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COMMENTARY

Barnes' Notes on the Bible
Volume 6 -
Song of Solomon

By A. Fuller

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THE SONG OF SOLOMON

INTRODUCTION

1. “The Song of Songs which is Solomon’s,” so designated by its most ancient (Hebrew) title, holds a unique position in sacred literature. It may be said to be the enigma of the Old Testament, just as the Apocalypse (Revelation) is of the New Testament.

The Song was regarded as an integral and venerated portion of the Hebrew canon before the commencement of the Christian era, and passed as such into the canon of the primitive church. It has been always held both by the church and by the synagogue in the highest and most reverent estimation.

Akiba, as reported in the Mishnah, expressing the general judgment of Jewish schools and doctors in the first and second centuries, exclaimed: “No man in Israel ever doubted the canonicity of the Song of Songs, for the course of ages cannot vie with the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; all the Kethubim (Hagiographa) are indeed a holy thing, but the Song of Songs is a holy of holies.” Origen, after enumerating six of the chief songs of Holy Scripture, e.g., the songs of the Red Sea (Exodus 15), of the well (^{Q217}Numbers 21:17,18), of Moses (Deuteronomy 32), of Deborah (Judges 5), of David (Psalm 18), of Isaiah (Isaiah 5), and assigning to each its special significance in reference to the spiritual life, thus proceeds: “When thou hast passed through all these, thou must mount yet higher to sing with the Bridegroom this Song of Songs.” In the Book of Proverbs, according to Jerome, the young are taught the duties of life; in Ecclesiastes, the middle-aged are taught the vanity of earthly things; in the Song of Songs the perfected, who have the world beneath their feet, are joined to the embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom.

One or two allusions have been found in the Song to at least one older canonical book (Genesis); and a few references to it occur in books of later composition (Proverbs, Isaiah, Hosea); while two or three doubtful allusions have been thought to be made to it by writers of the New

Testament. These references are sufficient to establish the recognition of the Song as a part of Holy Scripture by some among the canonical writers.

2. The difficulties of the interpreter of the Song are unusually great. One lies in the special form of composition. The Song of Songs might be called a lyrico-dramatic poem, but it is not a drama in the sense that it was either intended or adapted for representation.

Though the Song is a well-organized poetical whole, its unity is made up of various parts and sections, of which several have so much independence and individuality as to have been not inaptly called Idylls, i.e. short poetic pieces of various forms containing each a distinct subject of representation. These shorter pieces are all, however, so closely linked by a common purpose, as to form, when viewed in their right connection, constituent parts of a larger and complete poem.

(Almost all recent critics now assume that the Song is not an anthology or collection of poems and fragments by various authors, but (as its Hebrew title indicates) a single poem, the work of one author. The old popular renderings of this title, “Cantica,” “Canticles,” or “Songs of Solomon,” were consequently — as to the plural form — inexact and misleading.)

The earliest Jewish expositor of the Song as a whole, the author of the so-called Chaldee Targum, divides it in his historico-prophetic interpretation into two nearly equal halves at ⁽²¹⁰⁾Song of Solomon 5:1. All that precedes the close of that verse he makes refer to the times of the Exodus and of the first temple, and all that follows to times subsequent to the deportation to Babylon down to the final restoration of Israel and the glories of the latter day. Whatever we may think of this allegorical interpretation, the division itself may, with other divisions — suggested by refrains and recurrent phrases, used it would seem of set purpose to indicate the commencement or the close of various sections — prove a valuable clue to the true significance of the whole.

The two most important of these refrains are, first, the bride’s three-fold adjuration to the chorus (⁽²¹¹⁾Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4), marking at each place, as most interpreters agree, the close of one division of the poem; secondly, the question asked three times by a chorus on as many distinct appearances of the bride (⁽²¹²⁾Song of Solomon 3:6; 6:10; 8:5), marking, in like manner, a fresh commencement. These two refrains enable

us to divide each half of the Song into three parts of nearly equal length, and make the whole poem consist of six parts; an arrangement which, in its main features, has obtained a majority of suffrages among modern interpreters.

(Each of these parts, on a closer view, will be found to break up into two or three smaller sections, some quite idyllic in their character, and capable of being regarded as distinct little poems (e.g. ²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 2:8-17; 3:1-5; 5:2-8). Here occur other recurrent phrases, e.g. “Behold, thou art fair” etc. (²¹¹⁵Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1,7; 6:4; 7:6), which is a formula of commencement; and the following formulae of conclusion, “His left hand underneath my head” etc. (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 2:6; 8:3); “Flee, my beloved” etc.; and “I am my beloved’s” etc. (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 2:16,17; 7:10; 8:14).)

The Song is throughout so far dramatic in form that it consists entirely of dialogue or monologue, the writer nowhere speaking in his own person; and the dialogue is connected with the development of a certain action. There are, we believe, only three chief speakers, “the bride,” “the beloved,” and a chorus of “virgins” or “daughters of Jerusalem,” having each their own manner and peculiar words and phrases, and these so carefully adhered to as to help us, in some cases of doubt, to determine the particular speaker (see ²¹⁰⁸Song of Solomon 1:8 note)

(Origen adds a fourth speaker, a chorus of young men, companions of the bridegroom (²¹¹¹Song of Solomon 3:11). The bride constantly repeats her favorite phrases; e.g. the adjuration (²¹¹⁷Song of Solomon 2:7 etc., 5:8); “I am my beloved’s” etc. (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 2:16; 6:3; 7:10; compare ²¹⁸⁰Song of Solomon 8:10); “Flee (or “turn”) my beloved,” etc. (²¹¹⁷Song of Solomon 2:17; 8:14); her beloved is a “shepherd” who “feeds” his flock (²¹⁰⁷Song of Solomon 1:7) “among lilies” (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 2:16; 6:3). The beloved repeatedly employs the same terms in addressing the bride; e.g. “My love” or “friend” (²¹⁰⁹Song of Solomon 1:9,15; 2:2,10,13; 4:1,7; 5:2; 6:4); “My dove” (²¹¹⁴Song of Solomon 2:14; 5:2; 6:9); “My sister” (²¹¹³Song of Solomon 4:9,10; 5:2); “Let me hear thy voice” (²¹¹⁴Song of Solomon 2:14; 8:13); “Thou hast doves’ eyes” (²¹¹⁵Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1). Compare also

~~2001~~ Song of Solomon 4:1-3 with ~~2005~~ Song of Solomon 6:5-7, and
~~2004~~ Song of Solomon 4:4,5, with ~~2008~~ Song of Solomon 7:3,4.)

If in other Scriptures are found words of indignation and wrath and terrible threatenings, the characteristics of this book are sweetness, cheerfulness, and joy, characteristics somewhat at variance with “the hypothesis” so-called “of the shepherd lover.”

(This hypothesis, held by many distinguished critics, assumes that there are two lovers in the Song, one a faithful simple-minded shepherd, the other a magnificent voluptuous king, by each of whom the affections of a Shulamite maiden are alternately solicited; while she, faithful in her allegiance to her shepherd-lover, rejects with scorn the monarch’s blandishments, and finally compels him to abandon his pursuit.)

According to the view taken in this commentary, there is only one lover in the Song, and one object of his affection, without rival or disturbing influence on either side. The beloved of the bride is in truth a king, and if she occasionally speaks of him as a shepherd, she intimates (~~2006~~ Song of Solomon 6:2,3) that she is speaking figuratively. Being herself a rustic maiden of comparatively lowly station she, by such an appellation, seeks to draw down him “whom her soul loveth” (~~2007~~ Song of Solomon 1:7; 3:1-4), though he be the king of Israel, within her narrower circle of thoughts and aspirations. And, therefore, while the whole poem breathes of almost more than regal splendor and magnificence, the bride is nowhere represented as dwelling with any pride or satisfaction on the riches or grandeur of her beloved, but only on what he is to her in his own person as “chiefest among ten thousand” and “altogether lovely” (~~2010~~ Song of Solomon 5:10,16 notes).

3. Most recent critics have agreed in assigning to the Song an early date.

The diction of the Song (on the character of which several critics have insisted when arguing for a later date) is unquestionably peculiar. The poem is written in pure Hebrew of the best age, but with a large sprinkling of uncommon idioms and some very remarkable and apparently foreign words. Diction apart, most of the references and allusions in the Song would lead us to assign it, in accordance with its title, to the age of Solomon, nor does there seem to be sufficient reason for departing from the traditional belief that Solomon was himself the author; unless it be

considered a panegyric composed in his honor by a prophet or poet of the king's own circle. In that case some of the peculiarities of diction and phraseology might be accounted for by assuming the author to have been a native of the northern part of Solomon's dominions.

