

pseudigraphical work have been canonized? Any conclusions regarding the date and authorship of this book must be extremely tentative in light of these and other factors.

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The Song of Solomon seems best understood as a lyric poem although some students treat it as a drama. It is widely interpreted as an allegory although more modern conservative interpreters are taking it as a more literal account of the marriage relationship of man and woman. Liberal scholars are prone to see it as a collection of erotic poems or wedding songs. In this course we think of it as having powerful moral overtones with regard to the emotions that God has rendered normative in the life of "one man and one woman."

For an outline the following is suggested:

- I. The Bride longs for the Groom 1:1-2:7
- II. Their Love Increases; Praise of the Bride 2:8-3:5
- III. Praise of the King and Bride: Espousal 3:6-5:1
- IV. The Bride longs for the Groom 5:2-6:9
- V. The Beauty of the Bride 6:10-8:4
- VI. The Permanence of True Love 8:5:14

I have outlined it in the following fashion for the consideration of male/female relationships:

- I. Reflections of the joy of being together 1-2
- II. The beauty of life together and its test 3-5:1
- III. The enduring power of love 5:2-8:7
- IV. The necessity of purity in love 8:8-14

And here, for the sake of your consideration is the allegorical approach of Cocceius as he used the Song of Solomon to outline the history of the church:

- I. The Gospel preached to Jews and Gentiles 1-2
- II. Growth of church and persecution 3-4
- III. Peace within, danger without 5 -6:8
- IV. Reformation 6:9-7:10
- V. Unsettles state following the reformation 7:11-8:3
- VI. Persecution 8:4-6
- VII. Resta after suffering, longing for the Gospel 8:7-14

You will find similar sorts of outlines in books that treat the Song as an allegory between Christ and the church or Israel and Jehovah. The NIV and the NKJV both indicate which parties are speaking in their presentations of the book.

Regarding the history of redemption we continue to offer the note that books without a firm historical setting do not make an easy contribution to redemptive history. The Song has been treated allegorically to make up for that by many writers. But it seems a better approach is to recognize that God herein sanctifies, by a sort of extended proverb, the institution of marital love. It reflects on all of life. It may be true, as some have suggested, that it is intended to remind us of that greater love toward man from God, just as marital love is to be the reflection of that greatest love (Ephesians 5).

Some questions that help our thinking relate to the manner of interpreting the book. Does it have a plot? Can we identify the characters? How can we understand Solomon's later attitudes and development in the light of what he says of love and marriage in this Song?