

**THE BOOK OF CANTICLES; OR,
SONG OF SOLOMON, ACCORDING
TO THE ENGLISH VERSION, REVISED
AND EXPLAINED FROM THE
ORIGINAL HEBREW**

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The book of Canticles; or, Song of Solomon, according to the English version, Revised and Explained from the Original Hebrew by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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*Ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκίτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔχειν, καὶ
κεῖναι εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ.*

*"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are
they which testify of me."—JOHN v. 39.*

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THE BOOK OF CANTICLES, OR, SONG OF
SOLOMON,

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"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Ephes. v. 32.

AFTER long study of the Hebrew Scriptures, with a view to sceptical objections, whose force lay in the imperfections of translations, the writer found that in this book many difficulties disappeared under patient investigation; still there were some that had not yielded.

In Dr. Kitto's Journal of Sacred Literature there is an article on this book by Professor Stowe, of Cincinnati, in which many of these remaining difficulties are satisfactorily met. On most points the two students had arrived at the same conclusion—on some minor ones where they do not coincide it is easy to agree to differ. This increase of light has been like the introduction of a torch into a sparry cavern, not only guiding the bewildered, but on every side revealing hidden beauties.

It is here endeavoured to keep close to the original; where this translation differs from that in common use it is with that object; where in some other places in Scripture the word altered is used with the meaning here selected, that place is designated; when the word does not occur elsewhere, it is rendered as the root of the word allows.

It should be observed, that in this book Solomon is not the mortal king, but the Prince of Peace; by the ancient Jews understood to be the expected "King Messiah";¹ by the early Christian Church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Bride has been held to typify the Church by both. The Bride, the Betrothed, before and at the first coming of Christ, becomes the Lamb's Wife at and after the second. The Bridegroom of His Church speaks of the Bride's moral perfections even more than of her external beauty. The

¹ The great names of Aben Ezra among the Jews, of Rosemüller among the Germans, and Moses Stuart among modern commentators, may be cited as holding the view here advocated. Aben Ezra calls it "profanation" to give any but a spiritual meaning to this book.

daughters of Jerusalem admiring her beauty, admire also her superb raiment; she is clothed with the righteousness of her Lord, arrayed in His glory.

In some cases it may be found that the modern Jews themselves take the least refined view of the meaning. Similar instances occur in poetry far less ancient and difficult. Should the pointing of the Hebrew text sometimes seem to require accommodation, it must be remembered that manuscripts vary, and that points, however ancient, however useful, are of human, not divine, origin. There are in Hebrew two words for love, one, *Aheva*, desiring¹; another, (whence David,) abiding, satisfying love². They may here be distinguished by 1 and 2, as the genders by *masculine, †feminine. These, as well as the beautiful word for a female friend, meaning a companion with whom to feed, *break* bread, (consequently in the East a bride or wife,) are very imperfectly appreciated in translations.

The ancient Jews understood this book to be an allegory of God's love to the Jewish Church; the early Christians understood it as shadowing forth the love of Christ to the Christian Church, typified under the same figure by St. Paul, Eph. v. 32. A very large portion of the Christian Church in all ages has so considered it, and so it is interpreted here. Being part of the Jewish canon, to which our Lord referred as "the Scriptures," thus giving it His infallible sanction, no further evidence of its inspiration need be sought: it is part of that Word of God "which cannot be broken." Similar faith in the inspiration of the Apocalypse has always existed in the Christian Church. Before any of its predictions had been explained by the events, that faith reposed on its internal divineness. The words were of God, spoken by the glorified Redeemer to all coming time. By such as knew and loved His words in the Gospel, the words of the Apocalypse were recognized as His. In both these mysterious portions of the "One Book," the Bible, the subject is the same, the love of Christ to His Church, her wanderings, her woes, her final union to her Lord in glory. Her inward feelings, those more or less experienced by every believer, are especially dwelt on in the earlier, her outward trials and earthly vicissitudes, in the later book. The termination of those troubles is in both the same. At the end of the Canticles the bride comes up out of the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved; as the bride of the Apocalypse, after long exile in its dreary solitudes, is brought to the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the abode of peace, wherein is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

It has been inferred that the English translation of the Book of Canticles could not be depended upon as to the speeches of the different speakers, from the difference of some of the ancient translations, especially as given in Walton's Polyglot, but this difficulty is here met.