One striking characteristic of the writer of the Song is a love of natural scenes and objects, and familiarity with them as they would be presented, in the wide area of the Hebrew monarchy, to an observant eye in the age of Solomon.

(Thus, allusions to the north of Palestine, in which the writer seems to take particular delight, are found in ²¹⁰⁸Song of Solomon 4:8,11,15; 1:16,17. Allusions to the east of Jordan occur in ²¹⁰⁷Song of Solomon 2:17; 4:1; 6:5,13; and allusions to the fields and valleys, the flowers and animals, on the west of the river in ²¹⁰¹Song of Solomon 2:1,12,14; 4:5; 5:12; 7:13; The furthest south is alluded to in ²¹⁰⁴Song of Solomon 1:14; 4:4,6,12-14; 6:4; 7:4 etc.)

Thus, it has been observed that this short poem contains 18 names of plants and 13 of animals. No less delight is exhibited in the enumeration of those works of human art and labor and those articles of commerce, which in the time of Solomon so largely ministered to royal pomp and luxury.

(For example, the tower of Lebanon (²¹⁰⁴Song of Solomon 7:4), David's tower in Jerusalem (²¹⁰⁴Song of Solomon 4:4), rings and jewels (²¹⁰⁴Song of Solomon 5:14), crowns and necklaces (²¹⁰¹Song of Solomon 3:11; 1:10), palanquins and chariots (²¹⁰⁷Song of Solomon 3:7,9; 1:9), pillars of marble (²¹⁰⁵Song of Solomon 5:15), and every kind of spice and costly perfume (²¹⁰⁶Song of Solomon 4:6,14; 1:12,13).)

The time in which the Song was written was unquestionably one of peace and general prosperity, such as occurred but very rarely in the chequered history of Israel. All the indications named above concur with this in fixing that time as the age of Solomon.

4. The interpretation of the Song of Songs followed in this commentary proceeds on the assumption that the primary subject and occasion of the poem was a real historical event, of which we have here the only record, the marriage union of Solomon with a shepherd-maiden of northern Palestine, by whose beauty and nobility of soul the great king had been

captivated. Starting from this historical basis, the Song of Songs is in its essential character an ideal representation of human love in the relation of marriage (^{<2006>}Song of Solomon 8:6,7).

(The allegorical method of interpretation depicts the Song to have been in its original purpose an ideal representation of the communion of love between the Holy One and His Church as first exhibited in the election of Israel, not following, however, any actual developments of that relation in the changing fortunes of the chosen people, but representing (in accordance with the ideal truth of things) any transient disturbance of communion as resulting in the drawing of a closer bond. This is thought to be done by means of a succession of lyrico-dramatic songs, and under the allegory of the bridal love of the Shulamite and Solomon. The whole conception is thus based on the image referred to in ^{<0244>}Exodus 34:14 etc., and ^{<0315>}Leviticus 26:5 etc. (compare ^{<0215>}Exodus 20:5; ^{<0307>}Leviticus 18:7; ^{<0443>}Numbers 14:33; ^{<0526>}Deuteronomy 32:16,31). That such a conception should suddenly spring up in the mind or age of Solomon into this full and vigorous life, is considered possible when the analogous development of the “Chokhmah” (or Hebrew philosophy) in the same generation, is considered and compared with Psalm 45 and Psalm 72 which equally belong to it.)

5. According to this literal and historical interpretation, Parts I—III constitute the first half or one main division of the poem, which may be called: THE BRIDE AND HER ESPOUSALS WITH THE KING (^{<2002>}Song of Solomon 1:2—5:1). The three parts represent each a different scene and distinct action.

Part I. THE BRIDE IN THE KING’S CHAMBERS (^{<2002>}Song of Solomon 1:2—2:7) subdivisible into four sections, corresponding to so many pauses in the action or dialogue.

1. “The Prologue” (^{<2002>}Song of Solomon 1:2-4);
2. “The bride and the daughters of Jerusalem” (^{<2005>}Song of Solomon 1:5-8);
3. “The entrance of the king” (^{<2009>}Song of Solomon 1:9-14);
4. “The bride and the beloved” (^{<2015>}Song of Solomon 1:15—2:7).

The scene is laid apparently in a wooded district of northern Palestine near the bride's home, where the king is spending part of the summer season in tents. The three chief speakers of the poem are now introduced in succession: first, a female chorus (the "daughters of Jerusalem") commence by singing a short ode of two stanzas in praise of the absent king (²¹⁰⁶Song of Solomon 1:2-4). The next speaker, the Shulamite maiden ("the bride"), appears to have been recently brought from her country home to the king's pavilion, to be there affianced to him. A brief dialogue ensues between her and the chorus (²¹⁰⁶Song of Solomon 1:5-7). The king himself appears, in the third place, and commending the beauty of the bride, receives from her in return words of praise and affection (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 1:16; 2:7). Throughout this part the bride is represented as of inferior rank to him whom she calls her "beloved," shrinking at times from the splendors of the royal station that awaits her. She speaks of him both as a shepherd and as a king; but, in either character, as of one in whose favor and society she finds supreme satisfaction and entire rest. It is a day of early love, but not that of their first meeting.

Part II. MONOLOGUES OF THE BRIDE (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 2:8—3:5), comprising two sections.

1. "The visit of the beloved" (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 2:8-17);
2. "The bride's first dream" (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 3:1-5).

This part carries us back to an earlier period than the former, and affords a glance at the previous history of the Shulamite in her relations to the king. She describes to the chorus in two monologues how the beloved had visited her on a spring morning, and how she had afterward dreamed of him at night.

Part III. ROYAL ESPOUSALS (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 3:6—5:1), subdivisible into three sections.

1. "Bridal procession and royal entry" (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 3:6-11);
2. "The bridegroom's commendation of the bride" (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 4:1-7);
3. "The king's invitation" (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 4:8—5:1).

The scene changes to Jerusalem, where the bride is brought in royal state to be united to the king in marriage.

Parts IV—VI. THE BRIDE, THE KING'S WIFE (^{218P}Song of Solomon 5:2-7:14). The once lowly Shulamite, though now sharing with her beloved the high places of Israel, yet retains that sweetness, humility, and devoted affection, which in other scenes and circumstances had gained his heart. She invites him to revisit with her rural scenes, and share once more their simple pleasures (^{217I}Song of Solomon 7:11-13).

Part IV. SEEKING AND FINDING (^{218P}Song of Solomon 5:2—6:9) may be divided into three sections.

1. "The bride's second dream" (^{218P}Song of Solomon 5:2-8);
2. "The bride's commendation of the beloved" (^{218P}Song of Solomon 5:9—6:3);
3. "The beloved's commendation of the bride" (^{218P}Song of Solomon 6:4-9).

The scene of this part is still Jerusalem. The bride after relating to the chorus a second dream concerning her beloved, pours forth a stream of richest fancies in his praise, who, as she complains, has departed from her. The Chorus offering to aid her in her search of him, suddenly the beloved reappears and gives in his turn the noblest commendations to the bride.

Part V. HOMEWARD THOUGHTS (^{216C}Song of Solomon 6:10—8:4), subdivisible into four sections.

1. "The Shulamite" (^{216C}Song of Solomon 6:10-13);
2. "The dance of Mahanaim" (^{217I}Song of Solomon 7:1-5);
3. "The king and the bride" (^{217C}Song of Solomon 7:6-10);
4. "The bride's invitation" (^{217I}Song of Solomon 7:11—8:4).

The scene is still Jerusalem, or a palace-garden in the neighborhood; but the bride's thoughts are now reverting to her northern home. She relates how in early spring she had first met the king in a walnut-garden in her own country. The chorus ask her to perform a sacred dance seemingly well known to the bride and her country-folk. The bride complies, and while she is dancing and the chorus are singing some stanzas in her praise, the king

himself appears. The bride invites him to return with her into the country and to her mother's house.

Part VI. THE RETURN HOME (²¹⁸⁵Song of Solomon 8:5-14), containing three very brief sections.

1. "Last vows sealed" (²¹⁸⁵Song of Solomon 8:5-7);
2. "The bride's intercession" (²¹⁸⁸Song of Solomon 8:8-12);
3. "The Epilogue" (²¹⁸³Song of Solomon 8:13,14)

The scene changes to the bride's birthplace, to which she has now returned with the king. The bride commends her brothers to the good graces of the king, and ends, at his request, by charming his ear with one last song, recalling to his memory a strain of other days (see ²¹⁸⁴Song of Solomon 8:14 note).

