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Song of Songs

Graduation Thesis

BY

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Hebrew Union College

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PREFACE.

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED.

AND

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-- PREFACE --

A preface must, I suppose, contain a number of excuses for the pages that follow. If this be true, then have I certainly as excellent material for this part of the work as I had for the rest. In order, however, not to disproportionate this thesis, the preface will have to be as short as possible, and the excuses therefore suppressed, or only in the shape of a regret.

At first I had intended to write about "The Religious, Social and Political Life in Ancient Israel based upon the Records in Samuel and the first chapters of Kings." To the study of this subject I had looked forward with intensest delight, I had done some reading and note-taking when I was forced to interrupt my work at College on account of ill health. Prof. Battenwieser who suggested the first subject to me, advised me then to take a smaller

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field of work, and suggested the "Song of Songs" as a substitute for the above. I accepted this second subject not because I had any particular liking for that poem, but simply out of necessity to lessen my work. In the course of study on this poem, however, I am glad to be able to say, that not only have I thoroughly enjoyed the study of this little book of the Bible, but I have also again verified for myself the truth, that of educative value is not the "what" but the "how." I tried, therefore, to get all the sources that I thought would be of value in the preparation for this work. In this, however, I have not been entirely successful. Without exaggeration I think I can say that I spent nearly as much time in trying to find books of reference in this city of Denver as I did in studying those books that were at my command. Such books and articles as were suggested to me by Prof. Battenwieser and a

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few others I have read and noted with delightful bewilderment some of the ingenious interpretations of the "Song of Songs". I suppressed many a smile at the stupendous seriousness of the Commentator's beautiful visions, and often I could not prevent my own imagination from seeing how powerful a vehicle of thought poetry is, especially a corrupted version of a good poem; how variegated its language, how responsive to every mood and emotion of the persistent reader, how stimulating to every dreamer of dreams!.

The following pages will reveal no world-conquering theories, no startling discoveries of my own poetic fancy as to what the book ought to contain; nothing but a modest and thoughtful study of the little book of poetry known in the Bible as *שיר השירים*, "Song of Songs". I have divided the subject into several chapters, each chapter

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treating of one or two aspects of the question to be considered. Thus in the following order I have discussed the views and theories of different commentators on the name and contents of the Book; its Literary Form and Unity; its Place in the Canon; and some of the misinterpretations consequent upon its place in the Canon. In separate chapters is presented each of the most important theories that have been held concerning the interpretation of the "Song" with a criticism on the different theories and a statement as to which one of these theories has forced itself upon me for acceptance, giving also the reasons for the acceptance of the one and the rejection of the others. The last chapter treats of the Authorship, Date and Place<sup>ce</sup> of the Composition.

I certainly regret that I was not able to do this work in Cincinnati where the labor might have been more

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pleasurable and the result more thorough on account of the advantages which the College and the Public Libraries offer. Here in Denver I was hampered by almost every facility for investigation and reference. Instead of complaining however, I ought perhaps be thankful that the Denver Library furnished me with its Encyclopedia Britannica and Budde's article on the "Song of Songs" (not, however, before having told me four times that there was no such magazine as "The New World" in the Library).

To the Faculty of the Hebrew Union College I wish to express my sincerest thanks for their kind and friendly consideration for me in my recent illness, and to whom individually and collectively I lovingly dedicate these humble efforts.

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gum, Midrash, Mishna, Talmud etc.

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Canticles. 1877. especially Dr.J.G.Wetzstein's Syrische

Dreschtafel in his Appendix.

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CHAPTER I.

NAME AND CONTENTS

OF THE

----BOOK----

## Name and Contents of the Book.

שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשׁוֹלֹמֹה "Song of Songs Which Is Solomon's" is the full title by which the poem or collection of poems which we are about to examine is known in the Bible. This title involves the theory that Solomon is the author of the poem, which even so eminent a scholar as Delitzsch accepts as the true title of the Book. This question, however, will be taken up fully in the last chapter of this thesis, while here only the shorter title שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים "Song of Songs" which is the name by which the Book is more frequently called will be considered. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים, "Song of Songs" can have only one meaning as most of the authorities (a) agree, that is "The Most Excellent Song" which the author

(a) Gesenius Dict. "Most Excellent Song."

Budde p. 1--Das schönste der Lieder".

W.R. Smith--The Choicest of Songs.

Siegfried p. 93--Das schönste Lied, das herrlichste Lied

Ewald p. 25--"Lied das sich unter Liedern auszeichnet

gegen welches alle andere verschwinden."

Delitzsch p. 17--quotes Midrash "The most praiseworthy, most excellent, most highly treasured among Songs."

to whom the poem was ascribed ever composed. That this is the meaning of the superscription there can be no doubt(a) Similar expressions occur throughout the Bible as **עֲבָרֶיךָ עֲבָרִים** Gen.ch.9v.25; **עֲרֵי עֲרֵי** Ezek.ch.16v.7; **סִרְרִים סִרְרִים** Jer.ch.6v.28; **הַגְּבֹלִים הַגְּבֹלִים** Eccles.ch.Iv.2 and etc. But it has been remarked that all these examples have no article before the plural. This is only because in the above examples the person or thing is not definitely defined, whereas in **שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים** a particular thing is spoken of, namely the definite Song before us. Other examples of a defined character are:- **שִׁירֵי הַשְּׂפִתִים** IK.ch.8v.27; **הַמִּלִּימָה הַמִּלִּימָה** and **הַמִּלִּימָה הַמִּלִּימָה** Deut.ch.1Cv.17. Some have indeed tried to accommodate the meaning of the title to their theories of the Book(b), but all such attempts

(a) Davidson, Hebrew Syntax p.49 R4.--"A superlative sense is expressed by joining a noun with its own plural "in the genitive".

(b) Ewald; Klenker und Augusti "Ein Lied von Liedern, d.h. eine Sammlung mehrerer Lieder" Blüde p.1.

do violence to the Hebrew idiom, and show only ingenious efforts to read ideas into this little phrase.

As the title indicates *שיר השירים* is a beautiful song. A mere glance at the Book will convince the reader that the subject matter is love. This much is granted by all commentators, however blind, visionary, or critical. As to the kind of love, however, which the poem expresses, and as to who is the lover and who the beloved, there are a variety of opinions. The early Jews believed it to be a spiritual love between God and Israel. The Christians thought it was a poem of love between Christ and the church or the soul (a). Grotius calls it *conjugalis* (conjugal prattle) between Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter (b). Michaelis regarded it as a picture of true wedded love (b)

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(a) Budde XI.

(b) W.R. Smith. Encycl. Brit. art. Canticles.

long after marriage. Herder calls it "Solomon's Songs of Love, The oldest and sweetest in the East," and he thinks the poem shows various phases that culminate in the placid joys of wedded life(a). Delitzsch and Moulton who hold entirely different views as to the general interpretations agree in this that Solomon is the lover and that a maiden from Shulem or Shurem<sup>1v</sup> is the beloved. "Solomon appears here," says Delitzsch(b), "in loving fellowship with a woman such as he had not found among a thousand; and although in social rank far beneath him, he raises her to an equality with himself. She is a pattern of simple devotedness, naive simplicity, unaffected modesty, moral purity, and frank prudence- a lily of the field, more beautifully adorned than he could claim to be in all his glory. Solomon raises this child to the rank of queen, and becomes

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(a) W.R. Smith. Encycl. Brit. art. Canticles.

(b) p. 5.

beside this queen as a child. The simple one teaches the wise man simplicity; the humble draws the king down to <sup>her</sup> level; the pure accustoms the impetuous one to self restraint. Following her he willingly exchanges the bustle and the outward splendour of court life for rural simplicity, wanders gladly over mountain and meadow if he has only her; wither he is content to live in a lowly cottage"

Origines also granted that it was a wedding song when he says: "Epithalamium libellus, id est nuptiale carmen(a)"

According to Ewald(b), it is a song of praise about pure, innocent, true love, which neither splendour blinds, nor flattery arrests. Innocence shows itself in the purest light. On the one hand the author shows us Solomons palace and court, and he himself The Tempter. On the other

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(a) Budde p. XX.

(b) paragraph I.

hand we are to admire a simple country maiden, pure, modest, faithful. She is a native of Engedi. One day while wandering away from home, she suddenly finds herself among royal chariots and is taken away from home (a). Solomon tries to win her love, but in vain. She remains true to her shepherd lover.

The modern writers, too, whose theory of the "Song of Songs" differs radically from the above writers, far from denying the subject of the poem to be love, assert that it is the highest kind of love, the closest, intensest, freest love of wedded life. Thus Siegfried in his

(a) Ewald finds this in "Song of Songs" chs. 6vv. 11, 12. and

Iv. 4. *אני צאת אחות דודתי לראות באחי הנעלם נראות הפרדה האפרן*

*הנשואי קרובים. לא: דעתי לפני שאתי נרפבות עלי נרבו*

"I went down into the garden of nuts,  
 "To see the green plants of the valley,  
 "To see whether the vine budded,  
 "And the pomegranates were in flower.  
 "Before I was aware my soul set me  
 Among the chariots of my princely people."  
 ch. Iv. 4--"The King hath brought me into his chambers."

introduction(a) says that the theme which runs through all the songs of the "Song of Songs" is the glory of the enjoyment of conjugal love, certainly the most natural subject, he continues, at a wedding in oriental circles. Just as Job knows only one theme, so אֵשֶׁת הַיָּדָוָן has only one theme in all its songs; the art of both is in the variation of execution.

Budde both in his book on "Song of Songs"(b) and in his magazine articles expresses the same view as Siegfried. In his commentary he says that the subject of the book is evidently love between husband and wife. Both give expressions to this theme and all other persons whether mentioned or introduced as speaking re-echo this one note. In an article on Folk Song (New World March 1893) the

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(a) p. 90.

