

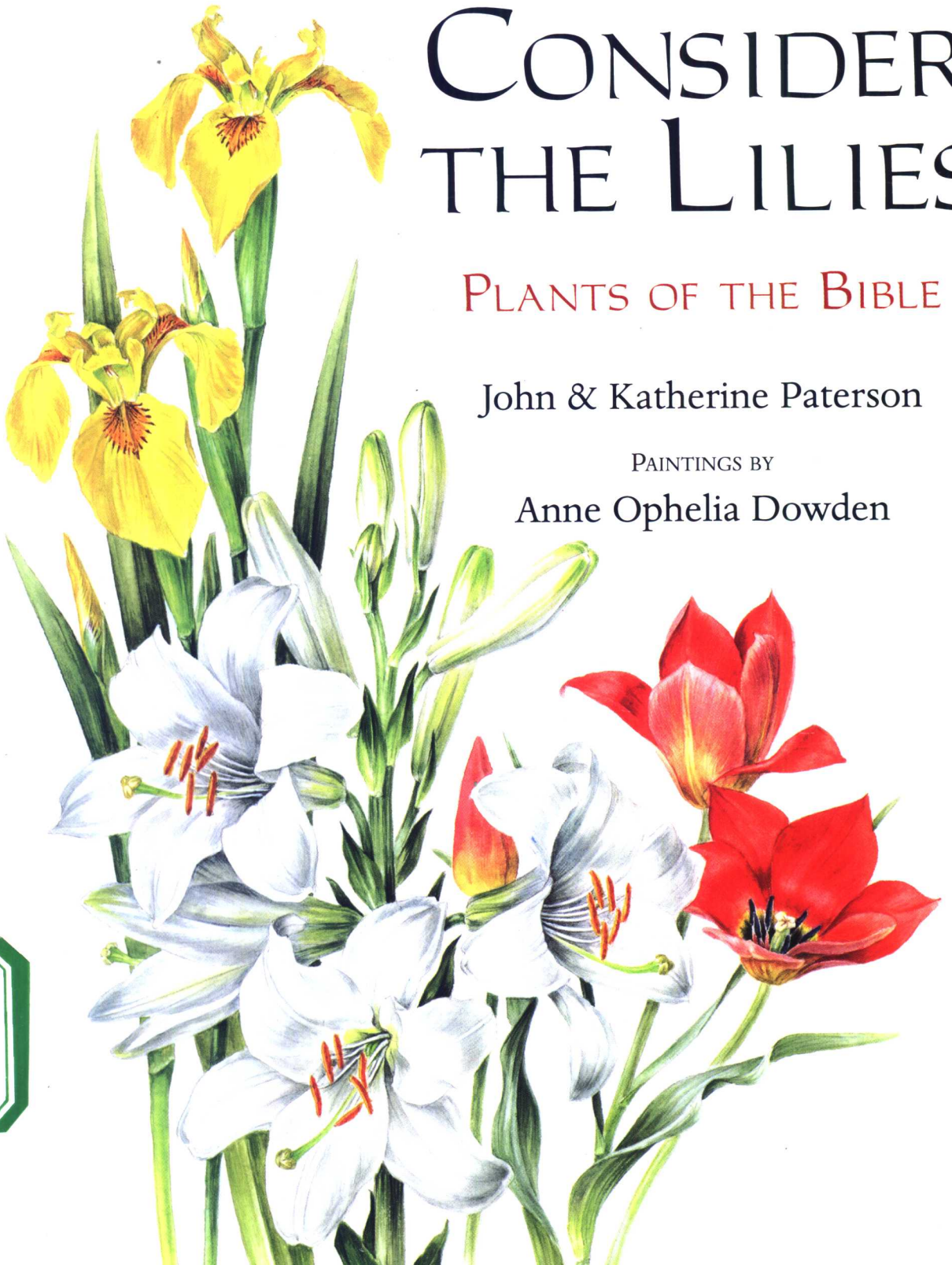
CONSIDER THE LILIES

PLANTS OF THE BIBLE

John & Katherine Paterson

PAINTINGS BY

Anne Ophelia Dowden





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★ "In an unusual approach to understanding the Bible, the authors examine the symbolism as well as the scientific, historical, and contextual aspects of numerous trees and plants, fruits and flowers. . . . A volume that is gracefully written, elegantly designed, and exquisitely illustrated in full color."