The history, which forms its groundwork is, however, throughout the poem, contemplated from an ideal point of view; and the fundamental idea expressed and illustrated is the awful all-constraining, the at once leveling and elevating power of the mightiest and most universal of human affections. The refrains and phrases, to which allusion has been already made, give expression at regular intervals to this idea. (For example, ²¹⁸⁷Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4,7; 7:6; 8:6.)

The ideal character of the whole poem is further evidenced by the way in which the chief points whereon the action turns are indicated; (For example, The question of the chorus (²¹⁸⁶Song of Solomon 3:6; 6:10; 8:5).) and it will be found that the two halves, or main divisions of the Song have numerous well-balanced contrasts and correspondences throughout.

(In the one, the bride ascends to Jerusalem and at the king's invitation remains with him there, in the other at her request he returns with her to Shunem; in the one, the beloved seeks and wins the bride, in the other she seeks and obtains her will from him; in the one he claims her self-surrender, in the other she demands his vow of fidelity. In the first half of the Song the chorus sing the praise of the king, in the second they celebrate the beauty of the bride and her triumph over him. Finally, in each of these main divisions the bride relates to her companions a significant dream in order more fully to express her feelings toward the beloved

(²¹⁸¹Song of Solomon 3:1-5; 5:2-8), and in each she sings at his request a strain of peculiar import which seems to have a special music for his ear (²¹¹⁷Song of Solomon 2:17; 8:14.)

These and other peculiarities, which impart to the Song of Songs its unique and enigmatical character, seem chiefly due to its idealizing treatment of an actual history felt at the time, and especially by the writer, to be profoundly interesting and significant.

Further, that the history thus idealized and the form in which it is presented have meanings beyond themselves and point to something higher, has ever been a deep-seated conviction in the mind both of the church and of the synagogue.

The two axes, so to speak, on which the main action of the poem appears alternately to revolve, may be found in the king's invitation to the bride on bringing her to Jerusalem (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 4:8), and in the bride's to the king in recalling him to Shunem (²¹¹¹Song of Solomon 7:11-13; 8:2); in these two invitations and their immediate consequences — the willing obedience of the bride and the ready condescension of the king, the first surrender on her part and the final vow on his — the writer of the Song seems to have intended to exhibit the two-fold energy, both for elevation and abasement, of that affection, to the delineation of which his work is dedicated. The omnipotent, transforming, and yet conserving power of faithful love is here seen in like yet diverse operation in the two personalities through whom it is exhibited. In the case of the bride we see the lowly rejoicing in unforeseen elevation without loss of virginal simplicity, in that of the beloved the highest is made happy through self-abasement without compromise of kingly honor.

It is then no mere fancy, which for so many ages past has been accustomed to find in the pictures and melodies of the Song of Songs types and echoes of the actings and emotions of the highest love — of Love Divine — in its relations to humanity. Christians may trace in the noble and gentle history thus presented foreshadowings of the infinite condescensions of Incarnate Love; — that Love which, first stooping in human form to visit us in our low estate in order to seek out and win its object (⁴¹²³Psalms 136:23), and then raising along with itself a sanctified humanity to the heavenly places (⁴¹¹⁶Ephesians 2:6), is finally awaiting there an invitation from the mystic Bride to return to earth once more and seal the union for eternity (⁴²¹⁷Revelation 22:17).

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 1

Song of Solomon 1:1. The “Song of songs,” i.e., the best or most excellent of songs.

Which is Solomon’s literally, “to” or “for Solomon,” i.e., belonging to Solomon as its author or concerning him as its subject. In a title or inscription, the former interpretation is to be preferred.

FIRST PART. **Song of Solomon 1:2—2:7**

Song of Solomon 1:2-4. THE PROLOGUE. — The Song commences with two stanzas in praise of the king (now absent) by a chorus of virgins belonging to the royal household. Expositors, Jewish and Christian, interpret the whole as spoken by the Church of the heavenly Bridegroom.

Song of Solomon 1:2. *Let him kiss me* Christian expositors have regarded this as a prayer of the Church under the old covenant for closer communion with the Godhead through the Incarnation. Thus, Gregory: “Every precept of Christ received by the Church is as one of His kisses.” *Thy love* Better as margin, i.e., thy endearments or tokens of affection are more desired than any other delights.

Song of Solomon 1:3. *Because ...* Better, For fragrance are thine ointments good, making with the clause that follows two steps of a climax: “thy perfumes are good, thy name the best of all perfumes.” “Ointments” here are unguents or fragrant oils largely used for anointing at entertainments (compare ^{<4275>}Psalm 23:5; ^{<4745>}Luke 7:46; ^{<4123>}John 12:3).

Thy name ... poured forth As unguents are the sweeter for diffusion, so the king’s name the wider it is known.

Song of Solomon 1:4. *The king hath brought me* Made me a member of his household. This is true of every member of the chorus as well as of the bride.

The upright love thee Better as in the margin: uprightly do they (i.e., “the virgins” of ^{<2008>}Song of Solomon 1:3) love thee. Compare the use of the same word in ^{<1981>}Psalms 58:1; ^{<1931>}Proverbs 23:31.

^{<2005>}**Song of Solomon 1:5-8.** This section is made by the Targumist and other Jewish interpreters to adumbrate the condition of Israel in the wilderness; by some Christian expositors, that of the Gentile Church on her first conversion.

^{<2005>}**Song of Solomon 1:5.** *I am black ...* Dark-hued, as the tents of Kedar with their black goats’ hair coverings, rough and weather-stained, “but comely (beautiful) as the rich hangings which adorn the pavilion of Solomon. Kedar was the name of an Arab tribe (^{<1921>}Genesis 25:13; ^{<1905>}Psalms 120:5). The word itself signifies “dark” or “black.” Possibly “tents of Kedar” stand here poetically for shepherds’ tents in general (^{<2017>}Isaiah 60:7).

^{<2005>}**Song of Solomon 1:6.** *Look not upon me* In wonder or scorn at my swarthy hue. It was acquired in enforced but honest toil: the sun hath scanned me (or “glared upon me”) with his burning eye. The second word rendered “looked” is a word twice found in Job (^{<1810>}Job 20:9; 28:7), and indicates in the latter place the piercing glance of a bird of prey.

My mother’s children, Or, sons; a more affectionate designation than “brothers,” and implying the most intimate relationship.

Angry This anger was perhaps but a form of jealous care for their sister’s safety (compare ^{<2082>}Song of Solomon 8:12). By engaging her in rustic labors they preserved her from idleness and temptation, albeit with a temporary loss of outward comeliness.

Mine own vineyard A figurative expression for herself or her beauty.

^{<2007>}**Song of Solomon 1:7.** *whom my soul loveth* A phrase recurring several times. It expresses great intensity of affection.

Feedest i.e., “Pursuest thy occupation as a shepherd;” so she speaks figuratively of the Son of David. Compare ^{<2016>}Song of Solomon 2:16; 6:3; ^{<1921>}Psalms 23:1.

Rest Or, lie down; a term properly used of the couching of four-footed animals: “thy flock” is here therefore easily understood. Compare ^{<544>}Ezekiel 34:14,15; ^{<422>}Psalms 23:2; ^{<416>}Jeremiah 50:6.

As one that turneth aside Or, goeth astray like an outcast.

^{<208>}**Song of Solomon 1:8.** The chorus, and not the king, are the speakers here. Their meaning seems to be: If thy beloved be indeed a shepherd, then seek him yonder among other shepherds, but if a king, thou wilt find him here in his royal dwelling.

^{<209>}**Song of Solomon 1:9-14.** This and the next (^{<215>}Song of Solomon 1:15—2:7) sections are regarded by ancient commentators (Jewish and Christian) as expressing “the love of espousals” (^{<416>}Jeremiah 2:2) between the Holy One and His Church, first in the wilderness of the Exodus, and then in the wilderness of the world (^{<215>}Ezekiel 20:35,36).

^{<209>}**Song of Solomon 1:9.** Or, to a mare of mine in the chariots of Pharaoh I liken thee, O my friend. (The last word is the feminine form of that rendered “friend” at ^{<216>}Song of Solomon 5:16.) The comparison of the bride to a beautiful horse is singularly like one in Theocritus, and some have conjectured that the Greek poet, having read at Alexandria the Septuagint Version of the Song, may have borrowed these thoughts from it. If so, we have here the first instance of an influence of sacred on profane literature. The simile is especially appropriate on the lips, or from the pen, of Solomon, who first brought horses and chariots from Egypt (^{<108>}1 Kings 10:28,29). As applied to the bride it expresses the stately and imposing character of her beauty.