(b) Budde p. X. & XI.

same author says: " Whether it(The Song of Songs) forms a whole or consists of many single pieces,whether it belong to dramatic or lyric poetry, and whoever may be its author this much is certain beyond a doubt: it served in its whole compass to glorify marriage in ancient Israel, and bears the most genuine imprint of folk-song."

Already in the Middle Ages among Jewish Exegetes, it was Ibn Ezra who felt that this song contained expressions of love between husband and wife, although Ibn Ezra expresses this as well as other advanced thoughts in a concealed form(a).

It is evident from all that has been said and quoted that the Song of Songs is a Love Poem in which a man and a woman express the intensest love for each other, and sing about each other's personal charms, and about the

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(a) Budde p.XII.

happiness and ecstasy each feels in the embrace of the other. This is not necessarily untrue even according to Ewald's theory, for he sees in the poem two men and one woman, but she loves only one man, and although she speaks in the presence of the king or in his palace, she always speaks of the one she loves. To me it is furthermore evident that both he and she sing of each other's personal charms and the enjoyment of each other's embrace with a freedom and suggestiveness which only connubial relationship would permit.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY FORM.

## Literary Form.

Few poems present the difficulty of classification as does this one known as "Song of Songs". In addition to complications arising from unavoidable errors that creep into any text handed down for centuries in unwritten form, or even in written form, this poem has the increased disadvantage of being a part of the Bible, and therefore its literary form has never been seriously considered because the Bible served for something far other than poetic form or literary style. In our age, however, when the Bible is being studied from every conceivable aspect, and the 'Bible as literature' is being discussed even by many who know nothing of Biblical Criticism, the question of the Literary Form of the Song of Songs is certainly not out of place. This question, however, is not easily answered. Prof. Moulton says(a): "It is of unusual importance to determine the

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(a) Biblical Idyls p.VIII.

exact technical form of this work, for upon its correct classification will depend not only lesser details, but the interpretation of the very story which the poem is to convey." Whether Prof. Moulton has classified first and interpreted after, I can not say, but I am quite convinced that this was not the order with most of the commentators on this song, that the classification has not determined the interpretation, but rather vice versa. It could not have been otherwise because it was the content of the Bible that engaged the attention and not the form, and this is all the more true of this particular book than of any other, because people could and can not yet believe that an entire book of the Bible should have as its subject matter nothing but real, human, sensual love.

Thus Ewald's theory of the book, it

seems to me, led him to classify it as a drama(a). Of course he recognizes a number of difficulties by such classification so he modifies his statement by saying that although a drama, it is not intended for the stage. It actually seems that the mathematical truth that a straight line is a curved line with zero curvature may be applied to anything whatever as being any other thing whatever with certain modifications. So then in a strict mathematical sense this poem is a drama with Ewald's modification that it was not intended for the stage. Why Ewald calls it a drama shall be explained fully in a later chapter, but being a drama, there must be something in the poem to suggest it, and these indications are perhaps not lacking but to Ewald they are very plain. The author does not speak in the Song of Songs, but allows everything to be spoken by the

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(a) Ewald paragraph 2.

persons of the poem is one point in favor of a drama. Furthermore as a drama, so this, begins in medias res. That Virgil's Aeneas, and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey which no one thinks of as dramas also begin in medias res Ewald does not mention. As a drama not intended for the stage, the author could permit the speaking persons to introduce other speaking persons and strange scenes which could not be thought of in a real drama. The maiden from Shuqem, the King, and the women of the court are the principle actors, while the shepherd is introduced only as speaking through the maiden. Solomon and Sulamit have most parts. This is the art of the author, to show how Sulamit withstands the flattery of the King. The characters, it is true are not distinguished so that one can tell exactly where one ends speaking and the other begins, yet the language

put into the mouth of each is so definitely set that no artificial indications were necessary. To justify this statement Ewald remarks that Solomon always addresses the maiden as *בְּרַצְיָתִי* "my love(a)"; the women of the court speak of her as *הַיָּפֹת בְּנִשְׁאֵי* "Thou fairest among women"(b); Sulamit always calls her shepherd friend *דְּרִיבִי* "my beloved"(c), or *יְשׁוּעַת הַבָּהֶם נַפְשִׁי* "O, thou whom my soul loveth"(d); the friend as introduced by her calls her *אִחֹתִי בְּאֵל* or *בְּאֵלָה* (e); the women of the court are called by both Solomon and Sulamit *בְּנִשְׁאֵי* (f). Luckily for Ewald, there is a sentence in the poem repeated three times(g). This sentence indicates to him the close of an act, hence he divides the drama into

(a) Song of Songs Iv. 16

Iv. 15: *אֲנִי וְרַצְיָתִי בְּרִצְיָתִי*. other examples 2v.2, 10. c. 4v.7. c. 6v.4

(b) S. of S. c. Iv. 8: *הַיָּפֹת בְּנִשְׁאֵי*. cf. also 5v. 7. c. 6v. 1

(c) S. of S. c. Iv. 13: *דְּרִיבִי*. c. Iv. 14: *דְּרִיבִי*

c. Iv. 16: *דְּרִיבִי*. also 2v.3; 2v. 8-10, 16, 17; 4v. 16; 5v. 2.

(d) S. of S. c. Iv. 7: *יְשׁוּעַת הַבָּהֶם נַפְשִׁי*. also 3v. 1; 3v. 4.

(e) S. of S. c. 4v. 8-12; 5v. 1; etc.

(f) S. of S. Iv. 5; 5v. 8, 11; etc.

(g) S. of S. 2v. 7; 3v. 5; & 8v. 5 (line 3 omitted).

four acts each closing with this sentence:

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,

"By the rees and by the hinds of the field,

"That ye stir not up, nor awaken my love,

"Until he please."

Hence the piece of literature before us according to Ewald is a drama of four acts.

W.R. Smith (a) who agrees with Ewald in general outline does not feel justified to classify the Song of Songs as a drama but simply says "that the poem is in a sense dramatic, that is, that it uses dialogue and monologue to develop a story. The heroine appears in the opening scene in a difficult and painful situation from which in the last chapter she is happily released. But the dramatic progress which the poem exhibits scarcely involves a plot in the usual sense of the word." He acknowledges that the

(a) Encycl. Brit. art. Canticles.

dialogues are so very simple that they have to be supplemented by the use of monologue "in which the heroine recalls the happiness of past days" and hopes for a reunion with her shepherd lover. "It is of course a fault of perspective," he says, "that the reminiscence is as sharp in outline and as strong in colour as the main action, but no one can expect perspective in such early art."

It seems to be a greater lack of perspective for a modern commentator to call something a drama that must be modified with a greater number of exceptions than are the rules applying to such a piece of literature. Unless this poor Sulamite's mind followed different laws of psychology than do the minds of other women, I can not quite comprehend how in such "a difficult and painful situation" she could have expressed so sweet a desire:

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,

"For thy love is better than wine."

To classify this poem as a drama must necessarily carry with it difficulties that are forever inexplicable, because there is not the slightest indication of any dramatic movement, plot, or development of a story.

Not much nearer to a true classification is Delitzsch's analysis. "It is not properly an idyll," he says, "nor yet properly a drama." Here too one can see his classification as a result of interpretation. He considers the poem a love affair between Solomon and the Shulemite, and so he sees in it "a drama in the process of formation" and calls it a dramatic pastoral(a); he divides it into six acts of two scenes each.

More positive of its dramatic form than either of the above is Driver, who, though he recognizes the poetry as lyrical in character, not only considers it a dra-

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(a) Del. p. 8.

ma, with dialogue and action, but believes it to have been originally designed to be acted.

It will be noticed that each one thus far feels that to call this piece of literature a drama is not quite correct, and so it is variously designated as "a drama not intended for action," "in a sense dramatic," "A dramatic pastoral" and what not. The fact is that it is no drama at all, nor in any sense dramatic. Here and there have been some who felt that we have here nothing but a collection of lyrics either by one or several authors. Thus Goethe says that they are fragments thrown together, and Herder calls them "pearls strung together on one string." Moulton calls it a lyric idyl, and presents it in his book as a "Suite of Seven Idyls" (b). These and other writers felt the true spirit of *Die Idyllen* and were convinced there-

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(a) Siegfried p. 86.

(b) Moulton's Biblical Idyls pp. VIII & 3.

fore that they were reading a collection of short songs, but to clear up the difficulties they lacked the historic background which Wetzstein has recently supplied.

Budde, whose theory and classification are based upon Wetzstein's investigation, says that the Song of Songs is a bundle of love songs, and in another place already quoted, he is convinced that this bundle of love songs is a collection of folk songs. Furthermore those proofs offered by Ewald and others for its being a drama namely the use of dialogue and persons speaking unintro-  
duced, these apply with equal force to lyric poetry.

But some have said, if this is a collection of songs, why are not these songs separated or capable of separation into distinct poems? Budde answers in this respect: "of course there are no full stops indicated in the song as we have it now, just as little as there are such stops

anywhere in the Old Testament. But even if they ever existed, they could certainly be lost in the process of centuries of copying much easier than annotations to dramatic poetry. Perhaps in the first copies a small space served to separate poem from poem, which in the course of time was lost." It might indeed be asked whether the misunderstanding about its being a single poem did not creep in very early and thus help to obliterate the distinctions of the separate poems.

From the fact that the dramatists feel innumerable difficulties of fitting the Song of Songs into dramatic form, and from the fact that such men as Goethe, Herder (a), Moulton, Reuss, F. Bergman and others, with little or no historic light to guide them, felt that they were dealing with a chain of songs as one expresses it, I feel compelled to

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(a) Siegfried p. 86.

accept the result of classification by Budde who has allowed the historic light of Wetzstein's investigation to cast its full rays upon his labor, and has brought to view the fact that the *Volkslieder* is a collection of Folk Songs.

CHAPTER III

UNITY.

