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ART. I.—*The Family of Arnauld, as connected with Jansenism and Port-Royal.*

IT was said by Royer-Collard, that not to know Port-Royal and its fortunes, is not to know the history of humanity. The most cursory student of church-annals, and of the Augustan age of France, is familiar with the names of Arnauld, Pascal, Nicole, St. Cyran, Lancelot, Tillemont, Quesnel, De Sacy, Boileau and Racine; all connected in some degree with the houses of Port-Royal. This celebrated retreat was six miles from Paris and three from Versailles, at the left of the great road by Rambouillet to Chartres. The convent lay in so low a valley that it seemed to hide itself from the neighbouring places: the inmates used, however, somewhat to exaggerate the wildness of the scene, in order to a closer parallel with the Thebaid. It is important to be observed, that in addition to the abbey just mentioned, there was one of later date, under the same auspices, in the metropolis, called Port-Royal de Paris. Of the former, or Port-Royal des Champs, the traveller from Versailles to Chevreuse will find no remnant but a solitary Gothic arch; but he will recognise the hollow vale crossing the flats, and marked by

- ART. II.—2. *Canticum Canticorum Solomonis Homiliæ XXXI*, a Theod. Beza. Geneva.
2. *Song of Solomon, newly translated from the original Hebrew, with a Commentary and Annotations*; by Bishop Percy. London. 1764.
3. *Clavis Cantici, or an Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, by the Rev. James Durham; with an address to the Christian reader, by John Owen.
4. *An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song*, by John Gill, D.D.
5. *The Song of Songs, a New Translation with a commentary and Notes*, by T. Williams.
6. *Critical History and Defence of the Old Testament Canon*, by Moses Stuart.

The last of these volumes has been placed in this connexion, that we may notice the strictures it contains on the Song of Solomon. Into a consideration of the general merits of this work of Prof. Stuart on the Old Testament, we have no disposition now to enter. In a chapter on "Conscientious Scruples as to a part of the Old Testament,"—he treats the Song in a way that must grieve many a pious heart. Years ago, when faithful and far-sighted men were lifting a warning voice against incipient but dangerous error, we did trust, in the exercise of the charity which "hopeth all things," that their fears might be ill founded, and that one who had been such a luminary in the sphere of biblical learning, would be enabled to withstand the disturbing influences and pass on without material perturbations. If we are not in error, the first step is here taken towards breaking in on the canon of the scriptures. The mind that begins with explaining away some of the old-fashioned doctrines, may not be satisfied to stop until it has set aside some of the old fashioned books of the word of God. Professing to receive the Song as a part of the canon, and on this account manifesting a kind of friendship for its contents, Mr. Stuart treats this book in a way

*Nicole*, "Oeuvres, etc." Paris 1727, six vol.—*Bussy-Rabutin*, "Memoires et Lettres," 7 vols. 12mo. Amst. 1721. *Arnauld*, "Logique de Port-Royal; ed. C. Jourdain," Paris, 1846; and "Oeuvres Philosophiques," ed. Simon. Paris, 1843. —*Des Cartes*, "Oeuvres," Paris, 1844.—*Malebranche*, "Oeuvres." Paris, 1846. —*De Sevigne*, "Lettres," Paris, 1844.—*De Genoude*, "La Raison du Christianisme," 4to. Paris, 1836.

that shows obviously strong prejudices against it and an unwillingness to receive it as a part of Scripture, were not the testimony in its favour so overwhelming. It is a mystery how a man can receive a book as inspired, and yet apply to it such language as he uses concerning this song.

"Certain it is," says he, "that the Canticles were a part of the canon sanctioned by Christ and the Apostles. Nothing as a matter of fact in ancient criticism, is more certain. It is of no use to deny this, or to make efforts to evade it. . . . I have often heard it said by the friends of Pres. Edwards, that he was particularly fond of the book of Canticles, and read and meditated much upon it. His character for piety was such as entirely forbids the supposition that he was secretly nourishing his animal passions by this. . . . As a book of amatory odes we might praise and admire it; for in the original, it is much more delicate than our English version represents it to be. But we shrink instinctively from connecting amatory ideas and feelings with a devotional frame of mind. . . . The perusal of the original makes much less impression on me of an exceptionable kind, than the perusal of our version. That there are many passages in this pastoral, if any must needs so call it, which are highly beautiful and tender and delicate, is quite certain. A heathen poet who had sung carnal love in like manner, would have doubtless been immortal among the Cythereans." His conclusion is, "that the Canticles is a book rather to be regarded in the light of a local one, and adapted to partial usage, than as a book now under the full light of the gospel, especially adapted to our use. It had its day." He says that the books containing the detail of the Levitical rites and ceremonies, have ceased to have any other interest for us than that they aid in the authentication of the Bible, prevent it from assuming a mythic appearance, and lead to the persuasion that what it describes is reality and not romance; that all the books of the Old Testament which prescribe and regulate these things have become in a good measure obsolete. "For us men of occidental tastes and habits and of only ordinary growth in piety, . . . who have a task difficult enough to keep our passions in due subjection even when we shun all the temptation and excitement that we can, it is the safer and better course to place the Canticles among the books withdrawn from ordinary use.

Canticles as a means of devotion, is superseded for us by better means. This is reason enough, independently of the danger of being excited in an undue way, to prefer other parts of the scripture.\* In the words of Witsius on a similar occasion, *At quid est sacratissima quaeque in profana, absurda, et ridicula ver tere, si hoc non est?*† These words of Mr. Stuart carry with them their own refutation. We should be sorry to be under the responsibility of having put forth charges, that every man who studies the Song of Solomon with less reputation for piety than Pres. Edwards, may be suspected of “secretly nourishing his animal passions by this;” and that the Holy Spirit has put into the hands of fallen man, a book which cannot be read without exposing ourselves to dangerous “temptation and excitement.” In the infidel commentators of Germany, such expressions do not strike us with surprise. In one for whose piety we have always had profound respect, they fill us with real grief. His argument rests on two assumptions, neither of which is tenable. The first is, that this book belongs to the same class with those which describe the Levitical rites and ceremonies: the second is that “all that part of the Old Testament which prescribes and regulates these things, is no longer a matter of practical moment to us, but only a portion of the history of God’s former dealings with his church.” Canticles formed no part of the Jewish law, nor was it in any way connected with their ceremonial services. Their ritual had been completed, and their civil polity established, nearly five hundred years before this book was written. The Jews never numbered it among the books constituting what they called the law. As though aware of the weakness of this

\* M’Cheyne remarks in his sermon on Cant. ii. 8–13, that no book of the scriptures furnishes a better text than does the song, of the depth of a man’s christianity. If his religion be *in his head only*, a dry form of doctrines,—he will see nothing here to attract him; if it have a place *merely in his fancy*, he will fail to be attracted by this book; but if his religion have a *hold on his heart* by the love of Christ shed abroad through the spirit, this will be a favorite portion of the word of God. Such is the testimony of one who has exhibited “as beauteous a character and as effective a ministry as He who holds the seven stars has exhibited to the church in these last days.” Says his friend Mr. Hamilton, “his adoring contemplations naturally gathered round them the imagery, and language of the Song of Solomon. Indeed, he had preached so often on that beautiful book, that at last he had scarcely left himself a single text of its ‘good matter’ which had not been discoursed on already.”