^{<210>}**Song of Solomon 1:10,11.** *Rows ... borders* The same Hebrew word in both places; ornaments forming part of the bride’s head-dress, probably strings of beads or other ornaments descending on the cheeks. The introduction of “jewels” and “gold” in ^{<210>}Song of Solomon 1:10 injures the sense and destroys the climax of ^{<211>}Song of Solomon 1:11, which was spoken by a chorus (hence “we,” not “I,” as when the king speaks, ^{<210>}Song of Solomon 1:9). They promise the bride ornaments more worthy and becoming than the rustic attire in which she has already such charms for the king: “Ornaments of gold will we make for thee with studs (or `points’) of silver.” The “studs” are little silver ornaments which it is

proposed to affix to the golden (compare ^{<2012>}Proverbs 25:12), or substitute for the strung beads of the bride's necklace.

^{<2012>}**Song of Solomon 1:12-14.** The bride's reply (^{<2012>}Song of Solomon 1:12) may mean, "While the king reclines at the banquet I anoint him with my costliest perfume, but he has for me a yet sweeter fragrance" (^{<2013>}Song of Solomon 1:13,14). According to Origen's interpretation, the bride represents herself as anointing the king, like Mary (^{<4013>}John 12:3), with her most precious unguents.

Spikenard An unguent of great esteem in the ancient world, retaining its Indian name in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. It is obtained from an Indian plant now called "jatamansi."

^{<2013>}**Song of Solomon 1:13.** Render: A bag of myrrh is my beloved to me, which lodgeth in my bosom.

^{<2014>}**Song of Solomon 1:14.** *Camphire* Rather, *Copher* from which "cyprus" is probably derived (in the margin misspelled "cypress"), the name by which the plant called by the Arabs "henna" was known to the Greeks and Romans. It is still much esteemed throughout the East for the fragrance of its flowers and the dye extracted from its leaves. Engedi was famous for its vines, and the henna may have been cultivated with the vines in the same enclosures.

^{<2015>}**Song of Solomon 1:15-2:7.** A dialogue ensues between the king and the bride, in which each in succession develops the thought or returns the commendations of the other. Almost every term of praise and endearment here employed may be exactly paralleled by those elsewhere made use of in Scripture to describe the relations of Israel or the Church to the heavenly Bridegroom.

^{<2015>}**Song of Solomon 1:15.** Outward beauty is of course the first here thought of; but this outward fairness is the symbol and accompaniment of an inward beauty indicated in the words "thine eyes are doves," i.e., innocent, meek, and loving. The bride is herself called "a dove" (^{<2014>}Song of Solomon 2:14; 6:9), as is the Church of Israel (^{<3749>}Psalms 74:19; compare ^{<4983>}Psalms 68:13).

^{<2016>}**Song of Solomon 1:16.** The bride's reply. Compare ^{<2301>}Isaiah 5:1; 33:17, both, perhaps, conscious references to this Song, Isaiah being the

only prophet who thus speaks of the Holy One of Israel by the term constantly employed by the bride throughout the Song to designate him “whom her soul loveth.”

Yea, pleasant More than corporeally beautiful, full of moral grace and charm (compare ^{<30123>}2 Samuel 1:23; ^{<392704>}Psalm 27:4; 90:17). “Christ is beautiful,” says Bede, “in His Divinity, pleasant in His Humanity.”

Our bed is green The epithet is appropriate for a bank or natural bed of grass and flowers.

^{<20117>}**Song of Solomon 1:17.** The king replies, “The tall umbrageous forest-trees shut us in, as we sit together on this grassy bed, like the roof and walls of a many-chambered house, while cypress avenues on every side seem like the long drawn corridors of a stately palace.”

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 2

2:1. The division of the chapters is unfortunate; Song of Solomon 2 ought to have begun at **1:15**, or Song of Solomon 1 to have been continued to **2:7**. The bride replies, “And I am like a lovely wild flower springing at the root of the stately forest-trees.” The majority of Christian fathers assigned this verse to the King (Christ). Hebrew commentators generally assign it to the bride. It is quite uncertain what flower is meant by the word rendered (here and **Isaiah 35:1**) “rose.” The etymology is in favor of its being a bulbous plant (the white narcissus, Conder). “Sharon” is usually the proper name of the celebrated plain from Joppa to Caesarea, between the hill-country and the sea, and travelers have remarked the abundance of flowers with which this plain is still carpeted in spring. But in the time of Eusebius and Jerome there was a smaller plain of Sharon (Saron) situated between Mount Tabor and the sea of Tiberias, which would be very near the bride’s native home if that were Shunem.

2:2. The king resumes, taking up the bride’s comparison: “As the lily excels in beauty the thorny shrubs among which it grows, so my friend excels her companions.”

2:3-7. The bride’s answer: “As the ‘tappuach’ with its fragrant fruit excels the barren trees of the wild wood, so my beloved his associates and friends etc.” *tappuach* may in early Hebrew have been a generic name for apple, quince, citron, orange etc.

2:4. *His banner* As the standard is the rallying-point and guide of the individual soldier, so the bride, transplanted from a lowly station to new scenes of unaccustomed splendor, finds support and safety in the known attachment of her beloved. His “love” is her “banner.” The thought is similar to that expressed in the name “Jehovah-nissi” (see the **Exodus 17:15** note).

2:5. *Flagons* More probably cakes of raisins or dried grapes (**2 Samuel 6:19** note; **1 Chronicles 16:3**; **Hosea 3:1**). For an instance of the reviving power of dried fruit, see **1 Samuel 30:12**.

~~2116~~ **Song of Solomon 2:6.** Render as a wish or prayer: “O that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand did embrace me!” Let him draw me to him with entire affection. Compare ~~1537~~ Deuteronomy 33:27; ~~1048~~ Proverbs 4:8.

~~2117~~ **Song of Solomon 2:7.** Render: “I adjure you ... by the gazelles, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love until it please.” The King James Version, “my love,” is misleading. The affection or passion in itself, not its object, is here meant. This adjuration, three times significantly introduced as a concluding formula (marginal references), expresses one of the main thoughts of the poem; namely, that genuine love is a shy and gentle affection which dreads intrusion and scrutiny; hence the allusion to the gazelles and hinds, shy and timid creatures.

The complementary thought is that of ~~2118~~ Song of Solomon 8:6,7, where love is again described, and by the bride, as a fiery principle.

SECOND PART. ~~2118~~ *Song of Solomon 2:8—3:5.*

~~2118~~ **Song of Solomon 2:8-17.** The bride relates to the chorus a visit which the beloved had paid her some time previously in her native home. He on a fair spring morning solicits her company. The bride, immersed in rustic toils, refuses for the present, but confessing her love, bids him return at the cool of day. It is a spring-time of affection which is here described, still earlier than that of the former chapter, a day of pure first-love, in which, on either side, all royal state and circumstance is forgotten or concealed. Hence, perhaps, the annual recitation of the Song of Songs by the synagogue with each return of spring, at the Feast of Passover, and special interpretations of this passage by Hebrew doctors, as referring to the paschal call of Israel out of Egypt, and by Christian fathers, as foreshadowing the evangelic mysteries of Easter — Resurrection and Regeneration. The whole scene has also been thought to represent the communion of a newly-awakened soul with Christ, lie gradually revealing Himself to her, and bidding her come forth into fuller communion.

~~2118~~ **Song of Solomon 2:8.** *Voice* Better, “sound.” Not a voice, but the sound of approaching footsteps is meant (compare “noise,” ~~2119~~ Isaiah 13:4).

~~2119~~ **Song of Solomon 2:9.** *Like a roe* Gazelle (compare ~~2119~~ Proverbs 5:19 note). The points of comparison here are beauty of form, grace, and

speed of movement. In ^{<1128>}2 Samuel 2:18; ^{<1128>}1 Chronicles 12:8, princes are compared to “gazelles.”

Wall The clay-built wall of the house or vineyard of the bride’s family, different from the strong wall of a city or fortress (^{<2187>}Song of Solomon 5:7; 8:9,10).

Looketh forth at the windows The meaning evidently is, that he is looking in at, or through, the window from the outside. Compare ^{<2184>}Song of Solomon 5:4 note.

Shewing himself Or, peering. Some, taking the marginal rendering, imagine that the radiant face of the beloved is thus compared to some beautiful flower entangled in the lattice-work which protects the opening of the window, from where he gazes down upon the bride.