## Unity.

Those writers who like Ewald, W. P. Smith, J. S. Jacobi, Oettli and others hold that the Song of Songs is a drama must necessarily hold that the poem is a completed whole. Delitzsch's view also implies that the book is a unit. Even Moulton who divides the Song of Songs into a "Suite of Seven Idyls," sees in it a connected story in which Solomon comes by surprise upon the Shulamite; she flies from him; he then disguised as a shepherd, visits her again, and wins her love (a). So that to Moulton also the Song presents a connected story and hence is a unity.

Driver says that the poem forms in some sense or another (b) a real unity. His reasons are the frequent repetitions of words and phrases throughout the poem, and the certain indications that the same characters are speaking in the latter as well as in the earlier parts of the poem.

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(a) Biblical Idyls p. XI.

(b) he refers here to the two views which he outlines, the traditional view and the dramatic

This last view is substantially the one of W.R. Smith

(a). He thinks that a unity is discernible not only in an external sense such as in the repetition of words and use of refrain in 2v7;3v5; and 8v4, but also in the order of the matter dealt with. Those who hold that the unity is due to interpolations and arrangement of some editor or compiler ought, he thinks, to separate Canticles into a series of lyrics each complete in itself, but as they can not do this, he holds to his theory that it is a drama, and hence a completed whole, a unity. He says that the centre of attraction is the female figure and the unity of this figure is the test of the unity of the book, the denouement, as he puts it, must therefore be at the end. He seems to have no difficulty in unraveling some plot. In ch. 8v1 the despised suitor (b) is identi-

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(a) Encycl. Brit. art. Cant.

(b) 8v7 "Many waters cannot quench love,  
 "Neither can the floods drown it:  
 "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love  
 "He would utterly be contemned"

fied, he thinks with the king of ch.I. She proved herself an impregnable fortress, she wants not the king's wealth, she wants but her own vineyard, that is her own lover. In this way by interpreting the last chapter to refer to the first, he believes to find a unity in the poem. He imagines her in a painful situation at the beginning of the book from which he frees her at the end, but he acknowledges that she is freed by no concurrence of favoring circumstances but simply by her own strong will that resisted temptation. In all the chapters of this little book, however, there appears to me not the slightest indication of any temptation put in her way, nor of any resistance on her part. Furthermore it will be shown later that there is no king in ch.I and hence there is no despised suitor in ch.VIII.

By far the ablest argument for a unity in this book is presented by Ewald(a), and it must be said in justice to him that some of his points taken by themselves might well be (a) cf. Ewald p.9 ff.

considered weighty internal evidence of a unity in the Song. He argues that many of those who claim that the Song of Songs is a collection of fragments assert at the same time that there is a thread running through all the fragments, only they fear to pursue this thread through all its intricacies. If we pursue the distinct phraseology, Ewald thinks, which each character uses (a), then the connection between the supposed fragments becomes plain, and the unity is evident. At least this much is certain, he thinks, that one author has written it all, and he certainly offers strong proofs for such belief. In the first place the language of the book is peculiar to this author and differs from anything else in the Old Testament, and this peculiarity of language runs through the entire Song of Songs. As examples are quoted Iv6: <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub>; 3v7; 8v12 which is peculiar to this book and found three times; <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub> used throughout the work whereas others would use <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub> or <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub>; and also the repeti-

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(a) quoted on p. 11 of this thesis

tion of the refrain already quoted, and found in 2v7;3v5 and 8v4. In the second place one meets everywhere throughout the book "the same circle of objects, the same color of thoughts, the same spirit. The poet has a few favorite expressions (a) and thoughts (b) which he loves to repeat. But Ewald insists that not only have we unity of authorship established, but the unity of the composition is evident as well from the "unity of art displayed, the plan of the whole, the tendency of the Song, the execution and artistic development of a connected story from beginning to end."

The arguments for the unity of the poem carry no weight with them for me, but I must admit that his arguments for the unity of authorship considered 'per se' are quite strong indeed and would be convincing, if there were no other but internal evidence from which to judge. But having studied the

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(a) The poet uses "lilies" in many comparisons: 2v1, "A lily of the valleys"; 2v2, "As a lily among thorns"; 2v16, "He feedeth his flock among the lilies"; 4v5, "Which feed among the lilies"; 5v13 "His lips are as lilies"; 6v2 "To feed in the gardens and to gather lilies"; 7v3, "Set about with lilies".

(b) 1v15, Behold thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair, Thine eyes are as doves. c14v1; 5v12; 6v9; 2v14; 5v2; etc.

Song with the help of Budde, Siegfried and Wetzstein's own exposition as found in Delitzsch's Appendix to Canticles, I feel sure that the internal evidences are not in themselves sufficient to establish the unity of the poem. The facts presented by Ewald are mostly true. There is a kind of unity running through the poem but this is because the subject matter, as Budde says, "is always love, the time and source of the pictures always spring" (a). We might even recognize the same persons throughout (cf. Iv6 & 8v8), still this does not prove the unity of the poem, but rather the uniformity of place, time and occasion (b). This uniformity is wrongly ascribed to a unity of authorship of the whole book."

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(a) It will be shown later in chs. 7 & 8 that these songs are wedding songs, and as Wetzstein says: (p. 165 Del. App.) "The greater part of village weddings take place for the most part in the month of March, the most beautiful month of the Syrian Year"; hence the time and the source of the pictures are always spring.

(b) cf. Budde The New World, March 1894. Song of Songs.



order is mentioned in Baba Bathra 15a, namely (a): Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The mnemonic sign **ישׁוּב** would indicate that this order had some currency among the Jews, at any rate this order places in juxtaposition the three books ascribed to Solomon. The Palestinian Jews had the following arrangement: Chronicles, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra. "This order was the prevalent one among the Massoretes, and is therefore to be met with in a variety of Spanish manuscripts. In this arrangement the writings of Solomon are no longer placed together, while the five Megilloth are." (b). "The fact," says Budde, (c) "that besides the shepherd and shepherdess, King Solomon, too, is mentioned in the poem undoubtedly gave the first occasion for incorporating the beautiful book in the collection of holy

(a)

כתבו (ימ"ש"ק סימן) ישׁוּב מ"ש"י שיר השירים וקהלת

(b) Buhl p. 40

(c) The New World 1895 "Folk Song"

Scriptures." A further unquestionable reason for its acceptance into the Canon is the fact that the book, on account of its title most likely, was considered as having been written before Ezra's time, for only up to that time ( ~~1872~~ ) was it thought that the holy spirit of prophecy manifested itself in writings (a).

b)---Misinterpretations Consequent Upon Its Place in Canon:

Just how the Song of Songs got into the Canon cannot be stated with any degree of definiteness. Certain it is that the beauty of the poem kept it alive among the people, and its title had much to do with securing its place among the canonical writings. Solomon's reputation as a maker of books and a wise man (b) put the stamp of wisdom literature upon anything ascribed to him, and so this as the Syriac translation still

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(a) Eudde p.X

(b) IK.5v.12-14 "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five"....and there came of all people to the wisdom of Solomon, from all Kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom."

indicates(a) was considered without reference to its content a book of Wisdom. Later on however, when the Bible was consciously considered as inspired and holy, it damned upon many an honest student that the content of the Song of Songs was out of harmony with any religious spirit, that it was a book of pure, human love between man and woman, and showed few, if any, traces of having been written with any holy or prophetic spirit. Once being in the Canon, however, there were of course those who would defend its right to such a place, and thus misunderstandings and misinterpretations necessarily followed. In Mishna Yodajim III 5 a dispute is recorded concerning the question as to whether Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs are inspired writings.

"To make unclean the hands" is the phrase used for "inspired writings." (b). The discussion is as follows:

- (a) "Wisdom of Wisdoms" written through וְחֵכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 (b) See note p.13 Delitzsch on וְחֵכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל. Also Buhl p.687.

כל כתבי הקדש מטמאין את הידים שיר השדים וקהלת מטמאין את הידים, ר' יהודה אומר שיר השדים מטמא את הידים וקהלת מחלקת, רבי יוסי אומר קהלת אינו מטמא את הידים ושיר השדים מחלקת וכו'.

"All the holy writings are inspired, therefore Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes are inspired, Rabbi Judah said the Song of Songs is inspired but about the Ecclesiastes there is doubt, while Rabbi Jose's opinion is that Ecclesiastes is not inspired and about the Song of Songs there is doubt."

A very similar discussion is found in Megilla 7a

(a). Rabbi Akiba, evidently puzzled by the fact that **שיר השדים** is found in the collection of inspired writings, accepts the convenient theory that whatever is right, and therefore wishing to silence all opposition indulges in wildest hyperbole concerning the glory and holiness of the Song of Songs: "God forbid" (b)

(a) רבי מאיר אמר קהלת אינו מטמא את הידים מחלקת ב שיר השדים ר' יוסי אומר שיר השדים מטמא את הידים ומחלקת בקהלת ר' שמעון אומר קהלת מקול ב"ש ומחמרי בה אבל רות ושיר השדים ואסתר מטמאין את הידים וכו'.

(b) Mishna Yadojim III 5

חס ושלום לצ נחלק אדם מישראל על שיר השדים שלא יטמא את הידים שאין כל הקולם כלו כדאי כיום שנתן בו שיר השדים לישראל, שלל הכתובים קדש ושיר השדים קדש קדשים

he says "that any Israelite should imagine that the Song of Songs is uninspired, for the whole world is not as important as the day on which the Song was given to Israel. All the sacred writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is most holy."

