

The Bible, Douay-Rheims, Book 24: Canticle of Canticles - The Challoner Revision

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With Annotations

The Whole Revised and Diligently Compared with
the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner
A.D. 1749-1752

SOLOMON'S CANTICLE OF CANTICLES

This Book is called the Canticle of Canticles, that is to say, the most excellent of all canticles: because it is full of high mysteries, relating to the happy union of Christ and his spouse: which is here begun by love; and is to be eternal in heaven. The spouse of Christ is the church: more especially as to the happiest part of it, viz., perfect souls, every one of which is his beloved, but, above all others, the immaculate and ever blessed virgin mother.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 1

The spouse aspires to an union with Christ, their mutual love for one another.

1:1. Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine,

Let him kiss me... The church, the spouse of Christ, prays that he may love and have peace with her, which the spouse prefers to every thing delicious: and therefore expresses (ver. 2) that young maidens, that is

the souls of the faithful, have loved thee.

1:2. Smelling sweet of the best ointments. Thy name is as oil poured out: therefore young maidens have loved thee.

1:3. Draw me: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments. The king hath brought me into his storerooms: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, remembering thy breasts more than wine: the righteous love thee.

Draw me... That is, with thy grace: otherwise I should not be able to come to thee. This metaphor shews that we cannot of ourselves come to Christ our Lord, unless he draws us by his grace, which is laid up in his storerooms: that is, in the mysteries of Faith, which God in his goodness and love for mankind hath revealed, first by his servant Moses in the Old Law in figure only, and afterwards in reality by his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

1:4. I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

I am black but beautiful... That is, the church of Christ founded in humility appearing outwardly afflicted, and as it were black and contemptible; but inwardly, that is, in its doctrine and morality, fair and beautiful.

1:5. Do not consider me that I am brown, because the sun hath altered my colour: the sons of my mother have fought against me, they have made me the keeper in the vineyards: my vineyard I have not kept.

1:6. Shew me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday, lest I begin to wander after the flocks of thy companions.

1:7. If thou know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth, and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds.

If thou know not thyself, etc... Christ encourages his spouse to follow and watch her flock: and though she know not entirely the power at hand to assist her, he tells her, ver. 8, my company of horsemen, that is, his angels, are always watching and protecting her. And in the following verses he reminds her of the virtues and gifts with which he has endowed her.

1:8. To my company of horsemen, in Pharaoh's chariots, have I likened thee, O my love.

1:9. Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtledove's, thy neck as jewels.

1:10. We will make thee chains of gold, inlaid with silver.

1:11. While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof.

1:12. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts.

1:13. A cluster of cypress my love is to me, in the vineyards of Engaddi.

1:14. Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair, thy eyes are as those of doves.

1:15. Behold thou art fair, my beloved, and comely. Our bed is flourishing.

1:16. The beams of our houses are of cedar, our rafters of cypress trees.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 2

Christ caresses his spouse: he invites her to him.

2:1. I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys.

I am the flower of the field... Christ professes himself the flower of mankind, yea, the Lord of all creatures: and, ver. 2, declares the excellence of his spouse, the true church above all other societies, which are to be considered as thorns.

2:2. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

2:3. As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired: and his fruit was sweet to my palate.

2:4. He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me.

2:5. Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples: because I languish with love.

2:6. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me.

2:7. I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and the harts of the field, that you stir not up, nor make the beloved to awake, till she please.

2:8. The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.

The voice of my beloved: that is, the preaching of the gospel surmounting difficulties figuratively here expressed by mountains and little hills.

2:9. My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart. Behold he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices.

2:10. Behold my beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come.

2:11. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone.

2:12. The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land:

2:13. The fig tree hath put forth her green figs: the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come:

2:14. My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, shew me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely.

2:15. Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines: for our vineyard hath flourished.

Catch us the little foxes... Christ commands his pastors to catch false teachers, by holding forth their fallacy and erroneous doctrine, which like foxes would bite and destroy the vines.

2:16. My beloved to me, and I to him who feedeth among the lilies,

2:17. Till the day break, and the shadows retire. Return: be like, my beloved, to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 3

The spouse seeks Christ. The glory of his humanity.

3:1. In my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, and found him not.

In my bed by night, etc... The Gentiles as in the dark, and seeking in heathen delusion what they could not find, the true God, until Christ revealed his doctrine to them by his watchmen, (ver. 3,) that is, by the apostles, and teachers by whom they were converted to the true faith; and holding that faith firmly, the spouse (the Catholic Church) declares, ver. 4, That she will not let him go, till she bring him into her mother's house, etc., that is, till at last, the Jews also shall find him.

3:2. I will rise, and will go about the city: in the streets and the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, and I found him not.

