

**The Works of John Gill**



**An Exposition  
of the book of  
Solomon's Song**

**John Gill, D.D.**

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of the book of  
Solomon's Song**



**JOHN GILL, D.D.**

1697-1771

AN  
**EXPOSITION**  
OF THE BOOK OF  
**SOLOMON'S SONG**

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COMMONLY CALLED  
**CANTICLES.**

WHEREIN THE AUTHORITY OF IT IS ESTABLISHED AND VINDICATED AGAINST OBJECTIONS,  
BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN; SEVERAL VERSIONS COMPARED WITH THE ORIGINAL TEXT;

*The different Senses both of Jewish and Christian Interpreters considered;*

AND THE WHOLE OPENED AND

**EXPLAINED IN PROPER AND USEFUL OBSERVATION.**

“Canticum canticorum spiritualis quaedam sanctarum est voluptas mentium, in conjugio illius regis and reginae civitatis, quod est Christus and ecclesia; sed haec voluptas allegoricis tegminibus involuta est, ut desideretur ardentius, nudeturque jucundius, and appareat sponsus, cui dicitur in eodem cantico, aequitas dilexit te and sponsa quae ibi audit, charitas in deliciis tuis.” –Aug. de Civ. Dei, 1. 17, c. 20.

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**BY JOHN GILL, D.D.**

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**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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## PREFACE.

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THE following Exposition was delivered in one hundred and twenty-two sermons, to the Congregation where God in his providence has placed me, and were designed only for their use, profit, and edification. Had I had any thoughts of publishing it to the world when I entered upon it, perhaps it might have appeared with some little more advantage than now it does; nor had it appeared now, had not the importunity of the people to whom I minister, with others, obliged me to it; to which I the more readily complied, considering that the authority and usefulness of this book are called in question in this loose and degenerate age; in which, not only this, but all scripture is ridiculed and burlesqued, and the great doctrines of faith therein contained treated with the utmost sneer and contempt; and therefore would willingly contribute all I can towards the vindicating of this, or any other part of the sacred writings; which, being given by inspiration of God, are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.”

I have in the performance of this work, consulted the original text, with the versions of several learned men; and have taken notice of them where they have differed from our translation, or have furnished out a proper and useful observation. I have also inspected several interpreters upon this book, both Jewish and Christian, and have collected their several senses together; and generally, if not always, have humbly given my opinion which is the most eligible. The versions which I have made use of, are those of the Septuagint, the Vulgate Latin, the Tigurine, Junius and Tremellius, Arias Montanus, Pagninus, &c. The writings and interpreters which I have consulted, of the Jewish, are Shirhashirim Rabba, Targum, Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Alshech, and Yalcut Simeoni, together with the books of Zohar and Rabboth, which are interspersed with the senses of various passages in this book. Of Christian interpreters, Alcuin, Foliot, Mercerus, Cocceius, Sanctius, Ainsworth, Brightman, Cotton, Durham, Patrick, &c., from all which I have received profit and advantage; and from none more than from the short notes of the incomparable Ainsworth, and the sweet observations of the excellent Durham; I mention these authors, not by way of ostentation, but as in duty bound to acknowledge by whom I have profited; for, as Pliny says,\* “Est benignum et plenum ingenui pudoris, fateri per quos profeceris.” Where two or more senses of any passage have offered agreeable to the analogy of faith, I have considered them all, and have made what improvement of them I was capable of, leaving the reader to judge for himself, which of them is most preferable; this I thought to be a much better way than to be too positive and dogmatical in the sense of a text, especially in such a part of scripture which is so very mystical and obstruse. If I should be thought in any

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\* Prefat. in Nat. Hist.



part of this work to have stretched the metaphors too far, I hope it will be imputed to an honest zeal, and a hearty desire to set forth the glory of Christ's person, and his exceeding great love to his church and people ; to do which, all tropes and figures, all the flowers of rhetoric, fall abundantly short. I have been obliged to contract what I delivered sermon-wise, lest the work should swell to too large a bulk, but the substance of it is here contained.

I would only observe, as to this edition \* of the work, that I have made various additions to it ; having, since the publication of the second edition met with an objection or two to the antiquity and authority of the book itself, I thought it necessary to consider them, and remove them ; being unwilling that any thing should lie against a book so grand, so sacred, and useful. I have also given a summary of the contents of each chapter, which was wanting in the former editions ; and though I had in many parts of the work, attended to the literal sense of passages, yet not so frequently as I have in my shorter notes on this book published in my Exposition of the whole Bible : I have therefore inserted from thence many things relating to the literal sense, with many others added, which will greatly enrich this edition, and make it more entertaining ; and will greatly serve to show the propriety of the allusions, figures, and metaphors made use of throughout the whole ; and to illustrate and confirm the spiritual meaning of this sublime and mysterious book. I have left out at the end of it, the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase, with my notes thereon, which were in the former editions, they being of little use and benefit, especially to common readers.