Similar injunctions are found in several places of the Talmud showing plainly that the book once being in the Bible radiated with meaning which it never would have assumed

had it not somehow gotten into the Canon. Thus Sanhedrin 101a:

הקורא פסוק של שיר השירים ועושה אהו כמין זמר והקרא פסוק בבית משאוח בלא זמנו מביא רעה לעולם

*One who reads a verse of Canticles in the time of a secular song and one who reads any verse of Scriptures in a public place inopportunately brings evil to the world.*

In Abboth de Rabbi Nathan ch.36 we find: :

המזעזע קולו בשיר השירים... אין לא חלק לעולם הזה  
*One who hums a popular tune in connection with Canticles has no portion in the future world.*

In the same book chapter I we read:

בראשית היו אומרים משלי ושיר השירים וקהלת גנזים היו שהם היו אחרים משמות ואין מן הכתובים ועמנו וגנזו אותם עד שבאו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ופירשו אותם

"At first Proverbs, Canticles and Ecclesiastes were pronounced Apocryphal, because they contained symbolical expressions: this lasted until the men of the great synagogue arose and disco-

vered a solution."(a)

From all these citations we see emphasized the fact that many evidently believed the Song to be unworthy of occupying a place among the inspired writings of the Bible, and that once being in the Canon, all sorts of excuses were offered replete with misunderstandings and misinterpretations, hyperbole allegory and mysticism, in order to retain the book in the place it occupied. The constant emphasis it seems, that the book is of religious content finally made its place secure among the books of the Bible.

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(a) Translation from Buhl p.30.

## CHAPTER V.

## ALLEGORICAL VIEW.

The Song of Song once being in the Canon, and its place secured by assertions about its worthiness of occupying such a place, and its holiness as a book of inspired origin, some cogent reasons had to be found to substantiate the claims made for the book. We find therefore the broad statements giving rise to minute application of the general principle and so we have misinterpretations or rather misguided interpretation as a direct consequence of the book's place in the Scriptures. No one could deny that the subject dealt with was love, but this love, said those that defended its religious content, was not physical, sensual, as appears on the surface, but spiritual, a love between God and Israel. In other words this was an allegory in which the bridegroom is God and the bride, Israel, Every word has been turned and returned to fit into this theory. The entire

Midrash to Shir HaChirim takes for granted that the love spoken of is that between God and Israel, and all the homilies are pivoted about this point. A few verses may be cited to show how thoroughly prevailed with this view-point were the writers of the Midrash. (Rabba)

On verse 2 of chapter I "כי טובי דודיקסין" "For thy love is better than wine," The Midrash says:

נמשלו דברי תורה במים בין בשמן בדבש ובחלב

"The words of the Thore are compared to water, to wine, to oil, to honey, and to milk."

Without any explanation the Midrash takes for granted that דודיק is God's Thorah.

In verse 15 of the same chapter we read:

"הנך יפה רכיבי הנך יפה" about which the Midrash says:  
 הנך יפה רכיבי הנך יפה, הנך יפה במצות, הנך יפה בגמילות חסדים,  
 הנך יפה במצות קשה, הנך יפה במצות לא תלשנה וכו'  
 כי ינך יונים, כי ינך הן סני הדרין שהם עינים לכדה

" Behold thou art beautiful my friend, behold thou art beautiful, thy eyes are as doves." "Behold thou art beautiful in doing the commandments, in observing charity; thou art beautiful both in com-  
<sup>a toy</sup>mandatory and prohibitory laws etc." "Thine eyes are as doves, that refers to the Sanhedrin whose eyes are directed to the com-  
 munity".

Sometimes even, when the literal sense <sup>seems</sup> too glaringly evident, the Midrash does not hesitate to change a word or expression to suit its meaning, and then proceeds to explain it allegorically. Thus <sup>וְיָבִיאֵם</sup> וְיָבִיאֵם (in verse 8) is changed to <sup>וְיָבִיאֵם</sup> וְיָבִיאֵם and then it asks: <sup>וְיָבִיאֵם</sup> "Why are prophets compared to women?" To quote all examples would be to quote the entire Midrash.

Not only the Midrash but the Talmud as well has numerous examples that show it to have been an axiomatic truth that the love relations in the book are those between God and

Israel. Thus in <sup>ל</sup>פתיחה commenting on ch.2v.3 כהפוח בועץ היער

"As the apple tree among the trees of the forest", the Talmud says

"למה נמשלו ישראל כהפוח לומר לך וכו'" "Why is

Israel compared to an apple tree?" It takes for granted at once

that Israel is the bride spoken of, and seeks to investigate only

why Israel is compared in a certain way. About ch.3v.12" ביום

"התנהו וביום שמחת תורה" the Talmud (a) says

ביום התנהו זה מתן תורה, ביום שמחה לבו זה בנין בית המקדש

In the day of his espousals, that is the giving of the Torah, and

in the day of the gladness of his heart, that is the building of

the sanctuary. Other quotation of a like character are of fre-

quent occurrence in the Talmud. "That such an allegorical inter-

pretation should have been thought of among the Jews is not

strange, nor even far fetched. God had been called husband by the

prophets time and again, and Israel his bride. Thus Isaiah says:

in chapter 54v.5 "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is

his name." In Jeremiah chapter 2v.2 we read: " Thus saith Jahve ,  
 I remember for Thee the kindness of Thy youth ,the love of thine  
 espousals,how thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land  
 that was not sown." Ezekiel's chapter 16 is more bold in its re-  
 presentation of Israel as a bride of God than is either of the  
 above."Thine breasts were fashioned and thyhair was grown;yet  
 thou wast naked and bare.... yea,I swore unto thee,and entered  
 into a covenant with thee,<sup>saith</sup> ~~with~~ the Lord Jahve,and thou becomest  
 mine." Hosea also describes the relation of God and Israel as  
 that between husband and wife. In chapter 2v.2 he says in the  
 name of God:"Contend with your mother,contend,for she is not my  
 wife,neither am I her husband;"and in verse 7:" And she shall  
 follow after her lovers,but she shall not overtake them;then shal  
 she say,I will go and return to my first husband,f or then was it  
 better with me than now."

When the allegorical interpretations had overha-



Side by side with the Jewish allegory and influenced directly by it, grew up a number of Christian visions. The Church Fathers, too, could not be blind to the fact that the subject dealt with in this book is love, and so they too had a spiritual love in which Christ was the lover and the church or the human soul was the bride. (a) This interpretation touched the electric fountains of new visions too numerous to be read by any one ~~single~~ individual and retain his sanity. Some of these might be hinted at just to indicate into what labyrinths of inextricable mysteries the human mind can be led, when proceeding without the light of science and logic.

The Catholic Church still clings to the last interpretation, and in her Bible the chapters have the following superscriptions which are self explanatory.

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(a) Siegfried p.79, Buhde p.XI; Ewald p.52. and others.

Ch. I The Church's love unto Christ

5. She confesseth her deformity
- II. The mutual love of Christ and his Church.
- III. The Church's fight and victory in temptation.
- IV. Christ setteth forth the graces of the Church.
- V. Christ awaketh the Church with his calling.
- VI. The Church professeth her faith in Christ.
- VII. A further description of the Church's graces.
- VIII. The love of the Church to Christ.
8. The calling of the Gentiles.

In the middle ages Mary was interpreted to be the bride and the whole book pictured forth the incarnation of Jesus or even the whole history of his life(a)." In modern times," says Delitzsch (b),"This allegorico-mystical interpretation is represented in the department of exegesis(Hengst), sermon (F.W.Krummader

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(a) Eubbe p.IX.

(b) Delitzsch.p.2.

and poetry (Gustav Jahn), as well as of music (Neukomm's Duet. *Er und sie*) and even of painting (Ludw von Maydell).

Luther gave it a politico-allegorical dress. He sees in it Solomon's praise of God for having blessed his reign. (a) A political dress of ancient Israel has been given it by Chr. Kaiser. The bride here is the colony on the Jordan and the lover is Zerubabel, Ezra or Nehemiah. A similar interpretation is given by Rosenmüller. The examples of interpretations from these two writers, quoted by Ewald pp. 76-77, are more profoundly absurd than the wildest dreams of Talmud or Midrash.

A somewhat milder form of Allegory but extremely clever is given by Hug who sees in the poem taken as a whole an allegoric picture of divided Israel. The bride is the kingdom of the ten tribes, Solomon is King Hezekiah. As the bride longs to be united with her lover, so does the destroyed kingdom of Samaria long to be united with the kingdom of Juda (b)

(a) Budge p. XI.  
(b) Ewald p. 40.

A very similar mild allegory with a christian cross is given by  
 Bp Lowth who, "while refusing to press details held that the poem  
 while describing the actual nuptials of Solomon with the daughter  
 of Pharosh, contained also an allegoric reference to Christ espou-  
 sing a church chosen from among the gentiles."

Now then, since there is nothing in the poem to  
 warrant any allegorical application, the number and variety of  
 such interpretations are unlimited, and bounded only by the fancies  
 of the allegorizer, and these we have seen are often enough bor-  
 dering on the ridiculously absurd, but whether ridiculous or sensi-  
 ble these explanations have all the same foundation in fact, name-  
 ly the imagination of the interpreter.

CHAPTER VI.

LITERAL VIEW.

## CHAPTER VI

## LITERAL VIEW.

Those who abandoned the allegoric theories and were not gifted with intense poetic imagination as were the dramatic theorists, had but one general line of interpretation left, namely to take the poem literally. This, however, is not so easy as one would imagine. In the first place men could not, however much they tried, disabuse their minds of the pious notion that they must justify the book's place in a collection of holy writings. Some undercurrent of a moral or ethical nature must be found in the book somehow, somewise, in order to find it worthy of a place in the Canon. They did not, or were not able, to read the book, they read only the purpose of God in putting such a book into the collection of sacred writings. And in the second place the allegoric theories had made so deep an impression on the minds of most people that it could not easily be lost from consciousness. Therefore even those who try to be literal have allegory in their

subconsciousness. Thus we find that even after the allegorical theorists had been disillusioned, there were still some who, "while refusing to allegorize, have nevertheless been unwilling to see in the poem nothing beyond a description of human emotions. They have regarded the love depicted in the poem as typical of a higher love, supposing it either (a)- to represent the love of Jahve to his people (Keil) or (b) that of the soul to God (Moses ) or (c) to foreshadow the love of Christ to the Church (Delitzsch, Kingsbury)." (1). But ignoring for the present the fact that these writers are trying to find some justification for the book's *raison d'être*, and overlooking the fact that they have not borrowed the key found by Wetzstein in Syria for unlocking ~~the~~ this riddle, their literal interpretations are by no means as literal as the name would lead one to believe. The very fact that these literal interpretations differ in their literalism is

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(1) Driver p.451.

sufficient reason to believe that they are not quite as literal as they pretend to be. Thus Theodorus of Ibsuestia who interpreted the Song literally, who in fact on account of his literal interpretation received the anathema of the second Council of Constantinople (553), regards the Song as a poem written in answer to the complaints of his people about his Egyptian marriage

(a). Grotius, another literalist, "without denying the possibility of a secondary reference designed by Solomon to give his poem a more permanent value, regards Canticles primarily as conjugal prattle between Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter." (b). Both of these writers interpreting literally see in the bride Pharaoh's daughter and in the bridegroom Solomon.