^{<2110>}**Song of Solomon 2:10-13.** *Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come away* The stanza begins and ends with this refrain, in which the bride reports the invitation of the beloved that she should come forth with him into the open champaign, now a scene of verdure and beauty, and at a time of mirth and mutual affection. The season indicated by six signs (^{<2111>}Song of Solomon 2:11-13) is that of spring after the cessation of the latter rain in the first or paschal month (^{<2123>}Joel 2:23), i.e., Nisan or Abib, corresponding to the latter part of March and early part of April. Cyril interpreted ^{<2111>}Song of Solomon 2:11,12 of our Lord’s Resurrection in the spring.

^{<2112>}**Song of Solomon 2:12.** *The time of the singing ...* i.e., The song of pairing birds. This is better than the rendering of the ancient versions, “the pruning time is come.”

^{<2113>}**Song of Solomon 2:13.** *The vines ...* The vines in blossom give forth fragrance. The fragrance of the vine blossom (“semadar”), which precedes the appearance of “the tender grape,” is very sweet but transient.

^{<2114>}**Song of Solomon 2:14.** *The secret places of the stairs* A hidden nook approached by a zig-zag path. The beloved urges the bride to come forth from her rock-girt home.

^{<2115>}**Song of Solomon 2:15.** The bride answers by singing what appears to be a fragment of a vine-dresser’s ballad, insinuating the vineyard duties imposed on her by her brethren (^{<2116>}Song of Solomon 1:6), which prevent

her from joining him. The destructive propensities of foxes or jackals in general are referred to, no grapes existing at the season indicated.

Allegorical interpretations make these foxes symbolize “false teachers” (compare ²¹³⁰Ezekiel 13:4).

²¹²⁶**Song of Solomon 2:16.** *Feedeth among the lilies* Pursues his occupation as a shepherd among congenial scenes and objects of gentleness and beauty.

²¹²⁷**Song of Solomon 2:17.** *Until the day break* Or, rather, until the day breathe, i.e., until the fresh evening breeze spring up in what is called (⁰⁰⁸⁸Genesis 3:8) “the cool” or breathing time of the day.

And the shadows flee i.e., Lengthen out, and finally lose their outlines with the sinking and departure of the sun (compare ²¹⁰⁴Jeremiah 6:4). As the visit of the beloved is most naturally conceived of as taking place in the early morning, and the bride is evidently dismissing him until a later time of day, it seems almost certain that this interpretation is the correct one which makes that time to be evening after sunset. The phrase recurs in ²¹⁰⁶Song of Solomon 4:6.

Mountains of Bether If a definite locality, identical with Bithron, a hilly district on the east side of the Jordan valley (⁴⁰²³2 Samuel 2:29), not far from Mahanaim (²¹⁶³Song of Solomon 6:13 margin). If used in a symbolic sense, mountains of “separation,” dividing for a time the beloved from the bride. This interpretation seems to be the better, though the local reference need not be abandoned.

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 3

The bride relates to the chorus what appears to be an imaginary occurrence transacted in a dream (like that of ^{<AR6>}Song of Solomon 5:2-8). The Targum takes this section to be typical of the wanderings of Israel after the Holy One in the wilderness, as the next (^{<AR6>}Song of Solomon 3:6-11) is made to represent their entrance into the land.

^{<AR6>}**Song of Solomon 3:1.** *By night* i.e., In the night-hours.

^{<AR6>}**Song of Solomon 3:3.** *The city* One near the bride's native home, possibly Shunem.

^{<AR6>}**Song of Solomon 3:4.** *I held him* This begins the fourth stanza. The bride's mother is mentioned again in ^{<AR6>}Song of Solomon 6:9; 8:2.

^{<AR6>}**Song of Solomon 3:5.** See ^{<AR6>}Song of Solomon 2:7 note.

THIRD PART. ^{<AR6>}*Song of Solomon 3:6—5:1.*

The principal and central action of the Song; the bride's entry into the city of David, and her marriage there with the king. Jewish interpreters regard this part of the poem as symbolizing the "first" entrance of the Church of the Old Testament into the land of promise, and her spiritual espousals, and communion with the King of kings, through the erection of Solomon's Temple and the institution of its acceptable worship. Christian fathers, in a like spirit, make most things here refer to the espousals of the Church with Christ in the Passion and Resurrection, or the communion of Christian souls with Him in meditation thereon.

^{<AR6>}**Song of Solomon 3:6-11.** Two or more citizens of Jerusalem, or the chorus of youths, companions of the bridegroom, describe the magnificent appearance of the bride borne in a royal litter, and then that of the king in festive joy wearing a nuptial crown.

^{<AR6>}**Song of Solomon 3:6.** "wilderness" is here pasture-land in contrast with the cultivated districts and garden-enclosures round the city. Compare ^{<AR6>}Jeremiah 23:10; ^{<AR6>}Joel 2:22; ^{<AR6>}Isaiah 42:11; ^{<AR6>}Psalms 65:12.

Pillars of smoke Here an image of delight and pleasure. Frankincense and other perfumes are burned in such abundance round the bridal equipage

that the whole procession appears from the distance to be one of moving wreaths and columns of smoke.

All powders of the merchant Every kind of spice forming an article of commerce.

^{<218>}**Song of Solomon 3:7.** *Bed* Probably the royal litter or palanquin in which the bride is borne, surrounded by his own body-guard consisting of sixty mighties of the mighty men of Israel.

^{<218>}**Song of Solomon 3:8.** *Because of fear in the night* i.e., Against night alarms. Compare ^{<3915>}Psalm 91:5.

^{<218>}**Song of Solomon 3:9,10.** A stately bed hath king Solomon made for himself of woods (or trees) of the Lebanon. The word rendered “bed” occurs nowhere else in Scripture, and is of doubtful etymology and meaning. It may denote here

(1) the bride’s car or litter; or

(2) a more magnificent vehicle provided for her reception on her entrance into the city, and in which perhaps the king goes forth to meet her.

It has been made under Solomon’s own directions of the costliest woods (ceda and pine) of the Lebanon; it is furnished with “pillars of silver” supporting a “baldachin” or “canopy of gold” (not “bottom” as in the King James Version), and with “a seat (not ‘covering’) of purple cushions,” while “its interior is paved with (mosaic work, or tapestry of) love from (not ‘for’) the daughters of Jerusalem;” the meaning being that this part of the adornment is a gift of love, whereby the female chorus have testified their goodwill to the bride, and their desire to gratify the king.

^{<218>}**Song of Solomon 3:11.** *Daughters of Zion* So called here to distinguish them from the bride’s companions, who are always addressed by her as “daughters of Jerusalem.”

His mother Bathsheba (^{<1011>}1 Kings 1:11). This is the last mention of her in sacred history.

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 4

The king in a lyric song of five stanzas commends the beauty of the bride:

204B Song of Solomon 4:1. *Thou hast doves' eyes ...* Thine eyes are doves behind thy veil. So also in **204B Song of Solomon 4:3; 6:7;** **247D Isaiah 47:2,** “veil” is better than “locks.”

That appear from ... Or, “that couch upon Mount Gilead.” The point of comparison seems to be the multitudinousness of the flocks seen browsing on the verdant slopes of the rich pasture-lands (**461B Numbers 32:1;** **3774 Micah 7:14**).

204B Song of Solomon 4:2. *Whereof ...* Or, “all of them are equal pairs, and none is bereft among them,” i.e., none has lost her mate. The points of comparison in this simile are of course brilliant whiteness, regularity, and completeness of number.

204B Song of Solomon 4:3. *Thy speech is comely* Perhaps, “thy mouth,” i.e., the organ of speech.

204B Song of Solomon 4:4. The “tower of David” may be that mentioned in **462B Nehemiah 3:25-27;** **304B Micah 4:8.** For the custom of hanging shields and other weapons in and upon buildings suited for the purpose, see **327D Ezekiel 27:10,11.**

204B Song of Solomon 4:7-5:1. The king meeting the bride in the evening of the same day, expresses once more his love and admiration in the sweetest and tenderest terms and figures. He calls her now “bride” (spouse, **204B Song of Solomon 4:8**) for the first time, to mark it as the hour of their espousals, and “sister-bride” (spouse, **204B Song of Solomon 4:9,10,12; 5:1**), to express the likeness of thought and disposition which henceforth unites them. At the same time he invites her to leave for his sake her birthplace and its mountain neighborhood, and live henceforth for him alone.

204B Song of Solomon 4:8. The order and collocation of words in the Hebrew is grand and significant. With me from Lebanon, O bride, with me from Lebanon thou shalt come, shalt look around (or wander forth) from the height (literally “head”) of Amana, from the height of Shenir and

Hermon, from dens of lions, from mountain-haunts of leopards. It is evidently a solemn invitation from the king in the sense of ^{<19510>}Psalm 45:10,11. Four peaks in the same mountain-system are here named as a poetical periphrasis for northern Palestine, the region in which is situated the native home of the bride.