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\* Preface to third edition.

## PREFATORY ADDRESS,

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

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THE immortal Toplady has truly declared, that, “ while true religion, and sound learning, have a single friend in the British Empire, the WORKS and name of GILL will be precious and revered.”

My esteemed friend and Christian brother, Mr. Doudney, has *accomplished* his arduous undertaking, and presented us with a beautiful edition of “ Dr. Gill’s Commentary,” at an amazingly low price. The Christian Minister has now a sound and learned gospel Exposition of the sacred Scriptures. We have also Gill’s *whole mind*, in doctrine, experience, and practice, in his elaborate “ Body of Divinity;” a new edition of which I carefully revised for the press in the year 1839. And if the reader would be acquainted with a sterling work, that plucks up by the roots the *Arminian* heresy, and wrests the sacred Word out of the unhallowed hands of *Pelagian* Expositors, then let him consult “ Gill’s Cause of God and Truth.” But there *yet* remains (I trust) a great number of plain and *precious disciples* of the meek and lowly Jesus, that are *not* ministers, and who have also but little time, or perhaps taste, for *polemical* and *critical Divinity*, who nevertheless *have* a relish *for*, and an appetite to feed at a table well spread with *rich experimental provisions*, and are glad to partake of “ *old wines well refined*.” I am truly thankful that *these* persons, who are “ heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” are not *passed over*, but that our good brother has catered for *them* also, in re-publishing “ Dr. Gill’s Exposition of Solomon’s Song;” a most blessed work, originally delivered in 122 sermons. It is very scarce, and exceedingly valuable. I know not a work containing more experimental savour, written by man. I have, during more than forty-five years spent in the Christian Ministry, repeatedly obtained *marrow and fatness* from a perusal of its pages. Nothing from Gill’s pen has perhaps been made so useful to *devotional* Christians as *this*; so that I can *well* recommend it to all those who would cry out with the Spouse, “ Let *Him* kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine ” (Song i. 2.) Reader! take the exposition of this verse, as a commencing *sample*.

The celebrated James Hervey was a very great admirer of this work. In his “ *Theron and Aspasio*,” we have the following high encomium (not too high) upon Gill on the Song :—“ It has such a copious view of sanctified invention running through it, and is also interspersed with such a variety of delicate brilliant images, as cannot but highly entertain a curious mind. It presents us also with such *rich and charming displays of the glory of Christ’s Person, the freeness of his grace to sinners,*

*and the tenderness of his love to the church*, as cannot but administer the most *exquisite delight* to the believing soul. Considered in *both* those views, I think the work resembles the *paradisaical* garden, described by MILTON, in which

‘ Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue  
Appear’d, with gay enamell’d colours mix’d.’ ”

This Exposition has stood the test of exactly 130 years, (the sermons were preached in the year 1724;) it has obtained the meed and high approval of the truly wise and good; so that *now* all that *modern* men may allege, in *depreciating*, will be but as the paper pellets of a school-boy against a well-constructed fortification. Gill’s works “praise him in the gates,” Prov. xxxi. 31.

I need add no more: but, I shall consider a long ministerial life to be *well* closed, in recommending “Gill on Solomon’s Song” to the “Generation following.” Psal. xlviii. 13.

J. A. JONES.

*London, March 8th, 1854.*

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## TO THE READER.

BELoved!—We are not fond of blank leaves, and therefore, as otherwise there would be a blank leaf in this introductory sheet, we venture to intrude upon the reader with a few remarks.

With what our aged Friend and Fellow-labourer has said of this invaluable Exposition, we fully concur. Circumstances have occurred during its passing through the press, to prevent our paying the same close attention to it as to the voluminous Commentary. It has been read and revised mostly by others. But as far as the proof-sheets have fallen into our hands, we have found, not a close, clear, searching scrutiny of the doctrine of the text merely, but in addition, a savour and a power for which we were scarcely prepared. We love sound, full, so-called high-doctrine; but where the grace and the dew of the doctrine is there too, under the teaching, power, and application of the Holy Ghost, it fixes that doctrine in the heart and conscience; and we defy men or devils thence to uproot it. An unctuous word dropped by the Holy Ghost upon the heart is like “cold water to a thirsty soul;” and whilst it exalts and endears a precious Christ, in his person, work, and offices, it is the most deadly artillery with which Satan and all the powers of darkness can be attacked.

We are of opinion that many of these savoury sweets, beloved, will drop from this honey-comb into your heart; and thus make

“Sovereign mercy dear to you,  
And Jesus all in all.”