† De Prophetis in Caanan, 39.



position, Mr. Stuart seems to make an effort for giving it strength, by examining conscientious scruples as to Esther and Ecclesiastes, and enrolling them among the obsolete portions of scripture. The impression can hardly be avoided, that the two last mentioned books have been thus specially noticed in his work on the Canon, in order to prepare the way for a more successful stroke at the Song.

But even could it be fully shown that this book belongs to the ritual portions of the Old Testament; we deny that the Pentateuch, its ceremonies, and all the architectural details of the tabernacle, and the temple have merely the value of ancient history,—of materials for enabling the curious to trace the progress of invention in manufactures, luxuries and conveniences of life,—the architect to gratify the desire to know the history of his art. There is a disposition abroad to undervalue the Old Testament. Its teachings stand very much in the way of those sentiments on imputation and atonement, which are drawn less from the word of God than from metaphysical reasoning. The books of scripture are all essential parts of one great fabric. Each has a peculiar place and value. The observance of the ceremonies of the law has been abolished, but the truths taught by those ceremonies, lie at the foundation of the system of salvation, and cannot be properly understood without the illustrations those comparisons supply. When those rites were appointed, “there was not an object in the material world which would convey to the mind the idea of God’s holiness: the idea, therefore, would have to be originated, and thrown into their mind, through the senses, by a process instituted for that express purpose. The plan to originate the idea, in order to meet the constitution of the mind, must consist of a series of comparisons. The idea of God’s moral purity conveyed by the Mosaic economy, has descended from the Hebrew, through the Greek, to our own language, and there is, so far as known, no other word in the world which conveys to the mind the true idea of God’s moral purity, but that originated by the institution which God prescribed to Moses upon the Mount.”\* The same is true of other doctrines. How can we arrive at a correct understanding of these truths, without studying them in the instructions given

\* Philosophy of the plan of salvation, p. 75, 79. We subjoin the following be-

by God? In the epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle explains the Jewish rites, showing that although the observance of them is no longer binding, a knowledge of them must be ever necessary to man for comprehending the way of atonement and sanctification. These services are the alphabet of our religious knowledge. We cannot speak of the way of salvation without using language drawn from this source. And that man will have the clearest, most evangelical and most comforting view of the scheme of redemption, who is willing to neglect the airy nothings floating in the regions of metaphysical speculation, and give his attention to a deep exploration of the imperishable foundation which has been laid in these ritual services, for his consolation and hope. Have the parables of the New Testament been rendered obsolete by the full didactic statements of doctrine in the epistles? Our Lord found it necessary to begin his instructions by comparisons, and he illustrated a different class of truths from those already elucidated under the law. With reverence would we suggest, that less is lost by inattention to the parables of the gospels, than by neglect of the services of the Jewish ritual. The key to the interpretation of them, has been furnished by our Lord, through his inspired Apostle. These objections to the Song do therefore amount to nothing. That the author of our faith should have given such a book as this by inspiration, is reasonable, and is what might be expected.

The effect of sin has been to destroy in the human heart the love of God, and substitute for it the love of unworthy things. The object of redemption is the restoration of man from his condition of enmity against God, and from all the consequences of sin, to the possession and enjoyment of perfect love to God. Hence, as hatred of God is the spirit of sin, love is represented as the essential grace, as the fulfilling of the law. The growth of the soul in holiness, must be estimated not by deep excite-

cause these writers will not be suspected of being trammelled by old modes of thinking. "Judaism was a propædæutic to Christianity; but there was no formal definition of any one spiritual truth in the whole of that economy. The purpose of it was to school the mind to spiritual contemplation; to awaken the religious consciousness by types and symbols, and other perceptive means, to the realization of certain great spiritual ideas; and to furnish words and analogies in which the truths of Christianity could be embodied and proclaimed to the world." Morell's *Phil. of Religion*, p. 140. "The Jewish ritual was an obscure text, which awaited the divine commentary of the Christian dispensation." Harris's *Pre-Adamite earth*, p. 273.

ment whether of ecstasy or of overwhelming sorrow, not by burning zeal or untiring activity, not by acquaintance with all mysteries and knowledge, not by giving our goods to feed the poor and our body to be burned; but by the love which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Perfect sanctification carries with it perfect love. The death of Christ, the agency of the Holy Spirit, all the means of grace, all the dealings of providence with the saints, converge on this one point, the forming anew in man, of this lost love. As the sanctification of the soul is through the truth, we might therefore suppose, that in giving us the scriptures, God would give full elucidations of this very important principle or affection. This he has been careful to do. He has shown love to be not only important but essential, 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3; he has given a full and excellent definition of it as the root of our best and holy feelings, 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7, and has shown its perpetuity, its superiority to knowledge, faith, and hope, and its inseparable connection with the happiness and existence of the soul of man, 1 Cor. xiii. 8-13. He has embodied it for our benefit in the living example of Jesus Christ, has shown that God to whose image we must be restored, is love, 1 John iv. 8, and has given the blood of his Son for removing the difficulty in the way of establishing in us this principle, and has sent his Spirit for forming it within us by a new creation, and for opening channels in the heart, through which its influence may reach and control all our other powers. All this has been necessary, because divine love is so perfectly opposite to our natural disposition. Its presence makes us new creatures, gives us new workings of the affections, and prompts to new language from the lips.

Now it is not unreasonable to suppose, that he who has given us such means for cherishing this heavenly affection, would go farther and add a description of the actual operations of a heart in which this love is found, and would give us language such as these emotions would naturally adopt in using the words of men; so that in giving utterance to his love, the saints should not be left to the uncertainty and danger of adopting such words as human error might suggest, but have ready furnished language of precision and beauty made ready to our hands by the same Spirit who is working within us this affection. Much of the difficulty and uncertainty of metaphysical disquisitions,

arises from the imperfection of language and the want of precision in its use. Words are the signs of ideas; and if the language in which we hear or speak on any subject, must be incorrect, it is important that those who have received a spiritual discernment of the things which are freely given to us of God, should be able to speak of them, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. ii. 13, that the Spirit who prompts the emotion, should furnish the language in which such emotion may find suitable utterance for showing forth the praise of the Redeemer. This has been done for us in a beautiful manner in the Song of Solomon.

The services of the Jewish ritual point out the way in which this newness of heart, this divine love may be attained by sinners. The epistle to the Hebrews, as well as the general language of piety, shows how impossible it is to understand the worth of Christ and the office of the Holy Spirit, without those typical allusions. The leprosy is the emblem of our spiritual state by nature; the sacrifices show the ground of pardon; the sacred anointing oil and the water of the laver illustrate the excellency of the Holy Spirit, and his cleansing power in developing those fruits, the first of which is love. In the same mode by allegorical language and emblems, the Song shows what this affection is as already formed and in operation. The heart on which the work of the Spirit has been felt to the greatest extent can best tell how much at a loss we must be in speaking of spiritual exercises and love to Jesus, were we cut off from the language of this song. Should the soul be influenced to these feelings by the Holy Spirit, and inclined to use such expressions of devoted love, without having at the same time a knowledge of this book as given by inspiration,—we would hesitate, would feel ourselves guilty of presumption, and would not answer those who might presume to upbraid us with irreverence or fanaticism. There are persons of undoubted piety, in the early stages of the Christian life, though having long borne the profession, who are as reluctant to believe the reality of the exercises of the most advanced Christians, as is the impenitent to admit the reality of the first emotions attending a change of heart: the error in both instances arises from unwillingness to believe what has not been personally experienced. If in consequence of never having



felt such deep emotions, persons of certain attainments in piety may object to this book as using language too strong; the un-renewed heart may, with the same propriety, doubt the reality of all the exercises of religion. Beyond controversy, there are spiritual exercises which can be better and more naturally expressed in the language of this song, than in any other portion of the scriptures. And the Holy Spirit has put into our hands this precious scroll written full of the characters of love, and whispers to us that we can never do wrong in speaking of Jesus in these terms, and that we may judge of the nature of our love to him by our disposition to speak of him in such language, and by finding in our hearts emotions corresponding with these expressions.