(1) Amana (or Abana, ^{<11512>}2 Kings 5:12), that part of the Anti-libanus which overlooks Damascus.

(2) Shenir or Senir, another peak of the same range (according to ^{<18119>}Deuteronomy 3:9, the Amorite name for Hermon, but spoken of here and in ^{<11823>}1 Chronicles 5:23 as distinct from it).

(3) Hermon, the celebrated mountain which forms the culminating point of the Anti-libanus, on the northeastern border of the holy land.

(4) Lebanon, properly the western range overlooking the Mediterranean, but here used as a common designation for the whole mountain system.

Leopards are still not unfrequently seen there, but the lion has long since disappeared.

^{<21119>}**Song of Solomon 4:9-11.** The similes employed refer to the graces of adornment, speech, and gesture, as expressions of inward character and sentiment.

^{<21119>}**Song of Solomon 4:9.** *With one of thine eyes* Rather, with one look of thine.

^{<21111>}**Song of Solomon 4:11.** *Honeycomb* literally, Thy lips distill a dropping (of pure honey). Compare the marginal references.

^{<21112>}**Song of Solomon 4:12-15.** The loveliness and purity of the bride are now set forth under the image of a paradise or garden fast barred against intruders, filled with rarest plants of excellent fragrance, and watered by abundant streams. Compare ^{<21155>}Proverbs 5:15-20.

^{<21112>}**Song of Solomon 4:12.** *A fountain sealed* i.e., A well-spring covered with a stone (^{<11213>}Genesis 29:3), and sealed with “the king’s own signet” (^{<21117>}Daniel 6:17; compare ^{<11276>}Matthew 27:66).

^{<21113>}**Song of Solomon 4:13.** *Orchard* This is the rendering here and in ^{<11115>}Ecclesiastes 2:5 of “pardes” (see ^{<11118>}Nehemiah 2:8 note). The

pomegranate was for the Jews a sacred fruit, and a characteristic product of the land of promise (compare ^{<1283>}Exodus 28:33,34; ^{<9415>}Numbers 20:5; ^{<888>}Deuteronomy 8:8; ^{<1078>}1 Kings 7:18,20). It is frequently mentioned in the Song, and always in connection with the bride. It abounds to this day in the ravines of the Lebanon.

Camphire Cyprus. See ^{<2114>}Song of Solomon 1:14 note.

^{<2043>}**Song of Solomon 4:13-15.** Seven kinds of spices (some of them with Indian names, e.g. aloes, spikenard, saffron) are enumerated as found in this symbolic garden. They are for the most part pure exotics which have formed for countless ages articles of commerce in the East, and were brought at that time in Solomon's ships from southern Arabia, the great Indian Peninsula, and perhaps the islands of the Indian Archipelago. The picture here is best regarded as a purely ideal one, having no corresponding reality but in the bride herself. The beauties and attractions of both north and south — of Lebanon with its streams of sparkling water and fresh mountain air, of Engedi with its tropical climate and henna plantations, of the spice-groves of Arabia Felix, and of the rarest products of the distant mysterious Ophir — all combine to furnish one glorious representation, "Thou art all fair!"

^{<2046>}**Song of Solomon 4:16.** The bride's brief reply, declaring her affection for the king and willingness to belong to him.

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 5

21RE **Song of Solomon 5:1.** *My honeycomb* literally, “my reed” or “my wood,” i.e., the substance itself, or portions of it in which the comb is formed. The bees in Palestine form their combs not only in the hollows of trees and rocks, but also in reeds by the river-banks. The king’s meaning appears to be: “All pleases me in thee, there is nothing to despise or cast away.”

Eat, O friends A salutation from the king to his assembled guests, or to the chorus of young men his companions, bidding them in the gladness of his heart (**21RE** Song of Solomon 3:11) partake of the banquet. So ends this day of outward festivity and supreme heart-joy. The first half of the Song of Songs is fitly closed. The second half of the poem commences (**21RE** Song of Solomon 5:2) with a change of tone and reaction of feeling similar to that of **21RE** Song of Solomon 3:1. It terminates with the sealing (**21RE** Song of Solomon 8:6,7) of yet deeper love.

FOURTH PART. **21RE** *Song of Solomon 5:2—6:9.*

Some time may be supposed to have elapsed since the bride’s solemn espousals with the king (**21RE** Song of Solomon 4:7—5:1). A transient cloud of doubt or estrangement is now passing over her soul, as by the relation of this dream she intimates to her friends. Ancient allegorical interpreters find here a symbol of the condition and feelings of Israel during the Babylonian captivity, when the glories and privileges of Solomon’s Temple were no more, and the manifested presence of the Holy One had been withdrawn. Israel in exile seeks the Lord (**21RE** Song of Solomon 5:8), and will find Him again in the second temple (**21RE** Song of Solomon 6:3-9).

21RE **Song of Solomon 5:2.** *I sleep, but my heart waketh* A poetical periphrasis for “I dream.” Compare the ancient saying: “Dreams are the vigils of those who slumber, hopes are waking dreams.”

The voice Or, “sound.” Compare **21RE** Song of Solomon 2:8, note. She hears him knocking before he speaks.

My undefiled literally, “my perfect one.” Vulgate “immaculata mea.” Compare **21RE** Song of Solomon 4:7.

Song of Solomon 5:3. She makes trivial excuses, as one in a dream.

Song of Solomon 5:4. *Put in his hand* Through (literally “from”) the hole (of the lock), in order to raise the pins by which the bolt was fastened. The Oriental lock is a hollow piece of wood attached to the doorpost, into which a sliding-bolt is made to run. As soon as the bolt has been driven home a number of pins drop into holes prepared in it for their reception. To raise these pins, and so enable the bolt to be withdrawn, is to unfasten the lock. This is commonly done by means of the key (literally “opener”), but may often be accomplished by the fingers if dipped in paste or some other adhesive substance. For such a purpose the beloved inserts his fingers here anointed with the costly unguent, which will presently distil on those of the bride when she rises to open to him.

Song of Solomon 5:5. *Sweet smelling myrrh* Or (as in the margin) “running myrrh,” that which first and spontaneously exudes, i.e., the freshest, finest myrrh. Even in withdrawing he has left this token of his unchanged love.

Song of Solomon 5:8. The bride, now awake, is seeking her beloved. The dream of his departure and her feelings under it have symbolized a real emotion of her waking heart.

Song of Solomon 5:9-6:3. The bride’s commendation of the beloved. In the allegorical interpretations of Jewish expositors all is here spoken by exiled Israel of the Holy One whose praise she sings “by the waters of Babylon” (Psalm 137:1). Christian interpreters apply the description directly to the Incarnate Son, partly in His Eternal Godhead, but chiefly in His risen and glorified Humanity.

Song of Solomon 5:10. *My beloved is white and ruddy* Compare 1 Samuel 16:12; Daniel 7:9. The complexion most admired in youth. Jewish interpreters remark that he who is elsewhere called “the Ancient of Days” is here described as the Ever-Young. “White in His virgin-purity,” says Jerome, “and ruddy in His Passion.”

The chiefest among ten thousand literally, “a bannered one among a myriad;” hence one signalized, a leader of ten thousand warriors.

Song of Solomon 5:11. *His head is as the most fine gold* Perhaps in the sense of noble and precious as the finest gold. Lamentations 4:2.

Bushy Waving like branches of the palm.

²¹⁵²**Song of Solomon 5:12.** Or, His eyes are doves. The comparison is to doves seen by streams of water washing in milk (i.e., milk-white), and sitting on fulness (i.e., on the full or abundant water-flood).

Fitly set This rendering supposes that the eyes within their sockets are compared to precious stones set in the foil of a ring (see the margin); but the other rendering is preferable. The milk-white doves themselves, sitting by full streams of water, or reflected in their flittings athwart the glassy surface, present images of the calm repose and vivid glances of the full pure lustrous eyes of the beloved.

²¹⁵³**Song of Solomon 5:13.** *Sweet flowers* Better as in the margin, i.e., plants with fragrant leaves and flowers trained on trellis-work.

Like lilies Are lilies dropping liquid myrrh (see the ²¹⁵⁵Song of Solomon 5:5 note). Perhaps the fragrance of the flowers, or the delicate curl of the lip-like petals, is here the point of comparison, rather than the color.

²¹⁵⁴**Song of Solomon 5:14.** *His hands ...* Are golden rings or cylinders. The fingers of the bent or closed hand are compared to a massive ring or set of rings; or, if outstretched or straightened, to a row of golden rods or cylinders.