3:3. The watchmen who keep the city, found me: Have you seen him, whom my soul loveth?

3:4. When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go, till I bring him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me.

3:5. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that you stir not up, nor awake my beloved, till she please.

3:6. Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?

3:7. Behold threescore valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel, surrounded the bed of Solomon?

3:8. All holding swords, and most expert in war: every man's sword upon his thigh, because of fears in the night.

3:9. King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus:

3:10. The pillars thereof he made of silver, the seat of gold, the going up of purple: the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem.

3:11. Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of the joy of his heart.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 4

Christ sets forth the graces of his spouse: and declares his love for her.

4:1. How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou! thy eyes are doves' eyes, besides what is hid within. Thy hair is as flocks of goats, which come up from mount Galaad.

How beautiful art thou... Christ again praises the beauties of his church, which through the whole of this chapter are exemplified by a variety of metaphors, setting forth her purity, her simplicity, and her stability.

4:2. Thy teeth as flocks of sheep, that are shorn, which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them.

4:3. Thy lips are as a scarlet lace: and thy speech sweet. Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate, besides that which lieth hid within.

4:4. Thy neck, is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men.

4:5. Thy two breasts like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

Thy two breasts, etc... Mystically to be understood: the love of God and the love of our neighbour, which are so united as twins which feed among the lilies: that is, the love of God and our neighbour, feeds on the divine mysteries and the holy sacraments, left by Christ to his spouse to feed and nourish her children.

4:6. Till the day break, and the shadows retire, I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

4:7. Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.

4:8. Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned from the top of Amana, from the top of Sanir and Hermon, from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards.

4:9. Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.

4:10. How beautiful are thy breasts, my sister, my spouse! thy breasts are more beautiful than wine, and the sweet smell of thy ointments above all aromatical spices.

4:11. Thy lips, my spouse, are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments, as the smell of frankincense.

4:12. My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.

My sister, etc., a garden enclosed... Figuratively the church is enclosed, containing only the faithful. A fountain sealed up... That none can drink of its waters, that is, the graces and spiritual benefits of the holy sacraments, but those who are within its walls.

4:13. Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard. Cypress with spikenard.

4:14. Spikenard and saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon, with all the trees of Libanus, myrrh and aloes with all the chief perfumes.

4:15. The fountain of gardens: the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus.

4:16. Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 5

Christ calls his spouse: she languishes with love: and describes him by his graces.

5:1. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat the fruit of his apple trees. I am come into my garden, O my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh, with my aromatical spices: I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.

Let my beloved come into his garden, etc... Garden, mystically the church of Christ, abounding with fruit, that is, the good works of the elect.

5:2. I sleep, and my heart watcheth: the voice of my beloved knocking: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the nights.

5:3. I have put off my garment, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?

5:4. My beloved put his hand through the key hole, and my bowels were moved at his touch.

My beloved put his hand through the key hole, etc... The spouse of Christ, his church, at times as it were penned up by its persecutors, and in fears, expecting the divine assistance, here signified by his hand: and ver. 6, but he had turned aside and was gone, that is, Christ permitting a further trial of suffering: and again, ver. 7, the keepers, etc., signifying the violent and cruel persecutors of the church taking her veil, despoiling the church of its places of worship and ornaments for the divine service.

5:5. I arose up to open to my beloved: my hands dropped with myrrh, and

my fingers were full of the choicest myrrh.

5:6. I opened the bolt of my door to my beloved: but he had turned aside, and was gone. My soul melted when he spoke: I sought him, and found him not: I called, and he did not answer me.

5:7. The keepers that go about the city found me: they struck me: and wounded me: the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

5:8. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love.

5:9. What manner of one is thy beloved of the beloved, O thou most beautiful among women? what manner of one is thy beloved of the beloved, that thou hast so adjured us?

5:10. My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.

My beloved, etc... In this and the following verses, the church mystically describes Christ to those who know him not, that is, to infidels in order to convert them to the true faith.

5:11. His head is as the finest gold: his locks as branches of palm trees, black as a raven.

5:12. His eyes as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk, and sit beside the plentiful streams.

5:13. His cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices set by the perfumers. His lips are as lilies dropping choice myrrh.

5:14. His hands are turned and as of gold, full of hyacinths. His belly as of ivory, set with sapphires.

5:15. His legs as pillars of marble, that are set upon bases of gold. His form as of Libanus, excellent as the cedars.

5:16. His throat most sweet, and he is all lovely: such is my beloved, and he is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.

5:17. Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou most beautiful among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, and we will seek him with thee?

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 6

The spouse of Christ is but one: she is fair and terrible.