The more modern literal commentators such as Bellirach Kingsbury and even Moulton consider it a love relationship between King Solomon and a shepherd maiden. They deny that Pharaoh's

(a) 5th Canticles Enyc. Brit.  
 (b) 5th Canticles Enyc. Brit.

daughter has anything to do in the poem. Although allegorical fumes still cloud the minds of Deitzsch and Kingsbury, they are literal and literal enough to see that in the poem a man and a woman are uttering expressions of mutual love, admiration and longing for each other. Somehow they see in the man, King Solomon, and in the woman a shepherd maiden whom they call Shulamith, or the Shulammitte. "There is, we are persuaded " says Kingsbury, (a)"but one Lover in the Song, and one object of his affections, 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, (VI-2,3), she intimates herself that she is speaking figuratively."

These interpretations would indeed come very near, much nearer than they suspected to unravelling the tragedy of this little book, were it not for the misleading element—their motif of trying to justify the book's place in the Canon. Even Moulton, (a) Bibl. Commentary p.667.

though he does not state it as plainly as the others, seems to be guided by this motif. They each see in the Song a complete story depicting King Solomon, the proud, impetuous monarch becoming better and purer by marrying a simple rustic maiden whose beauty of soul lifts him upto a higher appreciation of life. Accordingly Delitzsch and Kingsbury divide the poem into six acts, while Moulton's division is into seven idyls each act or idyl showing one stage in the development of this idea. Moulton's conception is somewhat more poetic, but in general they all find the same action in the poem. I shall give in brief the division of Moulton which is typical of the literal interpretations, and free from some of the grosser elements (a).

The first idyl depicts the wedding day. Solomon leads his bride to the palace. The bride gracefully apologizes for her homeliness to the company of city-bréd bridesmaids. Later, the procession passes from the banqueting hall to the bridal chamber (IV2 (a) Shortened and copied from Bibl. Idyls p. XII ff.

-2v.7)

The second idyl goes back in time and describes the Bride's reminiscences of the Courtship, how in the midst of his sweet words in the spring time, the brothers' voices broke in with the cry that the foxes were in the vineyard. She tells a simple dream of losing her lover and finding him again (2v.8-3v.5).

The third idyl goes back to the day of Betrothal. The heroine had been won by Solomon in disguise of a shepherd, but now he returns in full state. He invites her to leave her rugged home of Lebanon (3v.6-5v.1).

The fourth idyl presents another dream. Her lover comes to her at night and while she adjusts her dress, and dips her fingers in the myrrh, she loses him and wanders forth to find him. She walks with the happy confidence "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." (5v.2-6v.3).

The fifth of these songs is spoken by the royal bride

groom. It is a passionate meditation of the charms of his bride  
(6v.4-7v.10).

The sixth and seventh idyls might be called, in modern  
phrase, the close of the honeymoon. The first is spoken by the  
bride to her husband. Amid all the splendor of the court, she  
longs for her country home on Lebanon, and appeals to her husband  
that they might visit it together. The last of the Songs carries  
out this wish. They recognize the very spot where the King came by  
surprise upon the startled maiden. They speak sweet words of love  
and of its foe jealousy, and she renews her devotion to her hus-  
band (7v.10-8v.4; 8v.5-8v.14).

## CHAPTER VII.

## DRAMATIC VIEW.

Much has been <sup>made</sup> in modern times of what has been called the dramatic theory. Even Delitzsch, Moulton, Kingsbury and others who uphold what has been termed in the last chapter, the literal view, are by some classed among the dramatic theorists (a). Their theories are designated the King-hypothesis, while the others are the Shepherd-hypothesis. Both agree in seeing the Shulamite married happily, they differ only as to whom she marries (b). Some justification there certainly is for classing the above writers among the dramatic theorists, for even according to Moulton, as the synopsis at the end of the last chapter shows, there is a development of a story acted out by the King and the Shulamite. But as these writers themselves object strongly to the view of Ewald and his followers, properly called the dramatic view, they have been separately discussed as the upholders of the literal view, or as

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(a) Budde Siegfried p.80

(b) Siegfried p.80

Driver calls it the Traditional view. In this chapter then shall be reviewed the Shepherd-hypothesis of Ewald and others.

It required but little critical insight to see that the literal view which makes King Solomon the one upon whom the Shulamite showers her love to be faulty throughout. A number of the things she says to her lover or her husband could not well have been said by her were he actually King Solomon. Thus 1v.7:-

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,

"Where thou feedest thy flock

"Where thou makest it to rest at noon?"

or again 2v.8

"The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh,

"Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

And so other verses of a similar nature convinced many that the lover is not King Solomon. Furthermore the whole foundation upon which they built their quasi-dramatic structure, namely the fact

that Solomon became better and purer by marrying this simple, rustic maiden, that his sensual desire was turned into an ideally pure love, seems to be fatally contradicted in chapter seven, for there he is still as sensual and no different in any way than he was at the beginning. These and other considerations led to the rejection of the King-hypothesis or literal view, and a new theory was spun out, which is called the Shepherd-hypothesis, or the dramatic view.

John F. Jacobi is usually considered (a) the first one to have introduced a third person into the book. The title to his book (b) shows the underlying principle that set the whole dramatic school in motion, it was that the Song was very instructive and wholesome, and worthy of an inspired author. The allegoric

(a) Budde p. XIII; Driver p. 427. Smith Encyc. Brit. "Canticles."  
 (b) "Das durch eine leichte und ungekünstelte Erklärung von seinen Vorwürfen gerettete H.L.; nebst einem Beweise, dass selbiges für die Zeiten Salomons und seiner Nachfolger sehr lehrreich und heilsam und eines heiligen Dichters würdig gewesen."

theory took for granted that the book had no religious content, and tried therefore to substitute a moral content. When this theory became ineffective, there arose at once the old question of justifying the book's place in the Canon. The literal view as upheld by Delitzsch and Kingsbury answered by some that Solomon was made better by contact with the simple maiden. The book was thus made to teach the purification of sensual love and so its religious character assured, and its place in the Canon justified. Now then if the literal view be incorrect, as the Shepherd-hypothesis claims, it must again face the same question and find some other justification, and this it does by its premise that the pure, faithful love of Shulammitte conquers all temptations of the king. According to this dramatic view propounded most elaborately by Ewald, a country girl from Shunem is engaged to a simple shepherd. King Solomon (this name being assumed because a king is mentioned, and Solomon's name is also mentioned in the

Song) chances upon her in one of his hunting expeditions, falls in love with her, and has her brought to his palace. He then storms her with his passionate affection but all in vain, she remains true to her former lover. Finally Solomon releases her and she returns home, a tower of victory against all temptation, to be united with her shepherd lover. This, in broad outline, is the theory which Ewald says the Song of Songs presents to us in the shape of a drama. Robertson Smith, Driver and hosts of others practically follow this same theory. This theory, as Budde and Siegfried state, has been developed in a number of ways with additions and elaborations, each new writer introducing new persons and new scenes, which show a wealth of poetic fancy, not of the author of שיר השירים, but of the modern commentators.

In order to follow more closely the conception of Ewald, I append here his division of the poem into acts and scenes, indicating who the speakers are in the different acts.

The refrain in 2v.7,3v.5 and 8v.4, as has already been stated, marks the close of the first three acts, and the remainder of the poem as the fourth act.

Act I-----1v.2-2v.7 Shulammitte, Court Women, Solomon 1v.2-7 Shulammitte; 8 Women; 9-11 Solomon; 12-14 Shul.; 15 Solomon; 16-2v.1 Shul.; 2 Solomon; 3-7 Shulammitte.

Act II. ---2v.8-3v.5 Shulammitte. She is left alone, thinking and dreaming of her absent lover. She again conjures the Women of the Court not to stir up love artificially as Ewald interpret the refrain to mean.

Act III. ---3v.6 -8v.4 Scene I. Streets of Jerusalem. Citizens; 3v.6 First Citizen; 3v.7-8 Second Citizen; 3v.9-11 Third Citizen. Scene II. Palace, Solomon, Shulammitte, Women. 4v.1-7. Solomon; 4v.8-5v.8 Shulammitte; 4v.9 Women; 4v.10-16 Shul; 6v.1 Women; 6v.2-3 Shul; 6v.4-7v.10 Solomon; 7v.11-8v.4 Shulammitte.

In this act Shulammitte underwent the greatest temp

tation; she is raised to the highest position in the harem, but all, in vain, she conquers, her self respect and fidelity are victorious, and she returns to her shepherd lover.

Act IV. ---8v. 5-14. Shepherds; Shulamite, Shepheard lover. 8v. 5a Shepherds; 8v. 5b-12 Shulamite; 8v. 13 Shepheard lover; 8v. 14 Shulamite.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CRITICISM ON THE ABOVE VIEWS.