The beryl The “tarshish” (compare ²¹⁵³Exodus 28:20), probably the chrysolite of the ancients (so called from its gold color), the modern topaz.

His belly ... His body (the Hebrew term applies to the whole body, from the shoulders to the thighs) is a piece of ivory workmanship overlaid with sapphires. The sapphire of the ancients seems to have been the lapis lazuli.

²¹⁵⁵**Song of Solomon 5:15.** *His countenance* Or, his appearance (his whole port and mien, but especially head and countenance) “is as the Lebanon.”

²¹⁵⁶**Song of Solomon 5:16.** *He is altogether lovely* literally, the whole of him desires or delights; the plural substantive expressing the notion of the superlative. Theodoret, applying to our Lord the whole description, interprets well its last term: “Why should I endeavor to express His beauty piecemeal when He is in Himself and altogether the One longed-for,

drawing all to love, compelling all to love, and inspiring with a longing (for His company) not only those who see, but also those who hear?”

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 6

Song of Solomon 6:1,2. The question put by the chorus, and the answer it receives from the bride, show that the loss and seeking are not to be taken too seriously.

Song of Solomon 6:4-9. The section might be entitled, “Renewed declaration of love after brief estrangement.”

Song of Solomon 6:4. *Tirzah ... Jerusalem* Named together as the then two fairest cities of the land. For Jerusalem compare ¹⁹⁸²Psalm 48:2. “Tirzah” (i.e., “Grace” or “Beauty”) was an old Canaanite royal city (¹⁹²²Joshua 12:24). It became again a royal residence during the reigns of Baasha and his three successors in the kingdom of the ten tribes, and may well therefore have been famed for its beauty in the time of Solomon.

Terrible as ... Awe-inspiring as the bannered (hosts). The warlike image, like others in the Song, serves to enhance the charm of its assured peace.

Song of Solomon 6:5. Even for the king the gentle eyes of the bride have an awe-striking majesty. Such is the condescension of love. Now follows (²¹⁸⁵Song of Solomon 6:5-7) the longest of the repetitions which abound in the Song, marking the continuance of the king’s affection as when first solemnly proclaimed (²¹⁰¹Song of Solomon 4:1-6). The two descriptions belong, according to some (Christian) expositors, to the Church of different periods, e.g. to the primitive Church in the splendor of her first vocation, and to the Church under Constantine; other (Jewish) expositors apply them to “the congregation of Israel” under the first and second temples respectively.

Song of Solomon 6:9. The king contrasts the bride with the other claimants for her royal estate or favor (²¹⁸⁸Song of Solomon 6:8). She not only outshines them all for him, but herself has received from them disinterested blessing and praise.

This passage is invaluable as a divine witness to the principle of monogamy under the Old Testament and in the luxurious age of Solomon.

FIFTH PART. ²¹⁶⁰*Song of Solomon 6:10—8:4.*

The chorus address the bride here only as the Shulamite, and beg her to perform for their entertainment a sacred dance (see ²¹⁶³Song of Solomon 6:13) of her own country. The bride, after complying with their request, while they sing some stanzas in her praise (²¹⁷⁰Song of Solomon 7:1-5), and after receiving fresh commendations from the king (²¹⁷⁶Song of Solomon 7:6-10), invites him to return with her to her mother's house (²¹⁷⁷Song of Solomon 7:11—8:4). Many Jewish allegorists interpret the whole as referring to the times of the second temple, and to the present dispersion of Israel, during which, God continuing to vouchsafe His mercy, Israel prays for final restoration, the coming of Messiah, and the glory of the latter day. Christian interpreters have made similar applications to the now militant Church looking for the Second Advent, or to the ancient synagogue praying for the Incarnation.

²¹⁶⁰**Song of Solomon 6:10.** *As the morning* The glorious beauty of the bride bursts upon them like a second dawn, as she comes forth to meet them at the commencement of another day. Special poetical words are used for “sun” (burning heat) and “moon” (white one). The same terms are applied to sun and moon in ²²²³Isaiah 24:23; 30:26.

²¹⁶¹**Song of Solomon 6:11-12.** The bride's words may be paraphrased: “You speak of me as a glorious beauty; I was lately but a simple maiden engaged in rustic toils. I went down one day into the walnut-garden” (the walnut abounded on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, and is still common in Northern Palestine) “to inspect the young plants of the vale” (i.e., the wady, or watercourse, with now verdant banks in the early spring after the rainy season), “and to watch the budding and blossoming of vine and pomegranate.” Compare ²¹⁷¹Song of Solomon 2:11-13 notes. “Then, suddenly, ere I was myself aware, my soul” (the love-bound heart) “had made me the chariot of a lordly people” (i.e., an exalted personage, one who resides on the high places of the earth; compare ¹¹⁷²2 Kings 2:12; 13:14, where Elijah and Elisha, as the spiritual leaders of the nation, are “the chariot and horsemen of Israel,” compare also ²²²⁸Isaiah 22:18). This last clause is another instance of the love for military similitudes in the writer of the Song.

Ammi-nadib literally, my people a noble one. The reference is either to Israel at large as a wealthy and dominant nation, under Solomon, or to the

bride's people (the Shulamites) in particular, to the chief place among whom, by her union with the king, she is now exalted.

²¹⁶³**Song of Solomon 6:13.** *Return, return* About to withdraw, the bride is recalled by the chorus, desiring yet a little longer to contemplate a grace and beauty which has won all hearts.

Shulamite Probably the same as “Shunamite,” i.e., a native of the town or district of Shunem, situated in the territory of Issachar (⁶³⁹¹⁸Joshua 19:18), on the slopes of the Little Hermon, overlooking the plain of Jezreel. It is now called Salem.

See Look or gaze at. The bride's modest reply, taking up their words, and wondering at their request. The chorus answer with a further petition.

As it were the company of two armies Or, rather, the dance of Mahanaim (see the margin), a well-known sacred dance, taking its name from the locality in which it originated (⁰¹³¹²Genesis 32:2; ⁶²¹³⁸Joshua 21:38). Some, taking “Mahanaim” to be an ordinary designation for “the Angels” or “Angelic Hosts,” render here “a dance as it were of angel-choirs,” i.e., one of special grace and beauty. The former of these interpretations is to be preferred.

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 7

The Shulamite complies with the request of her attendants, and as she glides before them in the dance, they sing in further commendation of her beauty of form and grace of movement. The description in the original consists, like ^{<200>}Song of Solomon 4:1-5, of five stanzas nearly coinciding with the verses in the text.

^{<200>}**Song of Solomon 7:1.** *Thy feet with shoes* Or, thy steps in the sandals: the bride's feet are seen in motion in the dance. "Joints" might be rendered circling movements.

Prince's daughter Or, daughter of a noble; the bride is of honorable though not of kingly birth.

Like jewels The image suggested is that of large well-formed pearls or other jewels skillfully strung or linked together.

^{<200>}**Song of Solomon 7:2.** Or, Thy lap is like a moon-shaped bowl where mixed wine faileth not." The wine in the bowl rising to the brim adds to the beauty of the vessel, and gives a more pleasing image to the eye. Some interpret, "thy girdle is like a moon-shaped bowl," or "bears a moon-shaped ornament" (compare ^{<288>}Isaiah 3:18).

Set about with lilies The contrast is one of colors, the flowers, it may be, representing the purple of the robe. "The heap of wheat is not seen because covered by the lilies."

^{<200>}**Song of Solomon 7:4.** *A tower of ivory* The tower of ivory, the allusion being to some particular tower, built probably by Solomon (^{<100>}1 Kings 10:21).

Fishpools in Heshbon Or, simply pools. Among the ruins to the south of Heshbon still remain a number of deep wells cut in the rock, and a large reservoir of water. The simile well sets forth the appearance of a large clear liquid eye (compare ^{<282>}Song of Solomon 5:12 note).

Gate of Bath-rabbim Perhaps the gate looking toward Rabbath-Ammon on the north side of the city, though this does not agree with the wells above mentioned; or, the gate of the city "full of people" (^{<200>}Lamentations 1:1);

or, an expression indicating the gate itself as the scene of numerous gatherings.

Nose Better perhaps “face “or “brow.”

The tower of Lebanon Possibly “the house of the forest of Lebanon” or part of it (^{<1007>}1 Kings 7:2; 9:19), built by Solomon in the early part of his reign; or possibly a watchtower erected by David to overawe Damascus after his war with Hadadezer (^{<1016>}2 Samuel 8:6).