The English Version generally agrees with the pointed Hebrew that is given in Bagster's Polyglot, which is the received text. Ancient translations may have been made from corrupt MSS., or from unpointed ones, in which case the gender of particular words could not always be clearly determined. As for instance the pronouns "thou," "thee," and "thy," which in the spoken and pointed Hebrew are distinguished, but not in the unpointed.

It is scarcely necessary to explain that the points express unwritten vowels, by which some pronouns and some parts of the verb are made feminine. The pronouns "he" and "she," "this" and "that," do not depend on points, but are written with different letters, as are the feminine verbs in many parts of their conjugation. In these cases the gender does not admit of a doubt. In the Keri, or Jewish correction of their MSS., nothing occurs to alter the genders of the speakers, as given in the received text, though in chap. iv. 9, the gender of the adjective "one," as applied to

¹ Gen. xxix. 18. 20. Jer. xxxi. 3, &c.

² Deut. xxxiii. 12. Isa. v. 1.

"eyes," is made regular. The verses in which the gender is fixed by letters, and not by mere points, are these: i. 9, 13, 14, 15, 16; ii. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17; iii. 1 to 5, 6, 11; iv. 1, 7 to 12, 16; v. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13; vii. 1 to 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13; viii. 5, 8, 13, 14.

In other places the pronouns "thou," "these," "thy," determine the genders by their points, with which the English generally agrees. But in chap. viii. 5, 2nd clause, where the English is indefinite, the unpunctuated Hebrew is equally so, though the points make the five pronouns masculine. The verb translated "to raise" cannot apply to an infant, but is "to wake," as in chap. v. 2; iii. 5; iv. 16. In chap. ii. 1, it is probably the Bride who speaks, as there are two forms of the noun "lily," and the feminine is here used. Though a noun-substantive be not altered in gender to suit the speaker, yet where there are two forms, as *qaw* and *qaww*, the use of the feminine would indicate a woman being the thing compared to it. "Rose" is always feminine, and though in Hebrew the comparison might be applied to the King, it is less likely; still it must be remembered that in Prov. viii. and Hag. ii. a noun with a feminine (or rather neuter) termination is so applied¹.

Luther prefaces his "High Song" of Solomon, by saying it is the desire of the Christian Church for her bridegroom Christ, and that the Christian Church longs for her bridegroom Christ in expectation and betrothment.

Some have held, that in the Canticles were set forth "the several ages and periods of the Christian Church, in agreement with the seven Churches of Asia, as Coccosius and those that follow him; as thus—

The Ephesian Church, Cant. i. 5—7, from the Ascension of Christ to A.D. 370;

The Smyranean Church, Cant. ii. 1—17, from A.D. 371 to 707;

The Church at Pergamos, Cant. iii. 1—11, from A.D. 708 to 1045;

The Thyatiran Church, Cant. iv. 1 to v. 1, from A.D. 1046 to 1383;

The Sardian Church, Cant. v. 2 to vi. 8, from A.D. 1384 to 1721;

The Philadelphian, Cant. vi. 9; vii. 14, from A.D. 1722 to 2059;

The Laodicean, Cant. viii. 1—14, from A.D. 2060, onwards;

but these senses are very arbitrary, uncertain, and precarious." (Gill.)

"There seem to be allusions and references to various passages of this book in the New Testament; see Matt. xxi. 9; xxv. 1. Mark xii. 1. Luke xx. 9. Matt. xxv. 1, &c. John iii. 8, 29; vi. 44. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Eph. v. 27, and Col. ii. 17. Rev. iii. 20; xix. 7, 8, compared with Cant. i. 3, 4; ii. 17; iv. 7, 16; v. 1, 2; vii. 13; viii. 11, 12." (Gill.)