The several books of the word of God have some particular aim and some leading topic. The gospels furnish the life of God manifest in flesh; the epistle to the Hebrews opens the doctrine of atonement as vicarious and possessing infinite value from the divine nature of Him who suffered; Proverbs embody the practical duties of daily life; the Psalms are the pious heart's language of devotion, the song is its language of love. Devotion being the utterance of the different feelings of the soul in combination, and resting with reverence on the majesty and goodness of God, and love being the bond which brings us into union with God, and gives all our other powers their proper exercise: we find in the Psalms expressions in which to embody our general feelings of repentance, contrition, trust, veneration, and praise: in the Song, the expressions are restricted to the various operations of the one exercise of love. The deepest spiritual emotions of the human soul are here exhibited in a way best adapted to the comprehension and wants of man. In the portraits of Shakspeare, we have veins of a profound metaphysics never surpassed, yet so arrayed in flesh and blood, that we overlook the mental abstractions, in the beauty and attractiveness of their guise. And no metaphysical disquisition however labored no didactic statement, however clear, could give so intelligibly as does this Song, the nature of those exalted exercises of the human soul, which constitute love to our redeeming Lord.

Love to Jesus Christ becomes, through sanctification, the strongest passion that can take possession of the human heart.

Ambition, avarice, and passion may have more of the unnatural vigour attending fever; this carries with it the quiet, enduring energy of health, with sufficient power to consume those unhallowed principles and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Jesus. The power of this love cannot be known without being felt; and none but those who have experienced the greatest intensity of it possible on earth, can be capable judges whether language used in expressing it, may be exaggerated. The love of the pious heart to God being thus strong and indeed not utterable even by the strongest terms; the love of God towards us is as incomprehensible as his eternity, omnipresence, or almighty power. If therefore He condescends to illustrate to our comprehension the nature of this reciprocal love, the Holy Spirit must be expected to draw his comparisons from the strongest and tenderest instances of affection known among men, and use, in so doing, all the coloring that can be supplied even from the domains of poetry. Hence in this Song the relation of husband and bride is selected. Nor is this comparison peculiar to the Song. It is read throughout the New no less than the Old Testament; and at the close of revelation the church is spoken of as the bride, the wife of the Lamb. The relation of father and son, imperfect though it be, is nevertheless the best that language can furnish for setting forth the union between the first and second persons of the Trinity; and the relation between husband and wife is the best known to us for illustrating the union between Jesus and his redeemed. This union must be far more intimate, and far more tender, than the marriage relation. The attachment of two persons, strangers to each other previously, during almost their whole life, must, even in its greatest purity, ripeness and strength, fall very far below the love of Jesus for a soul he has formed for the end of loving him; whose constitution has been framed by sanctification of the Holy Ghost, according to what he can love and desires to love; whom he has allured to himself by overpowering manifestations of love; whom he loved not merely from the first moments of its being, but even before the origin of its being, and who owes its being to his loving it before it was called into existence, even before the world began; over whose course he has watched from its first breath; for

whose rescue from misery He did himself submit to death. Besides all this, He has the tender and incomprehensible love of the infinite God. Such love on his part, demands corresponding affection on ours. And how can any earthly comparison reach the measure of this love, when it is such that if any man hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be worthy of the love of his Lord. The comparison of father and son is not more imperfect in expressing the relation of the first and second persons of the Trinity, than is the love of husband and wife, even when taken in the strongest terms, imperfect in unfolding the love of Christ for his people. This illustration of that love is the best we can now have; but like all human comparisons applied to God, falls very far short of the truth. The expressions in the song, however hyperbolical they may seem to some minds, give therefore nothing more than a shadow of this love. The language appears strong, not because it is exaggerated, but because we are not capable of appreciating the love of God. Now, we see the love of Christ, through a glass darkly, even in our brightest hours. Angels who have a better understanding of the subject, see that this language, instead of being exaggerated, is, as everything heavenly expressed in human language, must be, very imperfect. Though the Holy Spirit has selected the most endearing relation on earth, the marriage state, and set forth the reciprocal affections of that relation in the glowing terms, ardent language, and richly colored imagery of oriental poetry, the whole is not sufficient for enabling us to comprehend in any other than an indistinct manner, the wondrous love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Beset with the inseparable infirmity of human nature, an over estimate of ourselves, and forgetting that the difficulty in understanding it, may be mainly with us, we act as though capable judges of the extent of God's love, and of the way it should be expressed; and we censure the language of the Holy Spirit as improper and extravagant, because we know so little of this love as to be unable to see how incomprehensible is its nature. All the objections brought against the Song arise from this source. Those who would reject it from the canon of scripture, or if retaining it, would pass it over in silence as unfit

for use in the present age, do this, not because it has less direct testimony than the other books in favour of its inspiration, but because its general character is not what they would expect to find in writing coming from God. No part of the scriptures can show more uninterruptedly than this, the concurrent testimony of the Jewish and Christian churches. It bears the clearest internal evidence of having been written by the author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The affection here illustrated is a leading one in the Christian life; the mode of illustrating it, is the one generally employed in other parts of the word of God, and is indeed the best that could be used for the purpose. All this certain opposers of the book will admit; but still object to it strenuously through prejudices arising from what appears to them exaggerated, if not indelicate expressions. Under these circumstances, and in view of what has been already said concerning the impossibility of doing anything like full justice to the infinite love of God in human language even adorned with the highest efforts of poetic genius; such persons would do well to reflect that the difficulty lies not in the book, but in themselves; that the Holy Spirit can use no other than the best possible words, and that all these apparent imperfections might vanish under the influence of a keener spiritual discernment and a deeper love. Different minds in which sin exerts an influence, have an affinity for different kinds of error, and opposition to different kinds of truth. As sanctification releases us from our native corruptions, by degrees, the Christian life is a gradual progress in working the soul loose from the dominion of error. Hence, some men reject the whole word of God; others reject particular books; while some persons who receive as inspired the whole canon of scripture, can never become reconciled to some of its doctrines. A defect in the intellectual or spiritual man, is at the root of all this error. The defect is not in the pages of inspiration, but in the human heart. "The cartoons of Raphael at Hampton Court Palace," says Dr. Arnold,\* "the frescoes of the same great painter in the galleries of the Vatican at Rome, the famous statues of the Laocoon and the Apollo Belvidere, and the church of St. Peter at Rome, the