^{<2076>}**Song of Solomon 7:5.** Compare and contrast with ^{<2155>}Song of Solomon 5:15. The rendering in the margin takes “Carmel” as the name of a color, equivalent to “carmine” (rendered “crimson” in ^{<4007>}2 Chronicles 2:7,14; 3:14). This interpretation is favored by the parallelism with “purple,” but removes a beautiful image.

Purple A deep violet black.

The king ... Rather, “A king is bound in the tresses or windings of thy hair.” These last words indicate the king’s approach.

^{<2076>}**Song of Solomon 7:6-10.** A brief dialogue; ^{<2076>}Song of Solomon 7:6-9 are spoken by the king, ^{<2079>}Song of Solomon 7:9 and ^{<2070>}Song of Solomon 7:10 by the bride.

^{<2076>}**Song of Solomon 7:6.** A general sentiment.

*How fair, and what a charm hast thou,
O love! Among delightful things!*

Compare ^{<2076>}Song of Solomon 2:7; 8:6,7 notes.

^{<2076>}**Song of Solomon 7:7.** *This thy stature* The king now addresses the bride, comparing her to palm, vine, and apple-tree for nobility of form and pleasantness of fruit; and the utterances of her mouth to sweetest wine.

^{<2079>}**Song of Solomon 7:9.** *For my beloved, that goeth down sweetly* Words of the bride interrupting the king, and finishing his sentence, that goeth smoothly or pleasantly for my beloved. Compare ^{<1231>}Proverbs 23:31.

^{<2070>}**Song of Solomon 7:10.** *His desire is toward me* All his affection has me for its object. The bride proceeds to exercise her power over his loving will.

²¹⁷¹**Song of Solomon 7:11-8:4.** Compare ²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 4:8.

The bride in her turn invites her beloved to revisit in her company the lowly scenes of pastoral life, out of which his grace had raised her. So in the latter day the Church of the Redeemed in heavenly places will pray for the Lord's return to earth.

²¹⁷²**Song of Solomon 7:12.** *The tender grape appear* Or, the vine-blossom unfold. See ²¹¹³Song of Solomon 2:13 note. It is now again the same season as that in which the king had first visited the bride (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 2:8-17). This thought enhances her desire to have him with her there again.

²¹⁷³**Song of Solomon 7:13.** *The mandrakes* Love-apples.

All manner of pleasant fruits Or, things, both fruits and flowers; "the new" to be freshly gathered, "the old" already laid up in store.

NOTES ON SONG OF SOLOMON 8

218B Song of Solomon 8:1. Royal rank and splendor are grown wearisome. The king once called her “sister” and “sister-bride.” Would he were indeed as a “brother,” her mother’s own child whom she might meet, embrace, and welcome everywhere without restraint or shame. Her love for him is simple, sacred, pure, free from the unrest and the stains of mere earthly passion.

218B Song of Solomon 8:2. *Who would instruct me* Or, thou shouldest teach me (^{254B}Isaiah 54:13). Some allegorists make the whole passage (^{217B}Song of Solomon 7:11—8:2) a prayer of the synagogue for the Incarnation of the Word, like ^{210B}Song of Solomon 1:2 (see note). Others, a prayer of the Church under both covenants for that complete union with the Incarnate Godhead which is still future.

218B Song of Solomon 8:3. The bride now turns to and addresses the chorus as before (marginal reference).

218B Song of Solomon 8:4. *That ye stir not up* literally, as in the margin. For “my love” read as before love. The omission of “the roes and hinds” here is noticeable. Hebrew scholars regard this charge here and elsewhere (^{217B}Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5) as an admonition to Israel not to attempt obtaining a possession of, or restoration to, the promised land, and union or reunion there with the Holy One, before being inwardly prepared for it by the trials of the wilderness and the exile. This interpretation comes very near to what appears to be the genuine literal meaning (see ^{217B}Song of Solomon 2:7 note). They suppose the words here to be addressed by Messiah to Israel in “the wilderness of the people” (^{215B}Ezekiel 20:35), in the latter day, and the former words (^{218B}Song of Solomon 3:5) by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai.

SIXTH PART. ^{218B}*Song of Solomon 8:5-14.*

The scene changes from Jerusalem to the birthplace of the bride, where she is seen coming up toward her mother’s house, leaning on the arm of the great king her beloved.

286 Song of Solomon 8:5. *Who is this* Compare and contrast with **286 Song of Solomon 3:6**. In the former scene all was splendor and exaltation, but here condescension, humility, and loving charm.

I raised thee up ... Beneath this apple-tree I wakened thee. The king calls the bride's attention to a fruit-tree, which they pass, the trysting-spot of earliest vows in this her home and birthplace. The Masoretic pointing of the Hebrew text (the most ancient traditional interpretation) assigns these words to the bride, but the majority of Christian fathers to the king. The whole passage gains in clearness and dramatic expression by the latter arrangement.

286 Song of Solomon 8:6,7. The bride says this as she clings to his arm and rests her head upon his bosom. Compare **3123 John 13:23; 21:20**. This brief dialogue corresponds to the longer one (**2807 Song of Solomon 4:7—5:1**), on the day of their espousals. Allegorical interpreters find a fulfillment of this in the close of the present dispensation, the restoration of Israel to the land of promise, and the manifestation of Messiah to His ancient people there, or His Second Advent to the Church. The Targum makes **286 Song of Solomon 8:6** a prayer of Israel restored to the holy land that they may never again be carried into captivity, and **2807 Song of Solomon 8:7** the Lord's answering assurance that Israel henceforth is safe. Compare **2824 Isaiah 65:24; 62:3,4**.

286 Song of Solomon 8:6. The key-note of the poem. It forms the Old Testament counterpart to Paul's panegyric (1 Corinthians 13) under the New.

(a) Love is here regarded as an universal power, an elemental principle of all true being, alone able to cope with the two eternal foes of God and man, Death and his kingdom.

*“For strong as death is love,
Tenacious as Sheol is jealousy.”*

“Jealousy” is here another term for “love,” expressing the inexorable force and ardor of this affection, which can neither yield nor share possession of its object, and is identified in the mind of the sacred writer with divine or true life.

(b) He goes on to describe it as an all-pervading Fire, kindled by the Eternal One, and partaking of His essence:

*“Its brands are brands of fire,
A lightning-flash from Jah.”*

Compare ^{<1024>}Deuteronomy 4:24.

(c) This divine principle is next represented as overcoming in its might all opposing agencies whatsoever, symbolized by water.

(d) From all which it follows that love, even as a human affection, must be revered, and dealt with so as not to be bought by aught of different nature; the attempt to do this awakening only scorn.

^{<2188>}**Song of Solomon 8:8-12.** A brief dialogue commencing with a question and answer probably made by brothers of the bride concerning a younger sister who will soon be old enough to be asked in marriage. The answer is given in the form of a parable: “If she be a wall,” i.e., steadfast in chastity and virtue, one on whom no light advances can be made, then let us honor and reward her. This fortress-wall shall be crowned as it were with a tower or battlement of silver. But “if she be a door,” light-minded and accessible to seduction (^{<1071>}Proverbs 7:11,12), then let us provide against assailants the protection of a cedar bar or panel.

^{<2180>}**Song of Solomon 8:10.** The bride herself replies with the pride of innocence and virtue already crowned. She has shown herself to be such a fortress-wall as her brothers have alluded to, and her reward has been the royal favor.

^{<2181>}**Song of Solomon 8:11,12.** She next turns to the king, and commends her brothers to his favorable regard by means of another parable. Solomon owns a vineyard in Baal-hamon (possibly Baalbak, or identical with Amana (Conder)), situated in the warm and fertile plains of Coele-Syria, overshadowed by the heights of Lebanon (^{<2148>}Song of Solomon 4:8). This vineyard he has let out to tenants etc.

The bride also has a vineyard of her own (^{<2106>}Song of Solomon 1:6), her beauty and virtue faithfully guarded by these same brothers in time past. This vineyard now belongs to Solomon. Let him have “the thousand” which is his due — she is indeed herself henceforth entirely his — but let the faithful keepers have their meed as well. At least two hundred silverlings should be theirs — a double tithe of royal praise and honor.

^{<2183>}**Song of Solomon 8:13,14.** The poem having opened with the song of a chorus in praise of the king (^{<2102>}Song of Solomon 1:2-4), concludes with a versicle recited by the bride, repeating the last words of her former strain (^{<2117>}Song of Solomon 2:17), with one significant change. She no longer thinks of the possibility of separation. The “Mountains of Bether” (division) of ^{<2117>}Song of Solomon 2:17, are now “Mountains of Besamim” (spices). His haunts and hers are henceforth the same (compare ^{<2116>}Song of Solomon 4:6).