

Shepherd Hypothesis

Leon Mauldin

Introduction:

- I. Analysis depends upon the particular theory of interpretation adopted.
 - A. It will be easy to pick up a commentary and determine the correct approach.
 1. “Interpretations of the Song have been legion, and there is little agreement among scholars as to its origin, meaning and purpose. The vividly detailed, erotic lyrics, the virtual absence of overt religious themes, and the vagueness of its plot make it a challenge to scholarship and a temptation to imaginative ingenuity.” (NBD, 1121)
 2. More than five hundred commentaries remain that were written during the first 17 centuries. (Cook, ix)
 3. “No other book of the bible (except perhaps Revelation) suffers under so many radically different interpretations as the Song of Songs” (Garrett, 353)
 4. “No book in Scripture has had such varied treatment. The options are so broad that some have despaired” (Kenlaw, 1202)
 5. Probably the most difficult and controversial book in the Old Testament (Phillips, 7)
 - B. Summary of approaches.
 1. **The allegorical approach.**
 - a. This is the oldest and most popular.
 - 1) “...[T]his strategy of interpretation was dominant and almost exclusive from the beginning of our evidence until the middle of the nineteenth century...the allegorical interpretation is enjoying something of a renaissance today in certain circles” (NICOT, 23)
 - b. For the Jews it was the relationship with God and Israel.
 - c. For Christians it was the relationship of Christ and the church.
 - 1) Tremendous influence of Origen (A.D. 185-253/54).
 2. **The typological approach.**
 - a. This gives the Song a literal meaning, which then becomes the type for Christ and the church.
 3. **The anthological approach.**
 - a. A collection of 25 or 30 separate songs; love poetry.
 - b. Dominant view of mid and late 20th century (assessment by Phil Roberts, unpublished class notes).
 - c. A single poem artistically arranged, containing continuity (see Bland, 405).
 - 1) Also, Murphy: “In favor of the recognition of Canticles as a unit is the presence of refrains and repetitions...it must be admitted that there is a remarkable homogeneity and a puzzling number of repetitions that seem to be signs of an effort to strive for unity.” (100-101)

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- d. Some who hold the anthological view would say, "...it is important to remember that these poems are not actual occurrences" (Truman, *Cornerstone*, 358)
4. **The dramatic approach.**
- a. **The Two-Character approach.**
- 1) Solomon and his bride.
- b. **The Three-Character approach.**
- 1) Solomon, the Shulammitte, and the Shepherd.
 - 2) This is the view that will be defended in this presentation.
 - 3) Influences on me re: this view include Homer Hailey. Also Bob and Sandra Waldron (see their book *Give Us A King The United Kingdom*, 213-224)
 - a) Bob Owens likewise uses this approach as seen in 4-lesson presentation at Collegeview Lectures, Florence AL, June, 2005.
 - 4) Dr. Clyde Woods, longtime professor of Old Testament at Freed-Hardeman, summarizes the shepherd hypothesis as that "which understands the shepherd the girl loves in the book to be a character other than Solomon. According to this scenario, the beautiful Shulammitte loves a shepherd from her homeland, but she was taken by Solomon's representatives with intention that she be added to his harem. Undaunted by the overwhelming splendor and glory of the Solomonic throne, this virtuous maiden remained true to her shepherd and spurned a king for her true love. This interpretation, which sees the book as presenting a 'love triangle,' views the proposed marriage to Solomon as a crisis and indeed makes Solomon, perhaps without personal intention, somewhat a villain of the piece. Although the 'shepherd hypothesis' cannot be proved, it may provide a **plausible alternative** to regarding Solomon as the exemplar of pure sexuality in marriage...The 'shepherd hypothesis' approach perhaps offers the **best possibility** for establishing a consistent story line, but even this approach confronts numerous problems in the text" (Emphasis added, 72)
 - a) Woods mentions a couple of these: "One feature that complicates the problem, I am convinced, is that the Song alludes frequently to ancient poetry we no longer possess. (*Ibid*)
 - b) Some of these obscure allusions or echoes have been clarified by the discovery and study of ancient Semitic poetry, but many remain enigmatic (72-73)
 - 5) The *Bible Study Textbook Series*, "Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon," by Kidwell & DeWelt made an unusual "threefold" approach throughout the book: 1) Literal application, using 3-character approach, 2) Application to marriage generally, and 3) Mutual love between the Christian and Christ (317)
5. Other approaches (which I believe should be absolutely ruled out).
- a. **Funerary Interpretation**
- b. **Cultic Interpretation** (cf. Marvin Pope, "Song of Songs," *Anchor Bible Commentary*)
- C. Principles when dealing with biblical difficulties.
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1. No approach to the Song of Solomon is without difficulties.
2. When dealing with the challenging, with the difficult, determine which has the fewest difficulties.
 - a. Bullock, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* acknowledged that the fewest difficulties are associated with this position (the three-character approach) (217)
 - 1) “The position we take in this study is that the characters in the Song are likely three rather than two: the maiden, King Solomon, and the shepherd who is the maiden’s true love. Though some passages in the Song may be accommodated without injustice to this view or to the traditional view of two primary characters, the maiden and King Solomon, **fewer difficulties** seem to be associated with the modern view [Shepherd Hypothesis] when applied to the book as a whole” (Emphasis added, *Ibid*, 224)
 - b. What does the evidence best favor?