\* *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 370.



most magnificent building perhaps in the world,—all alike are generally found to disappoint a person on his first view of them. But let him be sure that they are excellent and that he only wants the knowledge and the taste to appreciate them properly, and every succeeding sight of them will open his eyes more and more, till he learns to admire them, not indeed as much as they deserve, but so much as greatly to enrich and enlarge his own mind, by becoming acquainted with such perfect beauty. So it is with great poets: they must be read often and studied reverently, before an unpractised mind can gain anything like an adequate notion of their excellence. The reader must be convinced that if he does not fully admire them, it is his fault and not theirs. Here, as in everything else, humility is the surest path to exaltation.” These remarks apply with the greatest force to the scriptures, embodying, as they do, in the noblest and most appropriate language, not the conceptions of the human intellect, but truths so unusual, so grand, and so ennobling, that even after having been revealed, they cannot be received by the natural man without a discernment imparted by the Spirit. The truths illustrated in this song are preëminently among those which are spiritually discerned. They are not so much the principles of the doctrine of Christ, as the things which are brought more particularly into view as we go on unto perfection. The nature of the subject, love, makes it belong to the advanced part of the Christian life more especially; and as sanctification refines our spiritual perceptions, and by raising us from our degradation of darkness, towards the condition of saints in light, gives us the ability to appreciate the love of Jesus,—we see more and more beauty in this song,—we see in it nothing but beauty, we find our objections against it arose from the corrupt heart rather than from the book, we feel thankful that the Author of our faith has provided for us words so rich, so glowing, and so perfect, for giving utterance to our emotions; and we rejoice to find, under the light of the Holy Ghost, our unsanctified misapprehensions giving place to the conviction that the love of Jesus towards us is infinitely greater than is even here expressed.

The scriptures contain truths, promises, and illustrations adapted to every variety of circumstances and to every grade

of religious experience. Particular truths can be fully understood, and the power of certain promises can be adequately felt, only by our being brought into situations where the soul is made to feel the need of those very truths and those very promises. Here are innumerable gradations of truths adapted to the different degrees of the growth of the soul in grace, from the first exercises of conviction, to the highest measure of sanctification attainable on earth. A particular development of our spiritual perceptions is requisite for feeling the beauty and power of any one of the portions of truth in this ascending scale; and as the unrenewed man, even with profound learning, fails to apprehend the perfection of beauty in passages with which he has a mere scientific acquaintance; the Christian, while understanding all the heart can know of the truths adapted to the steps of religious experience through which he has passed, may yet fail to comprehend and appreciate thoroughly, portions of holy writ lying in regions of pious exercises whereunto he has not attained. Three things are necessary for understanding perfectly the scriptures: such an acquaintance with them as may be derived from human learning; the illumination of the Holy Spirit; and a position in the circumstances for which those truths were specially given and adapted. The two last are not inferior in importance to the first. And other things being equal, the man who has the advantage not only of the teaching of the Spirit, but of being led by Providence through the circumstances of life in which the want of certain promises is felt and their comforting power enjoyed, will be better able than other persons to see beauty, and richness, and glory in many domains of gospel truth, which must have lain unobserved by him, had he not been drawn into these green pastures and beside these still waters by the Presence that dwelt amid the pillar of fire in the wilderness.

Hence, this song is not so much a favorite in the early stage of the religious life, as at subsequent periods when we have grown in grace. It is the manual of the advanced Christian. When love has been more perfected by the Spirit, hither do we come for expressions of that love. When we are anxious to hear from the lips of Jesus the fulness of his love to us, here do we rejoice to sit and listen. The Jews were not wrong when they represented this book as the holy of holies in the fabric of

revelation; for assuredly, the voice here speaking, the living oracles here uttered, can be heard only by those who have been initiated into the mysteries of godliness, and dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. Accordingly, this book has been a favourite with eminent Christians. While some persons versed in biblical lore, but ignorant of the alphabet of piety, can see nothing further in this song than an amatory eelogue; and others whose piety we are far from doubting, can represent these words given by inspiration, as "leading us away from pure and spiritual devotion," by "connecting amatory ideas and feelings with a devotional frame of mind;" there is, and always has been in the church, a class of persons of no questionable character for ability, learning, or holiness, who esteem this book among the choicest portions of the word of God. There must be excellence in that which occupied so deeply the affections of such persons as Leighton, Lady Guyon, President Edwards, Rutherford and McCheyne.

When, therefore, this song is admitted to be inspired, and to have been sanctioned and loved by the ablest and most saintly men of even the present age; those who make these concessions, and yet hold the book in disesteem, would act with humility and wisdom by feeling that the difficulty in appreciating it lies with themselves. Much of what is censured as execrable, is found in our translation rather than in the original. If this book be rejected on account of objectionable passages, other parts of the scriptures must be set aside on the same grounds. What are called by some persons the indelicate passages of holy writ are far from being found in this song. We venture to assert that the parts looked on with most distrust are capable of a natural interpretation incapable of offending the most sensitive modesty, and tending directly to our edification in holiness. With the same reasonable spirit which is essential for enjoying the finest works of uninspired genius, let us feel that this song is everything it has been represented by an innumerable crowd of witnesses; that we are not at liberty to reject or neglect a book so manifestly of divine origin; that if the Song has been ridiculed by the corrupt heart or misused to purposes of evil, the same has happened with almost every other portion of the Bible: that all scripture is given by inspiration of God,

and is profitable ; and that by patient continuance as learners at the feet of Him who is meek and lowly of heart, we too shall become sensible of its beauties and filled with admiring love.

The first words are as certainly given by inspiration as any succeeding portion of this book, and show the estimation in which the Song is held by the Holy Spirit. It is called the Song of Songs, or the most excellent song. For the purpose of meeting the numerous objections brought against this portion of scripture, the divine wisdom writes on the very front of it, an attestation of its superior excellence not only to the thousand and five songs of Solomon, but to all the songs ever produced by all other poets. He who cannot err, tells us, in language of no doubtful meaning, that this song is unrivalled.

Poetry is the expression of the best and most beautiful thoughts, of exalted emotions, in the best and the most beautiful language. The language of poetry is the language of excited feeling. The best poetry must have the noblest theme, deal with the purest emotions, and be adorned with the richest ideas. God has garnished his works of every kind with beauty, and formed us with a capability of receiving pleasure from that beauty. Hence in conveying to us important truth, He does, throughout the scriptures, make it attractive by adapting it to this love within us of the beautiful. Now, love is the very excellence of God, for "God is love." Love is the purest, deepest, and most powerful emotion known to man. Nothing can therefore be better or more beautiful than the subject of this song ; and being a song, a poetical composition, it must be in the best and most beautiful language. A translation gives no idea of the excellence of Homer ; and beautiful as is this song in our English version, we must remember that it is the poetry of an age more remote than the earliest Greek poets, in a modern language of very different structure and idiom.

