the must of my pomegranates --*

behold the delights that will come, behold the ecstasies, behold the sleep of the powers. In this manner, the sacred Bride asks for pillows in order to sleep:

let him place *his left hand under my head, and let him embrace me with his right hand.*

For his part, the Bridegroom also strives to make sure that she not be awakened:

*I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, that you not awaken nor cause to awaken my beloved until she would will it (8:2-4).*

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## DISCOURSE #6

**The soul, having surmounted all the obstacles, has no more need of remedies, but dwells absorbed in and united with God by a perfect devotion.**

Finally, the soul has attained so great a perfection of devotion that no pleasure of the world arouses it, no phantasm diverts it, no praise distracts it, no travail terrifies it, no human respect restrains it. Rather, in view of all the world, she freely caresses her Bridegroom and dances before the Ark (cf. 2 Kings 6:14-16), not concerning herself with the wisdom of the world, which has said to her:

*who is this who ascends from the desert, affluent in delights?*

(Worldly wisdom) follows her still, in order to find fault with her for that which she adhered to *supported by her Beloved*. On the contrary, she always speaks with her Bridegroom about the great sign of love he would give her there where he had been the most offended, and about his resolve to die for us after Adam and Eve disobeyed him:

*I have awakened you under the apple tree; there your mother had been corrupted; there she who has engendered you had been violated (8:5).*

The soul will no longer find any difficulty in works, for nothing is difficult to the love that she has engraved profoundly on her heart and even in her exterior actions:

*Place me as a stamp on your heart and as a seal on your arms.*

And this so well that love combats death:

*Love is strong as death.*

Hell cannot vanquish it:

*Jealousy is tough as hell.*

Flames and fires are frozen in comparison with her love:

*Its lamps are lamps of flames and of fires.*

The sea would not be able to extinguish them:

*all the waters would not be able to extinguish charity, nor would all the rivers drown it.*

Nothing is comparable to it:

*if a man would wish to give all the substance of his house for dilection, he would esteem it no more than as nothing (8:6,7).*

With regard to the praises which are given to it, the soul does not concern herself with them because she says to herself: what are those imperfect souls who, not having any good of their own, wish to embellish themselves with external fineries? My little sisters (meaning the imperfect souls) are those who

must think that way, for they do not have breasts of themselves, no virtues and merits of their own:

*Our little sister does not have breasts; what will we do with our little sister on the day when it will be necessary to speak to her ?*

In them, one can make up the defect with the praises of strangers, just as if one would cover with silver a cracked and corrupted wall, and with cedar a door that would be rotten:

*If it is a wall, let us build over its ramparts with silver; if it is a door, let us reinforce it with planks of cedar.*

But, blessed me, says the soul, I concern myself very little with *pleasing men* (cf. Gal 1:10; 1 Thes 2:4), my Bridegroom having made me like such a wall and like such a tower that I am very pleasing and agreeable:

*I am a wall, and my breasts like a tower, for which I am made to find rest and peace in his presence (8:8-10).*

Then follow sensible and temporal things, against which the soul, perfected in mental prayer, has assumed such a habit that, holding them as vile things and of little value in comparison with her rich object, she esteems them only in as much as they can modestly serve her need. For the rest, no care of herself can divert her. Little, says the soul, is necessary to the one who wishes to live in the peace of our Lord and with modesty. A *thousand pieces of silver* or some other great price is a thing of quite little value. The man who has peace in himself has

*a vineyard in which are some poplars; he has leased it to some keepers,*

and they render to him

*for the fruits of it a thousand pieces of silver.*

As for me, says the soul, I have no concern for such things:

*My vineyard is before me as much as a thousand peaceable ones.*

On the contrary, I wish still to give *two hundred* in order to give alms to these poor ones, who by their prayers keep our goods for us:

and *two hundred to those who keep the fruits of it* (8:11,12).

For the rest, being abstracted from all the sensible things, I wish only that not one of them could distract me or trouble me.