Body:

I. PROBLEMS WITH THE TWO-CHARACTER (SOLOMON AND THE SHULAMMITE) APPROACH

- A. The setting in the book is that of a shepherd with whom the Shulammitte is in love.
 1. Solomon is never pictured as a shepherd.
 2. On this point the Waldrons have this to say: “But Solomon was born and reared in a palace in a city. He never, so far as the record goes, spent any time as a shepherd or farmer. He would have no reason to fantasize himself as someone else. He had wealth and power, everything he needed to woo a maiden. And why would a maiden who had agreed to marry a king want to describe him as a shepherd? Most young women fantasize up from their station of life, not down. It seems logical to assume that any maiden who accepted a king’s proposal would want the pomp and ceremony that would come to the wife of a wealthy king. Why would she fantasize him in any other way?” (214-215)
- B. Solomon’s polygamy.
 1. At the time when the events depicted transpired, Solomon already had 60 wives and 80 concubines. (Song 6:8)
 2. Is this book used by God to show his marvelous affection for this girl who is to become number 61?
 3. Solomon’s many wives are mentioned as a contributing cause to his apostasy (1 Kings 11:4ff.)
 - a. “Now the Lord was angry with Solomon...” (v. 9).
 - b. Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you...” (v.11).
 - c. cf. Nehemiah’s summary statement: “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin” (Neh. 13:26).

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- d. If the book is about Solomon's wooing of yet another wife, would this not seem to be at least a passive endorsement of Solomon's polygamy?
 4. Consider the import of Eccl. 7:28: "which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these."
 - a. Is he using poetic license, hyperbole?
 - b. Did the woman who was so wonderful in Song of Solomon fall out of favor with him?
 - C. Consider also the question asked by the "daughters of Jerusalem": "How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others, that you charge us so?" (5:9, NIV).
 1. Can you imagine this question being posed in regard to Solomon, with all his fame, riches, impressive building projects, and wisdom?
 2. One could answer that since this is poetry, it just furnished the occasion for the woman to enumerate his wonderful qualities.
 - D. There is a unique, special, and exclusive kind of love described.
 1. "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (2:16; 6:3).
 - a. Does this not lose effectiveness if taken to mean, "My beloved is mine (and 60 wives and 80 concubines) and I am his (as well as are the aforementioned women).
 2. "I am my beloved's, And his desire is for me" (7:10).
 - a. Again, how is this something special, if his desire is on the way to number a thousand women?
 - E. Likewise, consider the "friendship factor" of 5:16: "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."
 1. If Solomon is intended, that friendship would seem to be very limited and short-lived.
 2. This does express God's design in marriage.
 - a. The adulterous woman "leaves the companion of her youth And forgets the covenant of her God" (Prov. 2:17).
 - b. Would Solomon truly be able to exemplify this important aspect of marriage?

II. THE THREE-CHARACTERS: TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

A. King Solomon

1. Passages:
 - a. 1:4: "The king has brought me into his chambers."
 - b. 1:5: "Like the curtains of Solomon."
 - c. 1:12: "While the king was at his table, My perfume gave forth its fragrance."
 - d. 3:7: "Behold, it is the traveling couch of Solomon."
 - e. 3:9: "King Solomon has made for himself a sedan chair From the timber of Lebanon."