## a) - Allegoric View

The allegoric theory, which sees in the Song of Songs a love affair between God and Israel, or a depiction of Israel's history, or indeed any of the numerous pious visions, hardly needs refutation. No modern student with any degree of exegetic power will see in the book an allegory. If any attempt were made to compare this poem with the chapters of the prophets in which Israel is allegorically spoken of as the bride of God, and Jahve the husband of Israel, it would seem at once that all those references are couched in such language as to leave no doubt in the mind of the reader what the prophet means. The allegory in all such cases has its definite application, and usually there is a reversal from allegory to fact, and fact to allegory. Thus e.g. when Ezekiel in chapter sixteen represents Israel as bride whom God raises and educates for Himself, the prophet introduces

the chapter with <sup>וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת-קוֹלֵךְ</sup> "Thus saith the Lord Jahve", so that not the least doubt can exist as to the meaning of the allegory. So also with other references already quoted (a). With the Song of Songs, however, it is quite different. Not the slightest hint is there anywhere throughout the Song that the language carries any hidden or mysterious meaning with it, or that the speakers embody anything but themselves. The discussions in the Mishna, in Abboth de Rabbi Nathan (b), the Jewish saying that the Song should not be studied by any one under thirty years of age, all this shows that many of the early ~~vibes~~ were not blind to the literal meaning of the book, but that it was only an afterthought arising mainly from the pious wish to justify the book's place in the Canon that suggested allegory as a solution. This is furthermore evidenced from the fact that no indication of an allegoric understanding of the book can be found before the beginning of the common era. The Septuagint shows not the slightest

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(a) cf. p.      of this thesis  
 (b) quoted on p.      of this thesis

sign of any allegoric conception, which it certainly would have done, had such an interpretation been common, just as does the Targum, the Peshita, and even Luther's translation of the book (a). The early Christian allegories are of course but gross imitations of the Jewish. Had those not been, these would likely not have been. In the newer allegoric attempts too there is little effort made at reading the book, but only at reading into the book the peculiar notions of the interpreter. Thus we leave the allegoric interpretations one and all as either wilfully, for some reason or other, misreading the book, or else blindly building up theories upon something that has no foundation in fact.

b)-Literal View.

The allegoric theory having failed to satisfy, modern ~~xxxxxx~~ scholars set about reading the book in its own light. This was of course a step in the right direction. "Most of these writers", thinks Ewald, however, "found in the book simply expressions of love without any purpose whatever. No one

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(a) Ewald p.34

thought of an ethical tendency of the whole." If this, which Ewald bewails were only true, it would not be quite as deplorable as Ewald thinks. The fact is that they did just the opposite. Delitzsch and Cook e.g. who have much fault to find with Ewald's dramatic view, are not reading the book without an ethical tendency. This is just the fault that I have to find with them. This school, although satisfied on the whole that the Song did not carry primarily any religious mystery in its bosom, nevertheless, failed to unlock this little book for the very reason that it tried to read a / connected <sup>story</sup> with an ethical tendency into the the Song, just as Ewald and his school did, only in a slightly different way. The literal view sees Solomon married to Shulamith; the ethical value of the story, as Delitzsch describes it in glowing phrases, is that this simple maiden changes Solomon's sensual passions into a pure holy love. This as has been seen in Chapter VI is the main thought of the literal view.

This view is incorrect. A careful study of the poem will

reveal that Solomon cannot be the lover spoken of nor Shalammith the beloved. It is true that Solomon's name is found in the superscription, but this as will be shown in Chapter X is not part of the book proper. There are also three other places in which Solomon's name occurs, in ch. 1 v. 5; 3 v. 7-11 and 8 v. 11.

Now in the first reference, 1 v. 5, it is plainly evident that Solomon's name is used only in a rhetorical figure as a comparison. In a similar way it is used in 8 v. 11 where the sense is beyond doubt as Budde puts it (a); "I do not envy Thee thy precious vineyard; mine is dearer to me, and I do not need a Keeper for it." This sense is reinforced by another quotation from 6 v. 8 "Sixty queens had (Solomon) etc. but my single beloved wife is dearer to me than if I possessed the whole harem of Solomon." (a). In 3 v. 5-11 Solomon is mentioned as appearing in a litter. Here it is plain that the bridegroom and Solomon are one and the same. Furthermore in 1 v. 4; 1 v. 12; 7 v. 6 where the word 'King' is

(a) "THE JEW WORLD" March, 1894. Art. Song of Songs.

used 'Solomon' might have been used instead. But why, asks Budde, the comparison of king in 1 v. 5 with Solomon in 1 v. 5?

1 v. 4---"The king hath brought me into his chamber."

1 v.5---"I am black but comely,

"O ye daughters of Jerusalem,

"As the tents of Kedar

"As the curtains of Solomon."

It seems therefore that 'King' and 'The King' are synonymous with bridegroom and husband, and 'Solomon' is simply the embodiment of kingly splendor. Thus in 3 v. 6 the king might well be spoken of as Solomon in his royal splendor as well as in the comparison of 1 v. 5. So then there is no real Solomon playing any part in this poem. This name is used only in figurative language for the type of royal splendor and is synonymous with bridegroom to whom on his wedding day such royal splendor might well be ascribed.

As to Shulamith being the bride, there is even less reason given in the poem for a such a guess. The name  $\text{שולמית}$  occurs only in one verse of the entire book (ch. 7 v.1). It seems strange if she were really the bride, that her name should be found only in one verse, and furthermore that the article should be prefixed to a proper noun. We are led to suppose therefore that the name  $\text{שולמית}$  or  $\text{שולמית}$  (liquids easily interchange) "The Shulamite" was used as an epithet only. The name  $\text{אבישג}$  is found in connection with two women who play entirely different parts in the history of Israel. The one (II K 4 v.12, 25-36) is the rich woman who provides a chamber for Elisha. She evidently has nothing to do with the Song of Songs. But the other one (I K 1 v.3, 15; 2 v.17, 21 ff.) very likely has something to do here. She was considered the fairest maiden in the whole land. "So they sought after the fairest maiden in the whole land of Israel, and found her in Abishag the Shulamite and brought her to the king. The maiden was very fair. "Even for the dramatic

theory, Budde suggests, this would not be a bad explanation.

She was the fairest woman in the land, and a virgin "אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָיְתָה לְאִישׁ" <sup>לְאִישׁ</sup>

Solomon's wrath at his brother for asking that Abishag the

Shunamite be given him as his wife, might even have given

currency to the belief that Solomon was in love with her

himself. But the fact is that even as Solomon is the

type of splendor and synonymous with bridegroom, so is she

his bride the type for beauty and synonymous with bride.

"She is indeed no other than Abishag the Shunamite," says Budde

"but only as a representative of her qualities." Thou

Shunamite means simply "Thou fairest among the daughters of

Israel". This phrase is used several times in the Song and

means the same as "thou Shunamite", which is used as a

compliment to the bride. "That she should be called the

fairest of all on her wedding," remarks Budde, "is right,

however much she is outshone by hundreds at other times." (a).

General considerations also lead to the conclusion that

(a) The argument above has been taken almost entirely from Budde's Art. Song of Songs in the New World, March, 1894.

the man in the poem is not a king. The whole dramatic school, while it believes Solomon to be one of the characters in the poem denies that he is the lover. Martineau also a follower of the school goes still further and says that Solomon is never introduced as speaking (a). If the lover really were a king such verses as 1 v. 7, 16; 2 v. 6, 9 ff.; 6 v. 2, 3 could certainly not be addressed to him or said of him.

Furthermore, granting that the lover is Solomon, which I cannot and do not believe, and that the beloved is Shulamith, which is also not true, there is still no indication in the book of any such beautiful dream, that he becomes purer and better by contact with her. His admiration is for her physical beauty throughout and his passion is just as sensual at the end as it is at the beginning. Not only so, but there is no indication anywhere that she tries to exert any purifying influence upon him. She is, if anything, more sensual in her expressions of love for him than he is for her.

(a) Budde v. XI

Hence there is no King, no Solomon, no Shulanite, and no refining influence upon him and the whole literal view therefore falls by its own weight.

c)-----Dramatic View.

The dramatic view recognizes truly that Solomon cannot be the one on whom the maiden from Shunan showers her love. But Solomon's name is mentioned and so he must be given some part to play. Then there is the whole longing to justify the Lord's placing such a book in the collection of sacred writings and so an ethical tendency must be found. Putting all these things together we get a drama of a very unique character. The principal actors, according to Ewald are Solomon, a maiden from Shunan, a Shepherd, Court Women and citizens. As the parts for the different speakers are not indicated, they are differently distributed according to different interpreters. The most unheard of scenes straining

the wildest imagination are seen in this little poem of 116 verses.

To illustrate; (a) ch. 1 v.2-8 is spoken by <sup>f</sup>Sulamit according to Ewald; according to Stickel Sulamit speaks only 4 verses 2-6, while 7 to 8 are spoken by a second pair of lovers. Oettly makes the following division: vv. 2-3 a court woman; v.4a <sup>f</sup>Sulamit; v.4b all court women; 5-6 <sup>f</sup>Sulamit; 7-8 presents a play within a play. In this wise it is the whole book cut up by the dramatic school.

That this little book of the bible is not a drama is evident in the first place by the very fact that so many analyses, and such a variety of actors and scenes are possible, which shows that there is nothing in reality to give foundation to these structures.

Secondly: Not only the Hebrews but the entire Semitic literature knows no drama (b). If this Song of Songs were a drama it would be the only exception to the

(a) Siegfried p. 84

(b) Budde p.XIV, also his article Song of Songs in the New World, March, 1894; Siegfried p.85

spirit of Semitism. That dramatic literature may have sprung from such seed as is found in Ex.15 v.1 ff., and vv.20-21 and in I Samuel 18 v.7 if Semitism and especially Hebraism had shown any such tendency, is perhaps possible. But there was among the Hebrews no such individuality for women that would make it possible for a maiden to work out any such ethical purpose as this Shulamite is supposed to have done. In the ancient Hebrew state the girl never had anything to say in matters relating to marriage. The contract was made with her father (a), or with her brothers (b). If she was asked at all, as was done with Rebecca, it was done only out of formality, for, in fact, she had already been given away as Genesis 24 v. 51 shows.