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For Lauren Wohl
from
John & Katherine Paterson
&
Anne Ophelia Dowden

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For the plant identifications used in this book, the chief authority is Professor Michael Zohary, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

All plants pictured in this book are exactly 2/3 natural size.

"Consider the Lilies" and "Palms Before the Lord", pages 7 and 88, from the *New English Bible*. © The Delegates of The Oxford University Press and the Syndics of The Cambridge University Press, 1961, 1970. Reprinted by permission.



Anemone

"Consider how the lilies grow in the fields; they do not work, they do not spin; and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was not attired like one of these. But if that is how God clothes the grass in the fields, which is there today, and tomorrow is thrown on the stove, will he not all the more clothe you? How little faith you have! No, do not ask anxiously, 'What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What shall we wear?' All these are things for the heathen to run after, not for you, because your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice before anything else, and all the rest will come to you as well. . . ."

Matthew 6:28B–33

New English Bible

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Laurel

Introduction

A dove bearing a sprig of olive in her beak, a vine loaded with sweet purple grapes, a wise man presenting a cask of fragrant myrrh—even though we are separated from the world of the Bible by many years and even more miles, these familiar pictures from those times and that place speak immediately to our imaginations. Doesn't it follow, then, that the more we know about the world of the Bible, the more its words and images will have meaning for us? The purpose of this book is to take a close look at some of the plants mentioned in the Bible. The plants are not themselves the center of the passages in which they occur. The sprig of olive, the grapevine, the myrrh—all point beyond themselves to a deeper meaning.

This book has been divided into three sections: Revelation, Necessity, and Celebration. You will soon see, however, that a plant

could belong in more than one section. The grapevine, for example, while it was certainly necessary for life, was also, in a very real sense, a revelation of God's care for his people, and its wine was a symbol of celebration.

Over the centuries a great deal of research has been done to identify the plants of the Bible. While everyone agrees that figs and dates and lentils and barley are the plants we know today by the same names, no one is sure exactly what plants are meant by certain other references, such as gall and balm and weeds. In part, this confusion arose because the people who translated the ancient Hebrew or Greek texts did not know the botany of the Holy Land. They often used names like "lily," "rose," and "willow" for plants that certainly were not lilies or roses or willows. Modern scholars who have studied both the ancient words and the plants of Palestine have solved some of the questions, but there is still uncertainty and disagreement about many Bible plants.

In this book, as in the Bible, there is an account of a garden planted before history and a city established after history has come to its close. In the midst of both grows the same tree, the tree of life. Now, the tree of life is not one that will be found in any book of botany. But the Biblical writers chose to use the image of a tree because a tree is something all of their readers would be familiar with. Some readers might imagine one kind of tree, and some another, but everyone can see a tree in his mind's eye.

People can best visualize unimaginable things by means of things they know. The writers of the Bible understood this. That is why in telling us stories about God's mysterious dealings with the world, they

have used what we can see and touch and smell and hear and taste to point us to truths beyond our experience.

With pictures and text, this book considers trees and flowers and plants that appear in the Bible story. Perhaps, through these, we may catch a glimpse of the tree of life that grows in our deepest hearts.



Olive

REVELATION

*At the end of forty days Noah sent forth a dove, to see if
the waters had subsided from the face of the ground,
but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned
to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face
of the whole earth.*

*So Noah put forth his hand and took her and brought her
into the ark.*

*He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove
out of the ark,
and the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her
mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf,
so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.*

after Genesis 8: 8–11

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The Book of Genesis tells how God created the world and all plant and animal life, and, finally, a man and a woman, made in the image of God. The following story tells what happened when the man and woman disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When the Lord God created the world, he planted in the east a garden called Eden, which means "delight." And it was a place of delight for the man and woman whom he had made. However, in that garden grew two trees, unlike the others. One was called the tree of life, and the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "You may eat of any of the trees of the garden," God told them, "except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat the fruit of that tree, you will surely die."

At that time the man and woman did not know death or even that they were naked, because fear and shame had not yet entered the world.

But one day the serpent, who of all God's creatures was the most cunning, put a question to the woman. "Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat any fruit of the trees of the garden?"

"No," she said. "We may eat from all of the trees of the garden except for one. God said we must not eat the fruit of that tree, or even touch it, for if we do, we will die."

"You wouldn't die," the serpent said. "God doesn't want you to eat that fruit because he knows that if you do, your eyes will be opened