The ancient Jews called this book "the holy of holies;" the Syriac version, "the wisdom of wisdoms of Solomon."

By the Jews, ancient and modern, its inspiration and authenticity have never been questioned. "They have a saying, that wherever the word Solomon is used in this Song the Holy One is meant, the Holy God, or Messiah²."

That they were familiarized by the prophets with this allegorical showing forth of the love of the Redeemer to the Church may be seen in the subjoined texts. Might it not be imparted to Adam before the fall or the creation of Eve? Gen. ii.

Betrothing, Hos. ii. 16—20. Isa. liv. 5. Eph. v. 29, 32.

Eposals, Jer. ii. 2; iii. 14. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Isa. lxii. 4, 5, *thy sons*, rather *thy builders*. Rev. xix. 17. (Isa. l. 1, divorcements.)

Bride, Isa. xlix. 18; lxi. 10; lxii. 5; Rev. xix.

Wife, Isa. liv. 1. Rev. xxi. 9. Ps. xlv. throughout.

¹ On "Rose" see Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon.

² Maimonides, quoted by Gill.

THE CANTICLES, OR SONG OF SOLOMON.

CHAP. I. 1. The Song of Songs, of Solomon.

The chiefest of all songs, to and of Solomon, the Prince of Peace.

THE BRIDE SPEAKS.

2. He shall kiss me with the kiss of his mouth : for thy loving-kindnesses are better than wine.

The kiss of betrothal. Hos. ii. 19.

In Oriental metaphor "kiss" is still used to denote religious rapture, as "wine," devotion. Ps. ii. 12. Isa. xxv. 6; xxvii. 2.

3. For the scent of thy good unguents, as unguent poured forth thy name. Therefore the virgins love thee *.

Perfume is used in the East to typify religious hope; here both scent and unguent seem to refer, as in other Scriptures, to the graces of the Holy Spirit. Exod. xxx. 32—37. Ps. xlv. 7, 8. Rev. viii. 4.

4. Draw me. We will hasten after thee *. The King is bringing me into his abodes.

John vi. 44.

Ps. xlv. 14. Eph. ii. 6. Rev. xxi. 2. 9. His garden, his vineyard, his paradise.

THE VIRGINS TO THE BRIDE.

We will rejoice, and be glad in thee †.
We will remember thy * loving-kindnesses more than wine: the upright love thee *.

To the King. Wine, given by the true Vine, John xv. 1, the gladdening influences of divine grace, refined, purified, as here, is promised by Isa. xlv. 6, to all nations, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion.

As morning twilight, which precedes the day. The Church sees her own imperfections.

To the Bride.

THE BRIDE.

5. I am dark,

THE VIRGINS.

But lovely,

Ver. 2. The kiss of betrothal, denoting rule, as the root *qas* is used in Gen. xl. 41. In the Vulgate it is here rendered singular, though the *Vau* inserted has made it be sometimes taken as plural.

It will be observed, that the subject of this poem is betrothal, not marriage, concluding with the yet unfulfilled aspiration for the Bridegroom's coming.

When the prophetic character of this allegory is fully admitted, it will not be difficult here to perceive the anticipation of the wine of the Gospel, as in Isa. xxv. 6; xxvii. 2; iv. 1.

THE BRIDE.

Ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents
of Kedar,

Dark and unornamented. Kedar mean-
ing dark, sorrowful.

THE VIRGINS.

As the curtains of Solomon.

As those curtains, rich with embroidery.

THE BRIDE TO THE VIRGINS.

6. Look not upon me, because I am very
dark, for the sun hath shone upon me.
My mother's sons were angry with me ;
I was made a keeper of the vineyards ;
my vineyard, even mine, have I not
kept.

The light of Christ has shown her dark
state by nature.

Mother, the Jewish Church ; sons, the
unconverted Jews, who reject and
persecute the Christian Church. A
Church being typified by a vineyard, a
place enclosed, encircled.

THE BRIDE TO THE KING.