Thirdly: The dramatic view to have any ethical value must and does see the maiden unmarried at the beginning and remaining so till the end, when she is happily united with her

(A) cf. Gen. 24 v. 50 ff. also 34 v. 12.  
 (b) cf. S. of S. 8 v.8,9. Gen. 34 v. 7, 13 ff.

shepherd lover. This however is not borne out by the contents of the book. The very opening chapter shows such intimate relationships as could not possibly exist among the Orientals between unmarried people. Such rendezvous as are spoken of in the Song were unheard of among Semitic peoples. "Even the slightest intimacies," says Budde (The New World, 1894), "are permitted only on the eve of the wedding day, and maidens with whom it was otherwise would take good care not to boast of, or to give a description of her lover like that in ch. 5 v. 10 ff." Furthermore, such a passage, as ch. 6 v. 1 cannot by the blindest reader be taken to mean anything but the enjoyment of wedded love. If then they be already married at this stage of the drama, the rest of the play has no point and is therefore idle repetition, useless verbiage.

Fourthly: Granting that Ch. 3 v. 1-4 and Ch. 5 v. 2-7 are real dreams, it is very strange, to say the least, for so pure and innocent a love, as the dramatic view makes her

to have dreams of such a nature.

Fifthly: The structure of the drama involves that she be always <sup>talking</sup> to the King about her absent lover. He showers admiration, longing and flattery upon her, while she soothes and quiets him by describing in the same passionate language the charms of her own lover. The poor King continues to flatter, and she continues to rave over her absent friend. To think that Solomon, an oriental monarch, would allow an insignificant shepherd maiden or any maiden whatever to give him the mitten, when he might simply take her and make her his wife, is ridiculous in the extreme. He takes her into his palace, storms her with his affections, allows her to mock him with descriptions of her beautiful lover and then though passionately in love with her allows her to return in triumph to her country friend, all this is so perfectly absurd that one can only hope that the dramatic school is not in earnest. Delitzsch has well pointed out that the use of

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אָהַבּ in l v.16 and אָהַבּ in l v.17 shows that the man and  
 woman are talking to each other. If she meant someone else but  
 the one she is speaking to, the poet should at least not have  
 used אָהַבּ but אָהַבָּהּ. The dramatic view seems to me infinitely  
 more absurd than either of the other views.

## CHAPTER IX.

## Explanation In The Light of Modern Research.

Even if there were no other theory to explain satisfactorily the Song of Songs, the theories presented in the previous chapters would still be inadequate to unravel the mystery. Fortunately, however, we have a key in Wetzstein's "Syrische Dreschtafel" (Bastian's Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 1873, and Appendix to Delitzsch's Commentary) which unlocks this little book with perfect ease. From Wetzstein's study of Syrian life it becomes perfectly plain that we are dealing here with a collection of folk-songs that were recited and sung at wedding celebrations among the ancient Jews. This custom has been so well preserved among the Syrian peasants, and the songs used for such occasions even today have so similar a content to those songs in the Song of Songs, that there can be no doubt in the mind of the student as to the correctness of Wetzstein's view. "In the Orient" says Budde in his article on Folk Songs of Israel, "the culminating points of joy and sorrow in every human life - marriage and death - are especially the fixed poles around which folk-poetry

turns, in the bridal song and the strain of lamentation." From the same source we learn that women were employed in ancient Israel as professional mourners, "whose business it was to chant in regular measures the folk songs in lamenting tones, altering, selecting and changing to suit the occasion." Thus also was the custom for the celebration of weddings for which men and women were hired to sing the beauty and charm of the bride and bridegroom, of the sweetness of conjugal love. These songs by the very nature of being folk songs were seldom written down, but used by the professional singers and changed as occasion required. It is only by accident that some of these were preserved for us in the Song of Songs, and some of the funeral dirges in Lamentations. Indeed once and once only, one of the prophets, Isaiah introduces into his prophetic teaching a popular wedding song which he skilfully employs in his sermon (Is. 5v.1). This song in Isaiah, too, is so similar to those in Canticles that we are safe in believing them to have been commonly used among the Hebrews.

Hence Wetzstein's article "The Table in The King's Week"

gives us the key to the entire book of Canticles. It shows us that among the Syrian peasants for every wedding the threshing board, ornamented with "Gold and purple"(a), is raised into a throne on which the young couple play king and queen for one week. Before them the villagers present all kinds of games, dances are being held in which occasionally the bride takes part and everything is arranged to entertain the royal pair. In fact the whole week is called the king's week.

"The fairest period in the life of the Syrian peasant says Wetzstein, (Del. Appendix p.165) "are the first seven days after his marriage, in which along with his ~~bride~~ young wife he plays the part of king (melik) and she queen (melika), and both are treated and served as such in their own district and by the neighboring communities."

We can understand now perfectly the terminology king and queen in the Song of Songs about which commentators have had such beautiful visions. The poor farmer whose life is made up

(a) Song of Songs 3v.10

of honest toil and many a trouble is during the week of his wedding called king, and the young wife, who soon enough will have her share of life's burdens, is called queen. The grandest comparisons are sought from the people's history, and so Solomon's name suggests itself as the embodiment of kingly splendor, and ~~was the most beautiful woman~~ the most beautiful woman

Abishag the Shunamite, is the stock example for female beauty.

Not only does he play the part of king, and she that of queen but as is natural and fitting on such a happy occasion, he is the grandest king and she the most beautiful woman that Israel's history knows. Thus the most confusing portion of the Song, which led many astray, ch. 3v. 6-11 becomes quite evident. As the bridal procession nears the throne erected for the royal pair, some one sings a song greeting the bridegroom as King Solomon in all his glory, and the shepherd boys and villagers acting as bride's-men (cf. Judges 14v. 11) (לַיִם, סַרְסִיִּים, הַבָּרִיִּים, וְיָדִים) are called the mighty men of Israel, while the women in attendance are the daughters of

Jerusalem . Verse 11 of this chapter (a) certainly makes plain that that this king Solomon has been crowned only for the special occasion of the wedding week, and explains also the beautiful figure used in Psalm 19v.6 "הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִבְּרֵיתוֹ" "The sun is like a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber," for nothing more beautiful than this to the simple country mind can be imagined. Commenting on this whole custom, Wetzstein remarks philosophically (b): "The more oppressive, troublesome and unhappy the condition of the Syro-Palestinian peasant, so much the more reasonable does it appear that he should be honored for a few days at least, and be celebrated and made happy . And considering the facility and wantonness of divorces in the Orient, the recollection of the marriage week, begun so joyfully, serves as a counterpoise to hinder separation."

Wetzstein continues to tell us that the greater part of

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(a)3v.11: "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon.  
 "With the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him  
 "in the day of his espousals,  
 "And the day of gladness of his heart."

(b)Del.p.166.

village weddings take place in the month of Adar, (March) the most beautiful month in the Syrian year. "Since the winter rains are past, and the sun now refreshes and revives, and does not as in the following months, oppress by its heat, weddings are celebrated in the open air on the village threshing-floor, which at this time, with few exceptions, is a flowery meadow."... "The description passes over the marriage day itself, with its pomp the sword dance of the brides, and the great marriage feast, and begins where the newly married, on the morning after the marriage night appear as king and queen, and in their wedding attire receive the representatives of the bride's-men, now their ministers (mezer), who presents them with a morning meal. Then the bride's-men come, fetch the threshing table, and erect a scaffolding on the threshing floor, with the table above it, which is spread with a variegated carpet, and with two ostrich-feather cushions studded with gold, which is the seat of honor for the king and queen during the seven days."

"After the maidenhood of the newly married damsel

Chap.

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has been established (Del.p.172) before the tribunal of the wedding festival, there begins a great dance; the song sung to it refers only to the young couple, and the inevitable wasf i.e. a description of the personal perfections and and beauty of the two forms its principle contents? Such a wasf was sung also yesterday during the sword-dance of the bride; that of today(the first of the seven wedding-festival days) is wholly in praise of the queen; and because she is now a wife, commends more those attractions which are visible than those which are veiled. IN the Song, only VIIv.2-6 is compared to this wasf. As for the rest, it is the lovers themselves who reciprocally sing. Yet this may also have been done under the influence of the custom of the wasf. The repetition 4v.1-5 and 6v.4-7 are wholly after the manner of the wasf; in the Syrian wedding songs also, these encomiums are after one pattern."(a)

Here again in these citations from Wetzstein we have a picture of what is painted in the Song of Songs. Everything at

(a)On pp.174-175 of Del's Appendix is quoted one of the wasfs which Wetzstein heard himself. In structure and content it is almost exactly like one of the songs of Canticles, ch.7 for example.

these weddings to-day seems to be as it was centuries ago when Israel was yet in Palestine. A great number of songs are sung either by a male or female singer, while the chorus joins in the refrain. Most naturally all these songs treat of some feature of the feast, but the most prominent one which has its fixed place in all these weddings is the wasf.

In the Song of Songs we find in 7v.1(also 6v.4b,10b)the first wasf of the bride, called the sword-dance which is sung on the evening of the wedding day. The bride dances with a naked sword in her right hand, and a handkerchief in her left, lighted by fires, and surrounded by a company of men and women who sing her wasf, found in the Song in ch.7v.2-9. The conclusion of the first day's festivities is evidently pictured in 5v.1, where the bridegroom speaks of the enjoyment of his love, and bids his friends eat and drink and follow his example,perhaps of carrying off a bride, and in 5v.10-16 is a wasf of the bridegroom.In fact chs.4,5,6 and 7 with the possible exception of a few verses here and there are the wasfs of the king's week. Chs.1v.9-20.5 treat

of the same common subject, the charms of bride and bridegroom. Ch.6v.4-7 is a shorter form of 4v.1-5 and this may show either a simple repetition, or, what is more likely, the same frame work of the same subject. On v.3v.11 Wetzstein says that the custom of crowning the bridegroom no longer exists in Syria, but the bride is still crowned (Del.p.166) and this ceremony is described at length.

