

**CANTICLES, OR SONG OF SOLOMON: A
NEW TRANSLATION WITH NOTES AND AN
ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET THE SACRED
ALLEGORIES CONTAINED IN THAT BOOK:
TO WHICH IS ADDED AN ESSAY ON THE
NAME AND CHARACTER OF THE REDEEMER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649382811

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Cover @ 2017

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JOHN FRY

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AN ESSAY ON THE NAME AND CHARACTER
OF
THE REDEEMER.

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Author of Expository Lectures on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: a new Translation and
Exposition of the Psalms; of the SECOND ADVENT of our Lord Jesus Christ; of the
Sick Man's Friend; Friend to the Convalescent; and a History of the
Christian Church to the Present Time, on the Plan of Milner, &c.

SECOND EDITION.

Ὁ ἕμης ἕως ἑσραυρωται.
ST. IGNATIUS.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR JAMES DUNCAN, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCCXXV.

LONDON :—Printed by W. CLOWES, Northumberland-court, Strand.

P R E F A C E.

THE authenticity and divine inspiration of the Canticles, or Song of Solomon, have seldom been called in question. This book is well known to have formed part of those sacred writings which the ancient Jews revered as the oracles of Heaven, and which, in this high character, received the sanction of the Son of God. The Canticles are therefore to be considered as included among those Scriptures of which the Apostle speaks in his Epistle to Timothy: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*." No one then can doubt of the utility of studying this portion of the divine records, however extraordinary its subject may, at first sight, appear; but the attention of the reader may be solicited to the publication now laid before him in prosecution of

*2 Epist. iii. 16,

that general charge of our divine Master, "Search the Scriptures."

To give an account of the present attempt without any further apology—the first endeavour has been, to provide an accurate translation of this interesting part of Holy Writ from the original Hebrew, illustrated with such notes and observations, as appeared necessary to the comprehension of its literal meaning.

Next I have attempted—agreeably to what will be shown to be the nature and design of this book—to explain its several portions as so many spiritual allegories.

The former part of the undertaking could not have been omitted, for it were preposterous to attempt an improved interpretation of these allegories, without previously directing our efforts to gain a clear and distinct knowledge of the events or similies on which they are constructed. "It is the first duty of an expositor," as the Bishop of Dromore observes, "to ascertain that lower and more obvious meaning. For till this is done, it is impossible to discover what truths are couched under it. Without this all is vague and idle conjecture^b."

The spiritual interpretations follow, as being

^b New Translation, *Dodsley*, 1764.

necessary to complete the design of the divine author of these sacred songs: the parable, except in view of its interpretation, being but of small moment to the edification of the church at large.

In accomplishing the first part of our design, it will be seen, that we derive great assistance from the labours of others. And much assistance indeed was necessary: for to settle the literal meaning and distribution of the *Song of Solomon* has been justly considered as a very difficult task.

As a composition and work of taste, it must be confessed that we can only, in some parts, form a guess concerning the original beauties and design of the *Song of Songs*. It may be compared to some precious relic of antiquity, whose exquisite polish and minuter ornaments time and other causes have much corroded and defaced. Notwithstanding the successive labours of many learned and ingenious men, in clearing away the rubbish which obscured it, and in retracing its almost obliterated workmanship, we must be satisfied, in some places, to have preserved only the general contour or outline of the work, and may be compelled perhaps to own that we do not thoroughly comprehend the use of some of its subordinate parts.

In a religious point of view, however, this sort of imperfection in our knowledge respecting some of the original beauties of these sacred poems, is not of that consequence which might at first be imagined. The glory of the holy temple consists not in its gildings, or in its elegant carvings. These may be lost or defaced; yet, if a more spiritual worship is now celebrated beneath its consecrated roof, the glory of the house, in its latter state, may well be said to exceed its glory in the former. And thus, in the hands of a truly enlightened Christian, the Canticles appear at this day invested with a brighter lustre, than they perhaps could discern, who read them in the days of Solomon. Because, though, in regard to the exterior imagery of the allegories, some of their beauties may be lost: yet the hidden and mystic sense is brought more to light, and manifested with fuller assurance to the believer under the Gospel dispensation.—“For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them^c.”

The principle upon which the present translation and interpretation are conducted is that

^c Luke, x. 24.

adopted by Mr. Mason Good^d, or, more strictly speaking, that adopted by Signior Melesigenio. What is commonly called the Song of Solomon, is considered as a collection of distinct idyls, or little poems, perfectly detached and separate from each other, with no other connexion than what they derive from a common subject, the peculiarities of the style of a common author, and perhaps some unity of design in regard of the mystic sense which they are intended to bear.

This notion of what is commonly called the Song of Solomon is certainly a most important discovery. The mistake of considering a number of distinct pieces, in an ancient language, as one continued work, and endeavouring to interpret them upon that principle, is in itself sufficient to account for much of the obscurity so generally complained of in reading the Canticles.

The improbability, however, that the true nature of the Song of Solomon should be left to be a modern discovery, will perhaps strike my readers. But it may be observed, that though the notion be indeed a discovery, in respect of the ages just elapsed, yet there is still surviving evidence enough to lead to the conclusion, that

^d See Song of Songs, or sacred Idyls, by John Mason Good, London, 1803.