7. Tell me, thou whom my soul loveth †,
where thou feedest, where thou
makest to lie down at noon : for why
should I be as one that wandereth by
the flocks of thy companions * †

The Church desires the presence of Christ.
The Jewish desiring the first coming,
as the Christian the second.

THE KING.

8. If thou know not, O thou fairest
among women, take thy way by the
footsteps of the flock, and feed thy
kids beside the shepherds' tents.
9. To a princely company of steeds with
chariots have I likened thee, my
friend †.

She is told to seek religious communion
and the teaching of the ministry.
Mal. iii. 16.

The pronouns are pointed feminine.

"Friend," one who feeds, who breaks
bread with me, whom I feed, with her
"company" of attendant virgins, as in
the passover, and in the Lord's Supper.

VIRGINS TO THE BRIDE.

10. Comely thy cheeks with rows, thy
neck with chains.
11. Rows of gold we will make for thee †
with clasps of silver.

Rows of pendant jewels, as in the sculp-
tures of Egypt and Assyria. The
Church is adorned by the unity of
believers, bound together as jewels in
chains. Mal. iii. 17.

The Jewish Church might here see
figured the feast of the Passover, as
the Christian will recognize that of
the Lord's Supper.

Myrrh is one of the spices of the holy oil.
Exod. xxx. The construction is *double*,
to the nosegay and to the beloved.

BRIDE.

12. While the king is at his table, my
spikenard giveth forth its scent.
13. A nosegay of myrrh, my beloved * †
unto me, within my bosom to remain.

Ver. 9. *prince* is *prince* or *princely* in Arabic; rendered *αρχοντων*, *princes*, by the Septuagint in Deut. xxxii. 42; and in the Vulg. "capiti," heads; *kings*, Cruden.

Ver. 9 and 10. Adorned with the jewels given at betrothal, as to Rebekah, which her companions arrange in rows with clasps of silver; she is likened to the ornamented steeds represented in the Assyrian remains.

14. A cluster of camphire, my beloved *² unto me, in the vineyards of the well of kids. The graces of the ordinance of baptism are here prefigured. John iii. 5. Acts ii. 38.

THE KING.

15. Behold, thou *art* fair, my friend †, behold, thou † *art* fair, thine eyes, doves. By baptism of water and of the Spirit, John iii., the Church becomes "fair" in the sight of her Lord, and speaks with more confidence of her acceptance with Him. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Her eyes are innocent as doves. Ch. iv. 1; v. 12.

THE BRIDE.

16. Behold, thou * *art* fair, my beloved *², yea, gracious, also our couch is green. She is now in the gardens, but looks to being brought into the King's palace, as the Bride in Ps. xlv. 15, and as the Lamb's Wife in the Apocalypse to the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Rev. xix. 7, 8; xxii. 2.
17. The beams of our house *are* cedars, our roofings of cypress.

THE BRIDE.

- CHAP. II. 1. I *am* the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys. The rose by the Jewish writers was thought to express the lowliness of the Church, and her exposed situation in the field.

THE KING.

2. As the lily among the thorns, so my friend † among the daughters.

THE BRIDE.

3. As the citron-tree among the trees of the wood, so my beloved *² among the sons. In his shadow I delighted and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. The Church contemplates the perfections of Christ, and her happiness in Him, likening Him to the perfume-giving citron.
4. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love ¹. Again a prophetic allusion to the Lord's Supper.
5. Stay me with perfumes, strew me round with citrons: for I faint with love ¹. The Vulg. and Luther have "flowers," the Sept. "myrrh." Perfumes and sweet-scented fruit figuring the graces of the Holy Spirit.
6. His left hand under my head, his right hand shall enfold me. Her reliance on divine support. Deut. xxxiii. 27. The left hand, the hidden, the right, the visible help.

Ver. 14 and 15. The early Fathers said the prophets prophesied of baptism.

Ver. 1. The word rendered "rose" describes the flower folded up in itself. That rendered "lily" has in it the root of *six*, and of brilliant whiteness. The lily belongs to the class in which the divisions of the flowers are *six*. The anemone, which Stowe and others give, does not.

Ver. 3. On account of its perfume.