- f. 3:11: “Go forth, O daughters of Zion, And gaze on King Solomon with the crown
With which his mother has crowned him On the day of his wedding, And on the
day of his gladness of heart.”
- g. 7:5 “Your head crowns you like Carmel, And the flowing locks of your head are
like purple threads; *The* king is captivated by *your* tresses.”
- h. 8:11: “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon.”
- i. 8:12: “The thousand shekels are for you, Solomon.”

B. The Shulammitte woman.

1. Passages:
 - a. Specific usage of the term is found in 6:13: “Come back, come back, O
Shulammitte; Come back, come back, that we may gaze at you! Why should you
gaze at the Shulammitte, As at the dance of the two companies?”
2. The NET Bible (in its translator notes) lists eight major views regarding the term
“Shulammitte” (6:13). Here are the first three.
 - a. “...*Shulammitte* is a substantival use of the adjectival form *shulam*, ‘perfection’
with the gentilic suffix...*yt* from the root...(*shalem*, ‘to be complete, perfect’): ‘the
perfect, unblemished one’ (Fox). This approach is reflected in rabbinic exegesis
of the 12th century: ‘The meaning of the Shulammitte is “perfect, without spot”’
(Midrash Rabbah).”
 - b. “...*Shulammitte* is Qal passive participle with the feminine adjectival suffix...*yt* -
from the root *shalem* (‘peace’): ‘the peaceful one’ or ‘the pacified one’ (Andre,
Robert, Joüon). This is reflected in Vulgate *pacificus* (‘the pacified one’), and
Aquila and Quinta ... (*he eeruneousa*) ‘the peaceful one’ (Andre Robert, Joüon).”
 - c. “...*Shulammitte* is an alternate form of the gentilic name ‘Shunammitte’...used to
refer to inhabitants of Shunem ([1 Kgs 1:15](#); [2 Kgs 4:12](#)). This is reflected in
LXX... (*he Soulamiti*, ‘O Shulamite’). This is supported by several factors:
 - 1) “Gentilic names are formed by the suffix...[*yt*] - and the prefixed article to a
place-name, e.g., ...(*hayy^erushalamit*, ‘the Jerusalemite’) is from...(*y^erushalam*,
‘Jerusalem’)”
 - 2) “The interchange between lateral dental...(*l*) and nasal dental...(*n*) is common
in the Semitic languages (S. Moscati, *Comparative Grammar*, 32, §8.26);”
 - 3) “The town of Shunem was also known as Shulem, due to the common
interchange between (*n*) and...(*l*) in Hebrew (Aharoni, 123), as seen in
Eusebius’ Onomasticon in which Shunem = Shulem; and”
 - 4) “Later revisions of the LXX read... (‘the Shunamite’) instead of the Old Greek...
(‘the Shulamite’). Shunem was a town in the Jezreel Valley at the foot of
Mount Moreh near Mount Tabor and situated about nine miles east of
Megiddo, fifteen miles northwest of Beth-shean, and five miles north of
Jezreel ([Josh 19:18](#); [1 Sam 28:4](#); [2 Kgs 4:8](#)). During the Roman period, the
town was called Shulem. See Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 24, 152,
172, 442, 308.” (NET Bible, Elec. Ed., n.p.)
 - 5) I believe this third view fits best.