The fact that this song is so much rejected is a proof of its excellence. How many persons can see no excellence in the best productions of genius, even when there is about them no allegory, as is here the case, to be interpreted by the Holy Spirit. The better the poetry the more profound the ideas embodied in it, the farther is it above the range of the common mind and the more likely to be appreciated only by the cultivated few whose taste has been carefully refined. This being the Song of Songs



the same thing must be expected here, and to a much greater degree, because there is need of a taste which cannot be attained without the supernatural aid of divine grace. Even when the highest beauty and excellence was personified in Jesus Christ, how perfectly was all this above the comprehension of man. They saw in him no beauty that they should desire him. Isa. liii. 2. His beauty cannot be seen and understood without a taste imparted by the Holy Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. xii. 3. Much is said about the Beautiful, the Good and the True. Jesus was the personification of them all. For him, did God represent unto us these abstract spiritual excellences, in a sensible, bodily form. In its loftiest flights, the imagination of man never had so glorious a conception as that which is given in the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. The object of this song is the celebration of the love which led to that union, its beauty, its attractiveness and its glorious results. Others of the divine songs of scripture celebrate some particular consequences flowing from this love; the song of Moses at the Red Sea, speaks the praise of Jehovah for their deliverance; the Psalms are utterances of pious feeling for various mercies; this song goes to the spring of all that is beautiful, good, and true, and celebrates the love which is the fountain of all blessedness. Homer, generally received as the prince of poets, sings of the malignant passions, the wrath of his hero, the cause of woes unnumbered; this book sings of the wondrous love of God which is the spring, not of desolation, misery, and tears, but of the new creature, the deliverance from guilt, the consolation, the heavenly anticipations that are abroad in our world of woe. It sings of the same love which is the burden of the new song in heaven. How glorious was the chorus, when at the completion of creation, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Will not that be the song of songs which shall be heard amid the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, when the innumerable company of the redeemed and the angels join to celebrate the love of the Lamb that was slain? The theme of this song is the same redeeming love; and those whose hearts are here brought by grace to feel the excellence of this portion of scripture are

already learning that song which no man could learn but those redeemed from the earth.

God can express to us inward spiritual beauty, only through the means of outward, sensible beauty; and in this song, He makes use of this outward beauty for impressing on us that which is inwardly beautiful, true, and good. What beauty is comparable to the beauty of holiness? This is the source of all other beauty. All the deformity, ugliness, and filthiness in this world are owing to the want of holiness. In the heavens where no stain of sin has fallen, there is nothing but beauty. This beauty of holiness is that which the Psalmist so earnestly desired to behold. Ps. xxvii. 4. And the celebration of that beauty in this divine poetry, renders it the song of songs. A few years ago, on a clear winter's night, there burst forth a northern light that suffused the whole heavens with a rosy tinge and threw over the snow and landscape the same unearthly hues, different from anything previously seen, and causing emotions of inexpressible pleasure in those who beheld this transient burst of heavenly splendour—this song, is, as it were, a rosy burst of the divine love which, through the Lamb, is the Shechinah of heaven; and those whose souls have the spiritual perception for seeing the divine light here beaming, feel their hearts thrill with the beauty of the tinge it throws over our blighted and wintry world. Elsewhere there can be seen nothing of equal or like beauty.

It was proper that such a song should be written by Solomon. Aaron having prefigured Christ as a priest, and Moses foreshadowing Him as a prophet, Solomon prefigured Him as a king. And while David represents Jesus as suffering persecution and subduing the enemies of his people, Solomon represents Him as the triumphant prince of peace. Under Solomon the kingdom of Israel was perfectly established by the conquest of all their enemies and by the building of the temple in Jerusalem; and as the camp in the wilderness may represent the church in this world, the reign of Solomon may be a representation of the church in heaven. While therefore David sung in the Psalms of the various conflicts of the Christian life, Solomon here sings of that which is the end of all our conflicts, the consummation of the love of Christ and his church. His mental endowments were as glorious as his position. Not only did

he surpass all others in wealth and splendour, the most kingly of kings; but before him there was none like him for wisdom, neither after him shall any arise like unto him. 1 Kings, iii. 12; and he possessed noble poetic powers. A man combining these rare qualifications, was very properly selected by the Holy Spirit as the means for conveying to the saints this divine allegory, this unequalled song of love.

As the enemy of our souls contests every step of our progress from error into the full light of truth, failing to make us reject this book as uninspired or as improper for the use of the pure in heart, he will be equally satisfied in depriving us of its benefit by leading to a wrong interpretation. Much of the dislike to this song by even Christians, has arisen from the erroneous method pursued in the exposition by some of the most pious commentators. Even a pious man may go astray through a false theory of interpretation. There is no book in the Bible further removed than this song, beyond the capability of an impious man, even of great learning, for giving a proper exposition. There are portions of scripture containing an unadorned statement of doctrine or facts, which a scholar who takes them up as he would an uninspired classic, may interpret fairly, according to the literal meaning. Such a man may be called a commentator on the scriptures; he can hardly be called an expounder of them. It is a dangerous error, and one into which the unsanctified heart is continually liable to fall, that learning is the one essential thing in biblical interpretation. The importance in this work of a well furnished head, may cause us to undervalue the aid necessary from a pious heart. Bringing to the subject of religion our modes of thinking on common topics, we forget that the scriptures have difficulties which require spiritual discernment, no less than philological acumen, and that a man may "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," while destitute of the love which is the key to the solution of its deepest and most edifying problems. The mere philologist and antiquary perform an important work in the business of exposition. It is nothing more than the work of hewing the wood and drawing the water. In religious worship the tendency of the heart, under its corrupt inclinations, is to exalt the ceremonial above the spiritual; and in devotion to the study of the scriptures, we are in danger of exalting the

scientific above the spiritual, of resting in the means rather than in the end, in learned investigation rather than in the spiritual apprehension by the heart, of the truths to which those investigations lead. The enemy of holiness and parent of error cares not in what way he succeeds in keeping us from understanding the truth, whether by inducing us to neglect the essential aids of learning and study, under the fanatical impression that the Spirit will give all needed illumination, without the use of means; or by leaving us to rest in these scientific investigations alone, without the indispensable assistance of the Holy Spirit. Here especially must the well furnished head be found in alliance with a heart controlled by grace. There is no portion of the scriptures which requires more than does this song, a sanctified state of the affections in him who undertakes the interpretation. Without this the marrow of the book cannot be relished or detected. Here especially are things which must be not so much philologically, as spiritually discerned; and which to the natural mind, however learned, without the teaching of the Spirit, must appear as absolute foolishness.

In this song, truth is taught not by didactic statements, but by figurative allusions. As the doctrines relating to the person and work of Jesus, are set forth literally in the New Testament, but are illustrated by the emblems of the Jewish service; so the reciprocal love of Christ and his people, unfolded by plain statements in other portions of the Bible, is here elucidated by poetical imagery and comparisons. The types are correctly interpreted by a knowledge of the doctrines of the New Testament; while those doctrines are in turn, made clear only by intelligent acquaintance with the meaning of types. And the love of the Redeemer and the redeemed, as taught by himself and his inspired disciples, is illustrated in the emblematical language of this song, while at the same time, the key to a knowledge of these instructive figures is found in acquaintance with the divine love here so beautifully elucidated. A single emblem or illustration standing out by itself, is called a type or figure of things to come. When the emblems are multiplied and the figure continued to some length, the whole becomes an allegory. Such is the nature of this book. It is an allegorical illustration of the operations of love in the bosom of the saint and of the Redeemer. Hence, we must not expect to find here any state-



ment of doctrine in a didactic form. We must here search for truth not in the form in which it appears in the epistle to the Romans, but in the guise it assumes in the figures of the Jewish ritual. Beautiful and instructive though the services of the law are to ourselves, how dim was the apprehension Israel had of their significance; and how great is the flood of light poured on them by studying them with the knowledge imparted by God manifest in flesh. As mere poetry, this book has transcendent beauty; but when viewed in the light of the knowledge of the glorious love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, it assumes a splendour and instructiveness unimagined and unsurpassed.

