

THE SONG OF SONGS

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The Song of songs by Various

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VARIOUS

**THE SONG
OF SONGS**

THE SONG OF SONGS,

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION FROM ST. ATHANASIUS,

NOTES FROM THEODORET,

AND APPENDIX FROM ST. BERNARD.

Solomon

Preparata ut sponsata copulata Domine.—*Vet. Lat. Hymn.*



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HIGH STREET, TRINITY STREET,

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Cambridge.

1864.

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INTRODUCTION

TO

THE SONG OF SONGS,

Being an Extract from "The Synopsis of Holy Literature", by St. Athanasius the Great.

THIS Book was written by Solomon, and composed throughout from beginning to end mystically, by way of enigmatical allegory; for the meaning of its doctrines is not open but hid. Nevertheless, if diligently sought after, it is found; wherefore it becomes those who have understanding, to address themselves to the whole of this book as to an allegory, lest, through the ignorance of the unlearned, the things spoken in it fall into contempt.

¹ This Treatise is placed among the dubious Writings of St. Athanasius in the Benedictine Edition, but reckoned by Du Pin as genuine.

It is called the Song of Songs, because it comes after other songs, but after it no other is to be expected; by other, I mean not book, but things signified in the book. What I say is this: All Divine Scripture prophesies of the descent of the Word to us, and of His coming in the Flesh. For this is the will of God; and in the Prophets, and in all Holy Scripture this is primarily set forth. But to this Divine theme they add discourses concerning the nations, Babylon, Damascus, Moab, and others; and in every part of Scripture they rebuke sinners, and the wicked are urged to repentance, and are threatened with the future judgment of fire. Other Scriptures, indeed, foretell: as Moses, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me²;" and Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son³;" and Micah, "And it shall come to pass in the

² Deut. xviii. 15.

³ Isa. vii. 14.

last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted to the top of the mountains⁴;" and others prophesied in divers manners, according to the grace of the Spirit. But from all which they spake, the Lord, Whom they foretold, was expected. Thus many predicted Him, and until He came ceased not to prophesy of Him. And these all are songs. But the Song of Songs is not as a prophecy or sign; but Him, Whom others foretold, it shows, as it were, to be already come, and to have taken Flesh; wherefore, as on the marriage of the Word and Flesh, the Song of Songs sings the Epithalamium. The other Scriptures, indeed, speak of the Saviour, and meanwhile discourse of various things, but this Book sings only the marriage of the Word and Flesh. Wherefore in other Scriptures are found words of indignation and wrath, and terrible threats; but this Book, since it signi-

⁴ Micah iv. 1.

fies nothing else but the appearance of the Word, breathes only sweetness, joy, and cheerfulness. For when the Bridegroom is come, it behoves all to rejoice, and none to mourn, as the Lord said. For when He came He bare our infirmities, and turned our sorrows into joy. As, therefore, after the Dispensation of the Saviour, we expect no other prophet, so after the things treated of in the Song of Songs, is there nothing else signifying what is later to be expected. And the things allegorized in this Song are found spoken at intervals in the Prophets and other Scriptures. Again, as John pointed to the Lamb of God, and the Law and the Prophets are until John, so the things which are signified in the Song of Songs are the completion of all that is contained in all Holy Scripture. For what is to be expected after the Advent of Christ but judgment and retribution? therefore, they who bring in Prophets after the Lord are deceived and condemned as heretics. For which cause it

is "the Song of Songs," in that after it no other is to be expected. And as under the Law there was the Holy Place, and after it the Holy of Holies, but after the Holy of Holies no other place within; so after other songs is the Song of Songs, and after the Song of Songs is not to be expected any further or later promise: for the Word was once made Flesh, and finished the work. And this whole Book is full of Dialogues between the ancient people and the Word, and the whole human race and the Word, and the Church from among the Gentiles and Him — and again, between the Word and her, and the whole human race—then between the Gentiles and Jerusalem, and between Jerusalem and the Word, concerning the called from among the Gentiles and herself. Afterwards is the preaching by ministering angels to those who are called among men. These, therefore, are the words of the ancient people entreating Him to come down and be joined to Flesh: "Let Him kiss me with