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- 6) Along this line, *Young's Analytical Concordance* defines the term "Shulammitte" as, "A female inhabitant of Shulem (or Shunem), in Issachar. (883)
3. Throughout the book, a young woman is speaking, or is spoken to.
 - a. I understand her to be the Shulammitte.
- C. The Shepherd boy.**
1. Passages:
 - a. 11:7 "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture *your flock*, Where do you make *it* lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself Beside the flocks of your companions?"
 - 1) If she is speaking of Solomon, she would seem to know where he is.
 - 2) Note the response in 1:8: If you yourself do not know, Most beautiful among women, Go forth on the trail of the flock And pasture your young goats By the tents of the shepherds.
 - a) Or as the ESV renders, "If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents."
 - b) She is longing for someone who is not readily available.
 - c) This pastoral setting does not seem to fit Solomon.
 - b. 2:16: "My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures *his flock* among the lilies."
 - 1) cf. NKJV: "My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his. He feeds *his flock* among the lilies."
 - 2) "The Hebrew participle haro'eh...occurs nearly one hundred times, and is the common term for feeding domestic animals (cf. 1:7f.), i.e. performing the function of a shepherd" (Carr, 102)
 - c. 6:3: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, He who pastures *his flock* among the lilies."
 - 1) cf. NKJV: "I *am* my beloved's, And my beloved *is* mine. He feeds *his flock* among the lilies."
 - 2) Also, RSV: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he pastures his flock among the lilies."

III. HOW SOME DISMISS THE SHEPHERD ELEMENT

A. Pulpit commentary

1. In his introduction to the commentary, R.A. Redford states, "There may be expressions in the mouth of the bride which seem at first sight to favour such a theory [the existence of a shepherd], but the position of Solomon throughout is quite inconsistent with the idea of illicit solicitation, or indeed with any other relation to Shulamith than that of chaste and legal marriage. The only forcible argument in favor of this view, which is generally called 'the shepherd' theory, is the use of language in reference to the bridegroom which supposes him a shepherd; but this is explained by the fact which lies on the surface of the poem, that the bride is one brought up on

country life, and who in the purity and simplicity of her heart addresses even Solomon himself as her shepherd.” (xvii)

2. Further, “...1The whole hypothesis is rendered unnecessary by the arrangement which disposes the language among three classes of speakers only -- the bride, the chorus of ladies, and the king. Thus the shepherd-lover is identified with the royal bridegroom, and the basis is still left secure on which a spiritual interpretation of the whole can be based.” (xviii)
3. Comments on 1:7: “1The bride is longing for the bridegroom; but she cannot think of him yet in any other light than as a companion of her simple country life -- he is a shepherd, and she a shepherdess...Perhaps there is intended to be an allusion to the common metaphor -- the king as the shepherd and the people as his flock.” (5)
4. Comments on 2:16: “1...and it is evident that Solomon is lovingly regarded as a shepherd, because Shulamith delights to think of him as fully sympathizing with her simple country life. She idealizes.” (41)
5. Comments on 6:3: “1She is one of the lilies. The king is coming into his garden, and I am ready to receive him. The shepherd among his flock.” (144)

B. Solomon disguised himself as a shepherd.

1. “King Solomon, disguised as a shepherd, visited his vineyards, saw the Shulamite, and fell in love with her (1:1-2:7) She pictures their times together as a rich banquet. The next spring, he came to her and proposed marriage, and she accepted, but he had to go away for a time, promising to come back. While he was absent, she dreamed about him (3:1-5). Then he returned and revealed that he was King Solomon” (Wiersbie, 541)
2. This was also the view set forth by J. Sidlow Baxter, quoting Moulton: “King Solomon, with a courtly retinue visiting the royal vineyards upon Mount Lebanon, comes by surprise upon the fair Shulamite. She flies from them. Solomon visits her in the disguise of a shepherd, and so wins her love. He then comes in all his royal state, and calls her to leave Lebanon and become his queen. They are in the act of being wedded in the royal palace when the poem opens.” (III:182)

C. New American Commentary

1. “Dramatic interpretations must read a great deal of detail into the text” (359)
2. “At times it is difficult to know who is the speaker of a given line.” (*Ibid.*)
3. “Simply put, it [the Song] has no story ... these and all other attempts at finding a plot line in the Song collapse.” (360)
4. Not only does Garrett rule out a shepherd, but rules out Solomon as well: “The text is not a record of historical events in Solomon’s life. In love every groom is King Solomon, a shepherd, and even a gazelle; and every bride is a princess and country maiden.” (365)
 - a. Further, on 6:8 re: the sixty queens and eighty concubines: “There is no need to take this as a reference to Solomon’s harem” (417)
5. While we’re at it, to be complete we need to question the existence of the Shulamite also. Garrett says, “The description of the woman as a shepherdess and the term Shulamite may be poetic symbols as well. Whether the song was originally written

about a shepherdess is immaterial. The point again is that the experience of love adorns both partners and exalts them in ideal roles” (368)