In the interpretation of this song, there are therefore two separate lines of investigation, bearing upon each other and converging, though perfectly distinct. There is the study of the language, and the study of the allegorical meaning. After knowing all that can be known of the literal import and the customs here referred to, there remains the more important task of determining what are the spiritual truths intended to be conveyed to us in this figurative language. The meaning wrapped up in the folds of the allegory is the main object of search. Hence the commentators who have gone no farther than an elucidation of the literal meaning, even by all the learning that may be here brought to bear, cannot be considered as having expounded this scripture. The meaning of the allegory yet remains untouched; and to the scholar who has gone thus far this meaning may be as perfectly unknown, as is the narrative of the facts there contained, to him who does not understand the language. Biblical learning furnishes the key to a knowledge of a book as a poem; there is another element necessary for giving us a clue to the spiritual meaning embodied in this mystical poetry. The mere literal meaning of the prophecy of Isaiah, was intelligible to the Ethiopian eunuch, and yet he said, How can I understand except some man should guide me. Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Acts viii. 31. In this song particularly, a knowledge of the letter gives nothing like the meaning of the book without a knowledge of the spirit. The words of Jesus are equally applicable here, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they

are spirit, and they are life." John vi. 63. This is the key to the whole interpretation of the song. The meek will he teach his way, and he will show them his covenant. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and as without a parable spake our Lord not unto the multitudes, but when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples, Mark iv. 54; so must we still, with meekness and godly fear, seek to be alone with him in prayer, that we may ask of him the meaning of the parables contained in the written word, and receive the Holy Ghost that he may teach us all things and guide us into all truth. A fundamental inquiry in studying the song, is, Of whom speaketh Solomon this? of himself or of some other person? And never can we understand what we here read, until, after diligent study and humble meditation, we have the Holy Spirit to begin at the same scripture and preach unto us Jesus. He must open our eyes, before we can behold the wondrous things contained in this portion of God's law. Whatever our knowledge of the word of God, certain it is that our hearts will never burn within us, till Jesus himself opens to us the scriptures. None other can expound to us in all this song, the things concerning himself. The necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit interpreting divine truth, is taught by Peter, who says we must receive it as a first principle, "That no prophecy of the scripture is of any private\* interpretation." Showing in this passage he had not followed cunningly devised fables, in making known the power and coming of our Lord,—he points out two distinct grounds of confirmation for the truth of the gospel. The first is external, and depends on the testimony of the witnesses who were with him in the holy mount of transfiguration, and were there eye-witnesses of the magnificent glory, and heard the voice of the Father from heaven in attestation of the divinity of the Son. The second is internal, the persuasion which every true believer has of the divine origin of the scriptures, from what he sees and feels of the power of these truths under the influences of the Holy Spirit. This demonstration, this inward witness of the Spirit, is a safer reliance than a voice from heaven—is a more sure word of prophecy, of divine instruction regarding the truth of our faith, an interpretation or

\* *Idios quod animo acquisivimus et possidemus.*

expression of the divine will on which we may more certainly rely. Without at all undervaluing the external evidence, the miracles wrought in confirmation of Christianity, the believer finds, as he grows in grace, that his convictions of the inexpressible excellence of his faith, is felt more and more distinctly to rest, not on the testimony adduced from men, so much as on the words which the Holy Ghost speaketh through the scriptures to his sanctified heart. Divine truth kindleth to a flame by the Spirit which is within his soul as a light shining in a dismal place. To this word, a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path, he does well to take heed until the shadows of error and sin flee away, until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts. But in receiving the advantage and pleasure had from the scriptures thus spiritually discerned, we must start with the essential truth; must know this first, that no prophecy of scripture, no portion of divine instruction there revealed, is of any private interpretation; that is, of an interpretation which may be reached by the exercise of any powers peculiar to the unaided human mind by nature; for as prophecy, or the teachings contained in the scriptures, were not discovered and uttered by the unassisted intellect of man, but were spoken by men borne along by the Holy Ghost; those truths cannot be understood and interpreted by us with the enlightening influences of the same Spirit.

The parable of the sower derives its great interest from its instructiveness through the exposition of our Lord. This application of those simple facts to the illustration of spiritual things, invests them with great beauty. Touching as is the parable of the prodigal son, how greatly is the attractiveness of the narrative heightened when viewed as illustrating the joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. The types, parables, and allegories of scripture, rich in literary materials, are like the curiously wrought lanterns of oriental countries, which do not reveal their beauty of transparency and emblems till lighted up within; these portions of truth, though a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, reveal their excellence, splendour, and power to guide, only when through their divine emblems, streams on us the inner light of the Holy Ghost and the Lamb. An exposition of the sower or the prodigal son, that might go farther than an elucidation of the literal meaning,

without searching for the golden view of spiritual instruction there concealed, might be of use as materials ready to the hand of some other person, but would fail to give an idea of the mind of the Spirit. In all our duties, human agency must be blended with divine coöperation. In raising the fruits of the earth, there is a duty for the husbandman, and there is an influence that can be supplied only by the Creator, and in spiritual things, Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God gives the increase; so in interpreting the scriptures, in this song more especially than any other part of them, there is a work to be done by the mind in gathering all that can be furnished from the stores of biblical learning; and besides this, there must be the aid of the Holy Ghost for rendering our efforts perfect and successful. Here learning can go no further than the threshold; the key by which the mysteries within are reached, must be furnished by the Spirit of God. Like the tabernacle, beautiful in the eyes of the spectator, with its sides overlaid with gold, the song unsurpassed in poetic excellence may fix the admiration of even an unrenewed mind, but when the soul is admitted into the recesses of its interior meaning, and the hand of the Holy Spirit lifts the mysterious veil, we gaze with the trepidation of holy affection on something more entrancing than the ark of the covenant, the cherubim, and the human form seen amid the cloud of glory. Hence, says Leighton, the true experimental knowledge of Christ's loveliness and the Christian's love is the best commentary on the whole strain of this allegorical song. Fanatacism and ignorance may undervalue the indispensable and fundamental assistance supplied by learning, but the mind best instructed by the Holy Spirit will be best able to use these aids aright without either unduly exalting them or treating them with neglect.