And finally, if we would pass to worldly pleasures, I know, says the soul, that my Bridegroom does not wish to put up with any rivals, and that with the consolations which he gives me, he does not wish that I mingle these consolations with those that others than he would give me. Thus he commands me that, awakening and resigning myself totally to him with a clear and open protestation, I renounce all other bridegrooms:

*You who dwell in the gardens, your friends listen to you; make me hear your voice.*

And consequently, behold me prompt to obey him. No longer the world nor its pleasures, no longer any mortal thing: O God, my God, you alone are my Beloved; you alone are all my good; it is you alone whom I seek:

*Flee* (meaning come, but hasten lightly), *my Beloved, and be similar to a roe or to a fawn of a stag on the mounts of good scents* (8:13,14).

In this last protestation and perfect resignation of the soul to God consists the aim of mental prayer and the highest degree of spirituality, which is this great union of the soul with God by devotion.

And to conclude, nothing remains for us to do except to pray our Lord that he deign, by his mercy, to draw us to himself by these degrees of mental prayer, so that being already united with him in this world of grace, we may be so even more by devotion, so that after our death we may be able to be so eternally by glory. And in all these unions:

*let him kiss* us, the divine Bridegroom, *with a kiss of his sacred mouth* (1:1).  
*Amen.*<sup>16</sup>

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## NOTES

1. The reader will notice, without doubt, these words in the **Foreword** which read "being one of the first works of" the "pen of the blessed Francis de Sales." This piece would therefore be written earlier than the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1608), and the style itself indicates this. Is it necessary to place it before the redaction of *The Defense of the Standard of the Holy Cross* (1598), or between 1602 and 1604? The first hypothesis seems very doubtful to us, for in this case one would have to set aside the years of the Chablais mission, when the holy Apostle certainly could not occupy himself with this work, and go back perhaps to the last period of his studies (1590-1592). This is a bit early, given the authority with which he writes. And so, we suggest, but with every reservation, 1602-1604.

2. Since the Latin text of the Canticle of Canticles had not been placed there by the Saint, we have decided it wise to omit it.

3. The belief that Solomon was the most illustrious of the sages gave rise to the opinion that he was the originator of the Wisdom Literature in Israel. As such, some of these books (e.g., Ecclesiastes, Proverbs) were commonly attributed to his authorship.

4. Cf. *Treatise on the Love of God*, book VI.

5. Cf. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part I, chapter 1.

6. For various illnesses, a home remedy common in those days was to "bleed" the wound by applying heat so as to destroy the infection.

7. In Francis' understanding, Jerusalem is the scene of the Canticles. The "militant" Church is the church community as it continues to exist here on earth, as distinguished from the "triumphant" Church in heaven.

8. "Accidental" is a philosophical term for those goods which are not part of the "substance" of a thing, or that which makes it what it is.

9. In this translation of 2:4, Francis juxtaposes the Hebrew and Septuagint (Greek) texts.

10. The "hypostatic union" refers to the mystery of the unity of human and divine natures in the one person of Jesus.

11. In the theology of grace, "prevenient" (or actual) grace is that inspiration of God that precedes the free determination of a person's will and is thus the beginning of all action leading to justification.

12. A play on words in the French *poupre* includes the figurative meaning of "sovereign dignity."

13. Cf. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part IV, chapter 4.

14. "Must" refers to wine not fermented.

15. In his *Sermons* (OEA IX, 114), Francis describes the "essential" glory as the vision of God and the "accidental" glory as the effects of this vision received by the blessed in heaven.

16. Appended to the Annecy text is the following **Approbation of Doctors**:

"We, the undersigned, Doctors in Theology on the faculty of Paris, house and society of the Sorbonne, certify to having read and examined a little book entitled *The Mystical Exposition of the Canticle of Canticles, composed by the Blessed Francis de Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva*, in which we have found nothing which is contrary to the Catholic faith. Thus we have judged it worthy of being given to the public, for the consolation and profit of spiritual souls and those enlightened in the interior life. In faith of which we have signed in Paris, this 24th day of October, 1642" (signed by L. Bougrain and I. Hobier).

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*I am My  
Beloved's  
and My Beloved  
is Mine*