6. Comments on 1:7: “She now addresses the man. Pastoral imagery is common in love poetry. In asking where he pastures his sheep during the heat of the day, she is asking where she can find him at a time when the sheep would be resting and not demanding his complete attention” (387)
 7. Comments on 6:3: “The man is not, as some translations have it, pasturing his flock but grazing like a lamb or gazelle in a pasture (thus NIV ‘browse’). Thus the usage is metaphorical for his lovemaking” (415)
- D. On the other hand, Carr thought the evidence for the shepherd was compelling, to the exclusion of Solomon.
1. *I.e.*, he had a two-character approach, but it was the Shulammitte and the shepherd!
 2. “Still others identify only the shepherd-lover in the poem and understand the Song as a celebration of the love he shared with his beloved. This is the reading followed in this Commentary” (48)

IV. **A PROPOSED OUTLINE: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SONG OF SOLOMON** (See Hailey, 25-27)

A. **In the Royal Tents in Issachar -- Love Introduced (1:1-3:5)**

1. 1Song 6:11-12: May help explain how the Shulamite was taken to be presented to Solomon: “¹¹I went down to the garden of nuts To see the verdure of the valley, To see whether the vine had budded And the pomegranates had bloomed. ¹² Before I was even aware, My soul had made me As the chariots of my noble people.” (NKJV).
 - a. Dewelt: “She was taken to the palace of King Solomon. Perhaps this palace was one of his northern summer houses...” (317)
2. 1:2: “... 1the shift from the 3rd person masculine singular to 2nd person masculine singular forms is an example of heterosis of person: a poetic device in which the grammatical person shifts from line to line (M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs* [AB], 297). The third person is put for the second person (e.g. Gen 49:4; Deut 32:15; Ps 23:2-5; Isa 1:29; 42:20; 54:1; Jer 22:24; Amos 4:1; Micah 7:19; Lam 3:1Song 4:2; 6:6).” (NET Bible, Elec. Ed., n.p.)
3. 1:7: Remembering her shepherd.
 - a. He is in her thoughts.
4. 1:8: The chorus of women/daughters of Jerusalem.
5. 1:9-15: Solomon’s first advance.
6. 1:15-2:1: “This voice is that of the shepherd...she is remembering how he would speak to her” (Waldron, 218)
7. 2:3-6: Shulamite continues reminiscing about the shepherd
 - a. 1One can have a banquet with raisins and apples if there is true love (2:5).
8. 2:7-17: A soliloquy.
9. 3:1-5: Shulammitte relates her dream.

B. **The Royal Procession Entering Jerusalem (3:6-11)**

1. 3:6: Question calls attention to the entrance of Solomon
 - a. 3:7: His body guards.
 - b. 3:9-11: His wealth, seen in sedan chair, crown.

C. In The Royal Palace in Jerusalem -- Love Tested (4:1-8:4)

1. 4:1-5: Solomon's second effort, and the response.
 - a. 4:6: Shulamite speaking
2. 4:7-5:1: The shepherd speaks in her memory.
3. 5:2-8: Shulammite relates 2nd dream.
4. 5:9-6:3: Question of the women: What makes your beloved so special, so different?
 - a. 5:10-16: Shulammite's description of her beloved.
 - b. 6:1: A bit of humor; "We'll help you find him!"
 - c. 6:2-3: Shulammite's answer.
 - 1) He is at work.
 - 2) Note the exclusive nature of their love.
5. 6:4-8:4: Solomon's 3rd Effort.
 - a. 6:8: At this point in Solomon's life there were 60 queens and 80 concubines.
 - b. 6:10: Is this the chorus of women? Waldron suggests, "Narrator" (222)
 - c. 6:11-13: Is this a flashback to when she was first found and taken by Solomon? (*Ibid.*)
 - d. 7:1-5: The chorus praises the dancing of Shulammite.
 - e. 7:6-9a: Solomon's further effort.
 - f. 7:9b: Shulammite: "that goes down smoothly for my beloved!"
 - 1) Does your text show the break within the verse, indicating a change of speakers?
 - 2) Her answer is decisive.
 - g. 7:10-8:4: Shulammite longs for her beloved (shepherd).
 - 1) 7:12: would indicate Springtime.
 - 2) 8:4: refrain occurs for 3rd time. (cf. 2:7; 3:5).