These wasfs are part of every Syrian wedding and were beyond doubt part of every Hebrew wedding. Other themes related to the feast are, of course, also touched, some of which are preserved in the Song of Songs. Thus in 2v.8ff in the beautiful words is a song, put in the mouth of the bride, which verifies Wetzstein's statement about the time of the Syrian weddings, and the reasons given by Wetzstein are found almost exactly in this Song. In another song, the bride gently mocks her brothers who feared she would not get married in time (8v.8-16). A beautiful song of married love is in 8v.6, and a number of other songs and fragments of songs are throughout the book. Since in the Orient love-making

before marriage is impossible, it should be put in the mouth of the couple who thus persuade themselves that they thought of each other always, and were instinctively drawn towards each other even before married. She sought to feed her flock near his, dreamt of him at night, sought to embrace him, and now her dreams are fulfilled.

From all this it becomes unquestionably evident that in the Song of Songs we are dealing with a collection of folk-songs used in ancient Israel at wedding celebrations. Not only so, but there is apparently no attempt at an orderly arrangement of the different songs. For as Budde points out, (a) "The wasf of the ~~wedding day~~ wedding day sung with the sword dance of the bride is in ch.7 i.e. at the end instead of at the beginning, before the reception of the bridegroom-King in ch.3v.6-11. Or should this perhaps be the introduction not to the throne but to the wedding on the previous day, then ch.7 will have to be placed between this and the wasf of the first day of the king's week, i.e. between chs.3v.6-11 and chs.4-6. It follows, therefore, that the

a. The New World 1894.

songs are brought together irregularly, and the last trace of an orderly arrangement disappears."

As to a kind of unity which the dramatic and literal schools see in Canticles, there can hardly be any difficulty now. The subject of the poems is always love, and let it not be forgotten that it is married love from the very first word, for aside from the fact that these are wedding songs and the lovers are man and wife, no other but married love is possible in the Orient. Furthermore as we learn from Wetzstein and from the Song of Songs (2v.11ff) the time of these weddings is always spring when

"The rain is over and gone;

"The flowers appear on the earth;

"The time of the singing of birds is come"

and all nature wears a holiday attire. Thirdly the place for these celebrations is always the threshing-floor, and so there is indeed a threefold thread of unity running through all the Songs; this thread however does not at all weave the material into a drama, but rather leaves the separate songs in the relationship above indicated.

Chapter X.

Authorship, Date, and Place of Composition.

(a) Authorship. The Jews of the Talmud, Midrash and even down to our own time, accepted the words "שֵׁן שֵׁן לְשׁוֹן שֵׁן" as meaning that Solomon wrote the Song of Songs. In Midrash, Rabba this is plainly stated "שֵׁן שֵׁן לְשׁוֹן שֵׁן מִשְׁלֵי קִהְלֵת וְשִׁירֵי הַשִּׁירִים". In fact it was only this belief in Solomon's authorship that surrounded the book with the halo of sacredness which clings to it even to our day. The superscription itself may have been suggested by Solomon's name in the book, and because Solomon was "the" writer of wisdom literature ( I K.ch. 5<sup>v</sup> 12) just as David was "the" writer of religious poetry, everything supposed to contain wisdom was ascribed to Solomon, and vice versa, everything ascribed to Solomon must contain wisdom.

Delitzsch and Kinsbury ( Cook's Bible Commentary) have no particular aversion to retain<sup>ing</sup> Solomon as the author of the book. But as they are more intent on seeing an undercurrent of religious mystery than on divid<sup>ing</sup> the authorship, their opinion on this point does not carry much weight. Even they consider Solomon's authorship of the Song of Songs more of a

probability than a certainty, for Delitzah says ( p11 ) " if not the production of Solomon, it must at least have been written near his time." If, therefore, we take away the title of the

book שיר השירים אשר לשלמה, there is nothing left on which to base Solomon's authorship. Just this very thing has been done. The superscription it is agreed by most writers is not from the same pen as the rest of the book.

Aside from general considerations, the following fact is sufficient to establish this point. In the superscription אשר is used as the relative pronoun, while in the body of the book the shorter form שׁ is consistently employed throughout. Hence the foundation upon which Solomon's authorship rests being removed, there is nothing left to support the theory.

Now while according to the allegoric and literal schools the authorship of Solomon may have a probability in reason, though not in fact, with the dramatic school Solomon's authorship is out of the question. Solomon would be the very last one to write such a book as this school conceives it to be,

the only one indeed who would not have written it, for he is the example of wantonness and flattery who is baffled by an innocent, simple country girl. Solomon certainly never could have written anything like that about himself.

While then we can state with a great deal of certainty that the supposed view of Solomon's authorship is incorrect, we cannot state with any certitude who the author was. According to the modern view, which appeals to me as the correct one, ( presented in the last chapter) we cannot speak of an author at all, because folk songs live in the mouth of the people and are curtailed and augmented without compunction to suit time and occasion by any one capable of making such changes. We can therefore speak only of an editor, compiler, redackor.<sup>t</sup> Budde is of the opinion that most of these songs flow pure from the mouth of the people, that some one has evidently written them down as he remembered them, and that later a mutilated or torn copy came into the hands of another, whom we shall call the redastor,<sup>c</sup> who " thinking he was dealing with a whole attempted

a restoration and fitted them together as best he could. "

In this refitting there seems to have been no definite plan, for we see that the first chapter presents the story in medias res and the beginning of the festivities which ought to be in chapter I we find in ch. 3p 6- 11, while the sword dance and the wasp of the bride which belong on the first day's program are found in ch VII, and so on throughout the book. So that not only is there no sequence of time observed, but the different scenes themselves are often interrupted by pieces that are plainly out of place there, giving evidence of a retouching hand. Thus ch 4p 8 certainly interrupts the wasp of the bride ch4 v 1-7; v.9-ch5 v1, or if ch4 v9 to ch5 v1 is a separate piece then ch4 v8 separates the two. Budde points out that ch4 v8 is evidently a misunderstanding of the redactor who took the references literally. It is weak, unpoetical and unquestionably shows an insertion. For in ch4 v11 the smell of the bride's garments are compared to the resinous fragrance of Lebanon. The same thought is found in ch4 v 16. In verse 12 there is the fresh fountain

from Lebanon, and in verse 6 we have the poetic expression of the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, all of which are figurative phrases for the charm and attraction of the bride.

It is evident therefore that the redactor did not in ch4.v8 understand his text. Similar misunderstand<sup>ing</sup>s are frequent (cf. The Song of Songs by Budde. The New World 1894 p 73ff)

To sum up briefly: Solomon is not the author of the Song of Songs. Properly speaking, there can be no author at all because this is a collection of folk songs. Some one probably wrote them down as they occurred to him, and later some one else finding them in fragmentary form and believing them to be a corrected whole tried to restore them to the best of his ability.

( b ) Date. When Solomon 's authorship was given up by most commentators as untenable, it was still held that the book belonged to the time of Solomon's reign, written perhaps by some court poet or prophet (a) Ewald contends that the book was written in the tenth century B. C. E. His arguments are strongly put and are briefly as follows: The only reason for putting the date of the book after the exile can be the few Aramaic expressions found in it, but this language may be due to other reasons than a late origin. In the North of Palestine the dialect was more akin to Aramaic than in the South. As the North borders on Aramaea, it naturally shows much more and earlier Aramaic influences. Hosea from the North does not write as pure as his contemporaries from the South. Ewald points out that the Song of Deborah, one of the earliest poems, shows Aramaic influences because of Northern origin. (Judg. 5 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100) He continues that the language of the *Song of Songs* ~~is~~ is lofty and no expression in it could have arisen after the exile when the language was at its decline. Other peculiarities he believes, are sufficiently explained <sup>by the fact</sup> that the author was from (a). *Kingsbury, Bible Commentary, p. 662.*

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the North and wrote in an easy and popular style. He admits that  $\nu$   $\text{פָּרָשָׁה}$  in literature written in and around Jerusalem is a sure sign of late origin. No writer of Judea knows it till the exile, but in the North it might have been used much earlier. (cf. Judges ch. 5 v. 7 - ch. 6 v. 17 - ch. 7 v. 12 - ch. 8 v. 26) The foreign words  $\text{עֲוִיָּה (112)}$   $\text{עֲרִיב (413)}$ , and others, which are pointed to as a sign of late origin, might have been brought in, Ewald thinks, long before the exile just as well as later. Finally, he says, had the book been written after the exile, how could they so soon have misinterpreted it? But if it came from antiquity, it might therefore alone be taken into the Canon.

Now to decide the exact date of these poems is of course impossible. They were very probably not written as early as the 10th century before the Christian era. Ewald's remark that because from antiquity, it might therefore alone be taken into the Canon does not carry quite as much weight as he thinks, for the discussion in the Mishra<sup>n</sup> shows plainly that grave doubts were entertained as to the propriety of admitting the book, and such doubts would



century B. C. E.

(c) Place of Composition. Ewald believes that the book was written in the North. The Aramaic expressions and the foreign words are according to him to be explained by this fact: The dramatic school is forced to place the book in the North, for, according to its views, Solomon is by no means complimented in this book, and as Solomon's name was always honored in Judea, no one would have dared to write such a book there. Much weight is put upon the name Tirzah (  $\pi\gamma\eta\alpha$  ) in ch. 6 v. 4. This city was the residence of the Israelitish Kings, and therefore it is supposed somehow to hint at the author's home. But why this should be so when Jerusalem is mentioned in the same verse I can not understand. Since, however, I do not believe the S. of S. to be a drama, I need not fear that the author will feel any unpleasantness if I put him in the South. The fact that the mountains of Lebanon are mentioned, and Tirzah, a Northern city, is not sufficient evidence that the author lived in the North. Why should not these places be known to one who lives in the South? There seems more reason to believe that these poems originated and were used in Judea than that they came from

the North. In the first place there are five cities of Judea mentioned (Engedi, Saron, Hesbozn, Kedar, Jerusalem) and only one of the North. More valuable is the fact that the expression "Daughters of Jerusalem" is used several times figuratively for the women attending at these weddings, and this leads reasonably to the belief that these songs were recited and copied in or near Jerusalem.

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