The error into which many pious commentators have fallen, seems to have sprung mainly from the attempt to make too much out of the allegory. In expounding the types, some of the most learned and pious among the old divines, are greatly at fault by the extremes to which they have pushed their principle of interpretation. They appear almost to think that every thing must be a type in which there can be found even a remote comparison; and in those things which are really types, seek for numerous resemblances evidently not intended



by the Holy Spirit. As might be expected, this principle has been carried beyond all reasonable bounds in their efforts to expound this song. A controlling impression with them seems to be, that every thing must be drawn from this figurative language, that can be devised by a lively fancy in alliance with a spiritual heart. The duty of an interpreter of scripture is to search for the mind of the Spirit. The facts and personages, the services and figures of the word of God, may receive applications well nigh innumerable by way of accommodation and illustration, but these uses of sacred truth, however pleasing and instructive, should not be the leading aim of a commentator. Much of what is intended for exposition of the types, viewed as such an exposition, is perfectly worthless, but viewed as an ingenious improvement of scripture, is edifying and attractive. The use of a fact or allusion as a mere literary embellishment or illustration, may be allowable and profitable, when the same fact put forth in the same way authoritatively as a type, would be a perversion of scripture. And when the analogies of the real types are carried too far, we are perverting the scriptures. In every parable and allégory, there is some leading principle running through the illustration, and for this principle we must search, without expecting to find similitudes in the minor incidents introduced as necessary appendages to the narrative. There can be no better models for us to follow in interpreting allegorical scriptures than the exposition given by our Saviour of the parables of the sower and of the tares of the field.

Perhaps nothing has done more to bring this book into disrepute than the well meant but ill-judged efforts of pious men to draw some hidden meaning from almost every word. They could hardly have been more minute in dissecting and weighing the didactic portions of the epistles. Their expositions are often so overloaded with ingenious appropriations of these figures, as to crowd out of sight the one leading truth designed to be taught by the Spirit. Even with the best trained imagination, this principle must draw the expositor into offences against good taste. "Every word of God is pure. The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Nothing can therefore be clearer than the truth, that any interpretation of this inspired allégory, which is in the

least contrary to delicacy and correctness of taste, cannot be the true expression of its meaning. The inspiration of this book is established beyond all cavil; as the word of God it must therefore be very pure. The word of God must be consistent with its author and consistent with itself. In consequence of the peculiar manner in which truth is taught by allegory, any interpretation of this book must be wrong which does not harmonize with the rest of the scriptures. Here we must keep in mind the direction, "Prophesy according to the proportion of faith," understanding it, as we do, to mean, Interpreting the language of revelation, the will of God, according to the standard of things believed as gathered from the general tenor of revelation. By adhering to this principle, exercising good taste, and not trying to draw too much from the figures, while seeking humbly the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we shall find every anticipated indelicacy to vanish.

The words of ch. i. verse 13 may be taken as an example. Unto those who believe Jesus is precious, his presence is delightful. We are asked the question, how precious, how agreeable, is the society of our Lord? What are the sensations of pleasure like, that we have in his presence? We reply, what are the sensations of delight you experience from a cluster of camphire blossoms or from the fragrance of a bundle of myrrh so sweet that you love to have it dwelling in your bosom? Now the delights shed abroad in our soul by the presence of Jesus, are more pleasant than the exquisite delights thus received through the bodily senses. Such is the language necessary from our present position in the flesh, that we must use, such comparisons or say nothing concerning the loveliness of the presence of Jesus. We imagine that the passages describing the pleasure had by our Lord in contemplating the redeemed soul, ch. iv. 1-5, ch. vi. 4-7, ch. vii. 1-5, and the illustration of the beauty and loveliness of Christ, ch. v. 10-16, were not intended to be dissected so minutely as they have been by some commentators. Like the description of the New Jerusalem, these are representations of spiritual things by clusters of the richest emblems. The elegance and force of such a passage is lost by taking it to pieces and turning the fragments in every imaginable direction for finding in them various shades and views of allegory. It is as unreasonable as tearing a rose to pieces and examining it leaf

by leaf for getting at its beauty, or as breaking portions from a piece of statuary, instead of surveying it as constituting a finished whole. The use to which the emblems in such a description may be applied for illustrating truth by way of accommodation, is one thing; the leading intention had by the Holy Spirit in inditing the passage is another. The latter is what we must seek for in the interpretation of the book. The appearance of our Lord to John at Patmos was for representing emblematically the offices now sustained by him as ascended, in behalf of his persecuted people. Hence the garment down to the foot and the girdle about the breast, show him to be a still, a merciful, and gracious High Priest; his head and hairs white like wool, bespeak the eternity of the son of God manifest in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth; his eyes as a flame of fire, denote his omniscience. The exhibition given of him in the Song, ch. v. 10-16, is confined to the single idea of illustrating his loveliness. When a beautiful object is contemplated, the sight of it raises within the mind a train of pleasing emotions. The more these emotions are multiplied, the more intense must be our pleasure. The sight of the Lord Jesus as contemplated by faith, calls up within the soul clusters of ideas of the greatest beauty, and emotions of the greatest pleasure. No one thing will illustrate his loveliness, and therefore many objects of beauty are brought together, and they show by their diversity the variety of shades of beauty there is in Christ. The white and ruddy colour, the most fine gold, and raven's locks, the eyes of doves by rivers of water, the bed of spices and sweet flowers, the gold rings set with beryl, the white ivory overlaid with sapphires, the pillars of marble set on sockets of fine gold, the majesty of Lebanon with the excellency of its cedars; each one of these objects separately pours into the mind a rich stream of beautiful ideas; each reference or emblem forms by itself a pleasing study; all these objects combined and viewed at once, if this were possible, would flood and overpower the heart with beauty. Now when the inquiry is made, What is the beauty of Christ, of which so much is heard? the Holy Spirit says, view these different objects each of which is so beautiful, gather into your mind all the ideas of splendour they shadow forth, contemplate them collectively; and then, with your mind thus dazzled and drunk with beauty, think that the single view of

Christ alone raises in the soul an overflowing flood of beautiful ideas, visions, and conceptions, so deep, so rich, so captivating, that all these things with all their resplendent beauty, can only serve unitedly as one great and glorious but comparatively dim emblem, for representing the beauty of Jesus. The essential thing the mind must search for in this allegorical description is the loveliness of our Lord.

The blessed Saviour thinks of us far more constantly and far more fervently than we, even in hours of deepest emotions, think of him; he contemplates us with far more steadiness and intense interest than we can contemplate Him. How could he illustrate to us the beauty he sees in the saints, the work of his hands as well as the purchase of his blood? How tell the pleasure he has in dwelling on our souls in process of sanctification? Only by illustrations from the beauties seen around us in the world. The eyes of doves, the flock of goats on Mount Gilead, the flock of sheep coming up from the washing, the thread of scarlet, the piece of pomegranate, the majestic tower of David, whereon hung a thousand shields, the twin roes feeding among the lilies, the city Tirzah situated beautifully on Judah's hills, Jerusalem on Mount Zion, magnificent for situation, the jewels wrought by the hands of a cunning workman, the heap of wheat set about with lilies, the tower of ivory, the limpid fish-pools in Heshbon, the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus, Carmel crowned with verdure and flowers, the stately palm trees with clusters of grapes, the fairness of the moon, the clearness of the sun, the grandeur of an army with banners; all these things are beautiful in themselves, and on any one of them we can dwell long with great pleasure; what is the measure of the beauty pouring into our mind from them all combined? Yet the Lord Jesus says by his Spirit, that all the pleasure we can have from contemplating all these objects is nothing more than a shadow of the pleasure He has in dwelling on the character and ripening graces of his saints. It is no part of our duty to let the imagination so carry us away from the direct line of interpretation as to inquire what there is in the renewed soul answering to the teeth in the body, and why believers "have not such teeth as lions and tigers, but such as sheep have, nor tusks like dogs and ravenous beast, but



even shorn.”\* ch. iv. 2; as to inquire what is meant by the head of Jesus and in what respects that head resembles the most fine gold; in these and in all other particulars of the descriptions here given, the material point of the comparison lies in the beauty of the impression made and the pleasure thereby excited. The spiritual beauty of Christ could not be set forth intelligibly to our dull and carnal comprehension, otherwise than by reference to the beauty of the human form; the same is true concerning the beauty of the renovated soul of man; and it may assuredly encourage and gratify us to know that the soul of the believer excites in the bosom of Jesus, and the loveliness of Christ excites in the heart of the saint, deeper emotions of beauty and delight than can spring from the contemplation of all the objects of splendour mentioned in these descriptions, combined in one dazzling group.