6:1. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the bed of aromatical spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

My beloved is gone down into his garden... Christ, pleased with the good works of his holy and devout servants labouring in his garden, is always present with them: but the words is gone down, are to be understood, that after trying his Church by permitting persecution, he comes to her assistance and she rejoices at his coming.

6:2. I to my beloved, and my beloved to me, who feedeth among the lilies.

6:3. Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem terrible as an army set in array.

6:4. Turn away thy eyes from me, for they have made me flee away. Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Galaad.

6:5. Thy teeth as a flock of sheep, which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them.

6:6. Thy cheeks are as the bark of a pomegranate, beside what is hidden within thee.

6:7. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and young maidens without number.

6:8. One is my dove, my perfect one is but one, she is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her. The daughters saw her, and declared her most blessed: the queens and concubines, and they praised her.

One is my dove, etc... That is, my church is one, and she only is perfect and blessed.

6:9. Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?

Who is she, etc... Here is a beautiful metaphor describing the church from the beginning. As, the morning rising, signifying the church before the written law; fair as the moon, shewing her under the light of the gospel: and terrible as an army, the power of Christ's church against its enemies.

6:10. I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valleys, and to look if the vineyard had flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

6:11. I knew not: my soul troubled me for the chariots of Aminadab.

6:12. Return, return, O Sulamitess: return, return that we may behold thee.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 7

A further description of the graces of the church the spouse of Christ.

7:1. What shalt thou see in the Sulamitess but the companies of camps? How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O prince's daughter! The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, that are made by the hand of a skilful workman.

How beautiful are thy steps, etc... By these metaphors are signified the power and mission of the church in propagating the true faith.

7:2. Thy navel is like a round bowl never wanting cups. Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies.

7:3. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

7:4. Thy neck as a tower of ivory. Thy eyes like the fishpools in

Hesebon, which are in the gate of the daughter of the multitude. Thy nose is as the tower of Libanus, that looketh toward Damascus.

7:5. Thy head is like Carmel: and the hairs of thy head as the purple of the king bound in the channels.

Thy head is like Carmel... Christ, the invisible head of his church, is here signified.

7:6. How beautiful art thou, and how comely, my dearest, in delights!

7:7. Thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

7:8. I said: I will go up into the palm tree, and will take hold of the fruit thereof: and thy breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine: and the odour of thy mouth like apples.

7:9. Thy throat like the best wine, worthy for my beloved to drink, and for his lips and his teeth to ruminare.

7:10. I to my beloved, and his turning is towards me.

7:11. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages.

7:12. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vineyard flourish, if the flowers be ready to bring forth fruits, if the pomegranates flourish: there will I give thee my breasts.

7:13. The mandrakes give a smell. In our gates are all fruits: the new and the old, my beloved, I have kept for thee.

Canticle of Canticles Chapter 8

The love of the church to Christ: his love to her.

8:1. Who shall give thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find thee without, and kiss thee, and now no man may despise me?

8:2. I will take hold of thee, and bring thee into my mother's house: there thou shalt teach me, and I will give thee a cup of spiced wine and new wine of my pomegranates.

8:3. His left hand under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me.

His left hand, etc... Words of the church to Christ. His left hand, signifying the Old Testament, and his right hand, the New.

8:4. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love till she please.

8:5. Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I raised thee up: there thy mother was corrupted, there she was deflowered that bore thee.

Who is this, etc... The angels with admiration behold the Gentiles converted to the faith: coming up from the desert, that is, coming from

heathenism and false worship: flowing with delights, that is, abounding with good works which are pleasing to God: leaning on her beloved, on the promise of Christ to his Church, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; and supported by his grace conferred by the sacraments. Under the apple tree I raised thee up; that is, that Christ redeemed the Gentiles at the foot of the cross, where the synagogue of the Jews (the mother church) was corrupted by their denying him, and crucifying him.

8:6. Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy as hard as hell, the lamps thereof are fire and flames.

8:7. Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it: if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.

8:8. Our sister is little, and hath no breasts. What shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to?

Our sister is little, etc... Mystically signifies the Jews, who are to be spoken to: that is, converted towards the end of the world: and then shall become a wall, that is, a part of the building, the church of Christ.

8:9. If she be a wall: let us build upon it bulwarks of silver: if she be a door, let us join it together with boards of cedar.

8:10. I am a wall: and my breasts are as a tower since I am become in his presence as one finding peace.

8:11. The peaceable had a vineyard, in that which hath people: he let out the same to keepers, every man bringeth for the fruit thereof a thousand pieces of silver.

8:12. My vineyard is before me. A thousand are for thee, the peaceable, and two hundred for them that keep the fruit thereof.

8:13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends hearken: make me hear thy voice.

8:14. Flee away, O my beloved, and be like to the roe, and to the young hart upon the mountains of aromatical spices.

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