One difficulty oftentimes presents itself in reading Solomon’s Song—it is the difficulty to ascertain who is the speaker, whether Christ or the Church. But to our mind there is a blessedness and a satisfaction in this very difficulty. It tends specially and powerfully to set forth the unions the oneness, the identity that subsists between Christ and his Church—the Bridegroom and the Bride. This very union in name, as well as in nature, is sweetly expressed by the prophet Jeremiah; in the 23rd chapter and 6th verse it is written, “And this is HIS name whereby HE shall be called [Jehovah-tsidkenu] the Lord our righteousness;” and again in the 33rd chapter and 16th verse it is recorded, “And this is the name wherewith SHE shall be called, [Jehovah-tsidkenu] the Lord our righteousness.”

During the publication of Dr. Gill’s invaluable writings, we have had repeatedly to combat the scruples and objections of those who have marvelled that we, as a member and a minister of the Church of England, could publish the works of one who was opposed to that Church. To the great and grand essentials—which are sound doctrine, and “the fruits of good living,” as evidencing the sincere and hearty reception of sound doctrine—which are the very bulwarks of the Church of England—Dr. Gill was *not* opposed. With regard to minor points of discipline we differ and agree to differ. We view these as non-essentials—the mere scaffolding of the true spiritual temple. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” There are things in the Church of England which we could desire altered: and from the mass of its ministers we differ as widely as light from darkness; but what men of truth in the Establishment may say and feel, that men of truth out of the Establishment equally say and feel. We have as much freedom and liberty—yea, infinitely more—within her pale, than others have without her pale. *We* have no



interference where *they* have interference. *They* are subjected to a caprice and dictation to which *we* are not subjected.

But with respect to the writings of Dr. Gill, and men of the same school, if there be light, if there be life, if there be power, we stay not to ask—for we care not to do so—who they are, and what they are in point of relative position before men. We care not a straw whether they are Episcopalian or non-Episcopalian. It is enough for us that they are taught of God, blessed by God; and as such we hold out to them the right hand of fellowship, and wish them good luck in the name of the Lord.” And this is not in mere word. Those who are acquainted with the “GOSPEL MAGAZINE,” originally edited by the immortal Toplady, can testify that these are the principles upon which we have, through grace, conducted it for fourteen years.

Finally, brethren, we say these are not times for contention: this is not a day for splitting hairs about straws; it little behoves us now to ask, “Who is of Paul, or who of Apollos?” The enemy is at our very gates—yea more, he has scaled the walls,—made a breach,—and is, apparently at least, upon the very point of taking possession of the citadel. Up then, “to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Print, preach, and practice (as God shall give you grace) “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Let press, and pulpit, and parlour, echo and re-echo, with a living testimony for covenant love, covenant blood, and covenant salvation: and this shall be found the most effectual means of counteracting the artifices of Satan, and the cunning devices of Pope, Puseyite, and all such sanctimonious but hypocritical pretenders.

One word more. It does at times cheer our ofttimes drooping heart to reflect, that when our head shall be laid low, the hand that now writes shall be paralyzed in the long sleep of death, and our body be mouldering in the silent grave; these precious testimonies for God and truth shall be circulating far and wide, even to the very ends of the earth. It does cheer us—mid much darkness and many doubts—to think, that there have been, through our feeble instrumentality, two thousand two hundred and fifty sets (or thirteen thousand five hundred volumes) of the incomparable Commentary printed, and nearly all in circulation, from this little, dark, desolate, Popish village! And not only GILL, but the immortal HAWKER, though dead, yet speaks afresh to us from the same quarter. Five thousand of his Morning and Evening Portions are at this moment passing through this Village-press.

Gracious Lord, crown the same with thy covenant blessing: and, when we shall depart this life, oh grant that our children and our children’s children—grant that these little poor benighted villagers—the present helpers in this great work—may rise up to call Thee blessed; and that *they* may sing of *us*, as *we* now sing of *ours*.

“ We are travelling home to God,  
In the *Way* our fathers trod;  
*They* are happy now, and we  
Soon their happiness shall see.”

Beloved, we are yours to serve in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,

DAVID ALFRED DOUDNEY,  
*Curate of Monksland.*

*Bonmahon, Co. Waterford,*  
*April 7, 1854.*

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**“Dr. John Gill was the best known preacher and scholar among Baptists in England in the eighteenth century ... in fact the leading Particular Baptist in England during his time.”**

Thomas R. McKibbens

The Life and Works of Morgan Edwards

(New York: Arno Press, 1980)

Page 13

**“The greatest Baptist theologian of the eighteenth century ... Undoubtedly the leading light among the Calvinistic Baptists of his day ... John Gill was a leading exponent of the Calvinistic doctrines of grace which characterized Particular Baptist churches.”**

David Dockery and Thomas George

Baptist Theologians

(Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990)

Page 77 and 89

**“He [John Gill] was one of the most learned men that the Baptist denomination has ever produced.”**

C. H. Spurgeon

The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work.

(London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886)

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