D. In Issachar: the Shepherd and Shulamite -- Love Victorious (8:5-14)

1. 8:5a: Setting is now back in Issachar.
 - a. Is question asked by narrator? (Waldron, 223)
2. 8:5b: Now shepherd actually appears for the first time with Shulammite.
 - a. Shepherd speaks.
3. 8:6-7: Shulammite speaks.
 - a. Discusses characteristics of love.

- 1) Solomon is pictured at the end of the Song as one who buys and sells love
(Longman, *NICOT*, 41)
4. 8:8-10: Brothers speak, and Shulammite responds
5. 8:11-12: “Solomon could keep his wealth, his vineyards, his servants, and his fruits! I am not for sale!” (Cook, 205)
6. 8:13: Shepherd
7. 8:14: Shulammite.

V. LINGUISTIC OBSERVATIONS

A. The Text:

1. The Hebrew text (MT) of the Song of Songs is without major problems, is strongly supported by the versions... (*NICOT*, 19)
2. The difficulties encountered in the text have to do with the unusual number of rare words, the rich poetry, and the genre rather than with any problems with the text’s transmission.
 - a. There are about 470 words in the whole Song. Some 50 of these are *hapax legomena* (Kinlaw, 1121)
 - b. For example, see Watson’s “Table of Rare and Unique Lexical Items” (370)
3. Problem of assigning speakers.
 - a. “In the matter of the assigning of speakers, some are obvious, based on the gender and number of the Hebrew pronouns in the various sections, reinforced with information derived from verbal forms and other vocabulary items.” (Carr, 47)
 - b. “But this approach does nothing towards *identifying* the speakers beyond the simple male/female, singular/plural categories” (*Ibid.*)
 - c. The Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century AD) has “marginal notes assigning the units to individual speakers, but there has been no agreement on either the divisions or the assignments in subsequent writers” (*Ibid.*)
 - d. “The reality of various speakers is evidenced in Hebrew by the gender and number of verbs” (Woods, 72)
 - 1) “Applying this insight, more recent translators seek to identify the various speakers” (*Ibid.*)

B. The style/structure:

1. Much of the book appears to be soliloquy.
2. 3:1 and 5:2 appear to relate dreams.

VI. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SONG.

A. Thoughts that help us in selecting the right kind of mate.

1. Most people have more than one possibility as they select a spouse.
2. Upon what is that selection to be based?
 - a. The Shulammite could have “plaits of gold with studs of silver” (1:11), and all the perks of Solomon’s kingdom.

- b. Contrast with what the shepherd could offer.
 - c. “What happened to the Shulamite comes to pass in the history of almost every young man and woman. Especially in a country of endless possibilities like our own is this true. She was placed between opposite attractions that represented the true and the false ideals of life.” (Griffis, 82)
3. She does not base her choice on riches.
 - a. “If a man I were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised” (8:7, NASB). “If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned” (NIV).
 - b. And then 8:11-12: ASV: “¹¹Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; He let out the vineyard unto keepers; Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. ¹²My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand, And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.”
 - c. Her heart was not for sale.
 4. The ability to see the worth of a humbler person, and the beauty of true love.
 - a. ¹Victory over true love over physical infatuation.
- B. Human sexuality is of divine design.
1. Gen. 2.
 2. No reference in Song to procreation.
 3. There is so much to which we must say, “No” (works of the flesh, impurity of all kinds, sexual immorality). This book provides an opportunity to say, “Yes” to sexual expression in the God-given and divinely approved sphere of marriage (Heb. 13:4)
- C. Is it unreasonable that a biblical book would be devoted to an elaboration of Prov. 5:15-20; Eccl. 9:9, *etc.*?

Conclusion:

- I. The fact that there are difficulties with the “Shepherd Hypothesis” has been acknowledged.
- II. I remain convinced that this is the best explanation.
- III. All Scripture is profitable.
 - A. Let us make wise use of this book, which contains an expansion of the marvel perceived in Proverbs 30:19: “the way of a man with a maiden” (NIV).

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