Truth lies amid the beauties of allegory as the clusters of grapes hang among the branches and leaves of the vine; and as the good husbandman, instead of cutting down the vine and manufacturing it into various shapes according to his peculiar fancy, will gather the fruit and leave the branches untouched, we are using allegories aright only when gathering carefully the clusters of truth hid in their rich and luxuriant folds. This Song is a beautiful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well,—a choice vine brought out of heaven and planted by the spiritual brook of Eshcol, those waters of life along which are found those trees of life, the diversified books of the scriptures. He who gave us this spiritual vine growing so luxuriant over the fountain of the waters of the Holy Spirit for our refreshment in this valley of Baca on our weary pilgrimage to the heavenly Zion, intended that we should gather the fruit not that we should break and destroy the branches,—and that with leaf that never withers these fruits however frequently gathered by passing pilgrims should still bud forth in fresh and ripening clusters, beautiful and reviving to each successive generation even to the end of the world. Much is said about the indelicacy of this poem; but these objections have arisen less from an examination of the book on its own merits, than from looking at the fancies of commentators. With the best intentions, many

of these men instead of trying to soften down and accommodate to present views any expressions apparently too glowing for our days, seem to have exerted their ingenuity for getting from it as many amatory ideas as possible. What we mean may be seen by referring to Bishop Henry's "Commentary." We are free to say that after reading, studying, and meditating on the Song for years, we had never entertained the faintest suspicion that some passages are to be understood in their literal sense; according to his gross and offensive explanations. Let any person who is disposed to find fault with this portion of scripture, take it and read it as it appears to an unprejudiced mind unoccupied with any theories, and then let him read what has been made out of it by commentators; and we are confident he will feel that the Holy Spirit has woven the allegory of a beautiful and delicate texture, and that the offensiveness imputed to it, arises from the perversion of man. We are unable to understand what good can possibly arise from such representations as those of Bishop Percy. But they do positive injury. They degrade the scriptures in the estimation of the irreligious; and they infest the pious mind with associations of which it can be with difficulty divested and which might never have arisen without this foreign aid. Even in the commentaries of such men as Gill and Durham, amid so much that is spiritual and edifying there are interpretations offensive to every thing like good taste, and the more to be regretted because irrelevant, unnecessary, and incorrect. Like the miracles of the fabulous gospels, in contrast with the narrative of the Evangelists, many of the efforts of the human mind on this Song, in comparison with the simplicity of the language, not in the English version, but in the original Hebrew,—show with what superiority the Holy Spirit manages so delicate a subject.

Much of the learning gathered around this subject contributes little, if at all, to that spiritual understanding of the Song, which is the ultimate end of its inspiration. The history of the interpretation of the scriptures gives a pitiable exhibition of the workings of error in the human mind. There is hardly a passage without a variety of interpretations, opinions, and fancies engrafted on it; of these notions this book has received no ordinary share. So far from being able to discover divine truth by its unaided powers, how

does the mind pervert these truths when revealed, and weave from them the most silly dreams. The surmises concerning the structure of the Song, as stated by Bossuet and adopted by Bishop Percy; the fanciful conjectures of Taylor are worth very little save as a literary curiosity connected with the history of the book. It matters not whether the Song combines the characteristics of the Greek drama; whether it contains according to regular divisions the actions of the seven distinct days allotted to the celebration of the Jewish nuptials; or whether, according to Dr. Good, it consists of twelve sacred idyls. Nor is it necessary to spend time in determining the truth or falsity of the opinions that it was written to celebrate the marriage of Solomon; that the bride was the daughter of Pharaoh; or even that the circumstances here recorded are undoubted. Were these points settled beyond all cavil, they could not throw a single ray of light on the spiritual meaning of the allegory. The truths intended to be taught remain the same whether the incidents had existence in reality or in imagination. What benefit could be derived from our knowing there was a specific individual designated in the parable of the sower, who he was, what was his name? The truths and duties inculcated by our Lord, in Luke xiv. 12—27, receive no additional force from knowing that the nobleman mentioned was the son of Herod, and the far country to which he went was the city of Rome. The beauty and instructiveness of the allegory in Spenser's *Fairy Queen* are no more delightful and profitable to him who sees in the different sketches portraits of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Philip Sidney and others, than to him who may happily read the same poetry, ignorant of any such historical allusions. The very nature of an allegory renders it perfectly unimportant whether the incidents be real or imaginary.

We have deemed it more profitable and natural in meditating on this book, to view the bride as the representative of the individual believer rather than of the whole church. As the church is a collection of individuals, its state must be that of the members composing it; and no disjunction can be drawn between the love of Jesus for the collective body and his love for the several persons constituting the whole mass. In the glorious temple of revelation, a place which the Lord our God has chosen to cause his name to dwell even in brighter glory than

in the temple of the material world, does this book stand like one of the apartments in the temple on Mount Zion, small indeed, but exquisitely finished, the walls and ceiling of something richer than cedar, richer than bright ivory overlaid with sapphires, and filled with specimens of truth brought down from heaven by the Holy Spirit and here deposited for the comfort and delight of those who love the habitation of God's house and the place where his glory dwelleth. As the man skilled in geology will take a bone of fossil remains from a by-gone world, and from this alone restore the whole fabric of the creature to which it belonged, with a knowledge of its nature and instincts, so may we take the germs of truth, the heavenly fossils laid up for us with such care in the spiritual treasury of this Song, and taught by the Holy Spirit, our souls may develop the system of heavenly love, the mutual affection of Jesus and his saints, a love not native to our earth in its present fallen state, but existing in all the vigour and fulness of an immortal life in yonder heavenly world.

ART. III.—1. *The Constitution of Man*, by George Combe—on Secretiveness. See index.

2. *The Covenant and Official Organ of the Grand Lodge of the United States*. Vol. I. 1842. p. 97, on "The Secret Principle."

3. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 7th Ed. Art. Mysteries.

Our present object will be to discuss the principle of secrecy in its relations to man's moral and religious obligations. This inquiry is rendered necessary by the rapid extension and multiplication of secret societies of every kind, and the efforts which have been made to justify them upon the ground of philosophy and religion.

The love of secrecy it is said "is an element in the constitution of mind" and "must therefore, in some mode or other, find its appropriate and lawful exercise."\* "Secrecy is a virtue," says another, "a thing never yet denied."†

Now to begin with the beginning of our subject, we deny

\* *The Covenant*, p. 97.

† *Freemason's Monitor*.