

God's Romantic Imprint

The Standard
for all
Romantic
Literature

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HAVE YOU EVER FALLEN IN LOVE? Have you known those emotions beyond words—that wonderful, desperate ache to be with the one you love? Every morning you awake with thoughts of only him/her. Not a moment passes without your musings being focused on the one who owns all of your affections. Your nights are spent pining. You are a willing slave to your deepest yearnings. You are in love.

Is this how Christ feels about His Church?

Romance never goes out of style. Tales of romance spring from every generation and culture. Through the ages, great love stories have captured the imagination of millions who long and yearn for the perfect relationship.

The greatest love story of all time unfolds from the Bible's pages—the story of God's love for His people. It develops as a sweeping saga carrying us across time and space. The Holy Scriptures, brimming with characters, rich in plot, abundant in theme, and set on a stage overflowing with color, texture and form, read like a romance novel. The Bible presents the story of the Lord and His beloved.

The book of Isaiah portrays Israel as the Lord's vineyard—an allegorical picture of a fruitful garden tended by God. The New Testament identifies Christ's Church as His bride and announces a glorious future marriage banquet (Revelation 19:9). Scripture portrays both Israel and the Church as God's love—the apple of His eye.

Romance Literature. The word romance has several meanings. Modern usage centers

on the tender affection shared between a man and a woman. Grocery store romance novels and romantic comedies from Hollywood touch and influence our popular culture.

But historically, the word romance incorporates a far broader meaning. In medieval times, Romance Literature consisted of tales of chivalrous heroes told in verse. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Romance Literature became a fictitious narrative describing far away places and events. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the literary movement known as Romanticism grew to embody a vast assortment of novels and stories, often woven into historic contexts and exotic settings.

Many have tried to define Romance Literature. Most agree that it is a fictional dramatization of characters and stories that stir our passions and awaken our yearnings for those things which are beyond our ability to know or possess.

Romance Literature encompasses a broad variety of settings and themes. A runaway slave in search of freedom, an immigrant family passing through Ellis Island, a Sioux Indian boy coming of age in the era of westward expansion—all constitute romantic plots and themes. All are tales of individuals searching, yearning and striving for a better life.

Bible Romance. While the Bible is certainly *not* fictional, and while we *can* know God, the scriptures do manifest a romantic quality. They raise the standard of relationship and establish the ideal for living. They call us upward and make us yearn for that which we cannot fully possess in this life. In the

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corporeal world, we cannot know God fully. Nonetheless, our passions can be stirred to pursue Him.

Story Construction. As for story construction, the Bible serves as the consummate illustration of literary craftsmanship. All essential literary components—characters, setting, conflict, plot and theme—reside within the Bible's grand story.

The protagonist, God, reveals His purpose early, crafting the perfect scenario, an idyllic garden where regular communion with His beloved mankind is planned. But then the antagonist, the Devil, makes his entrance and his play to steal the Creator's world and love. To the heart without hope, the Devil has won.

But those with hope see the promise afar off. They see God's pledge in the animal skins that He provides following the Devil's initial play. Then hope stirs as Isaac agrees to be the sacrificial lamb. And God's plan comes into focus as blood is sprinkled on the doorposts and the mercy seat.

All great stories involve crises of faith, moral dilemmas, difficult choices and some form of sacrifice. To the astute reader, the Author's hand is seen constructing history's chapters—every one leading to the critical event—the story's culminating moment.

Yes, the sacrifice is coming—the ultimate expression of love—the most romantic moment in all of history—the moment when God dies so His beloved can live.

God's Romantic Imprint. God has authored the most marvelous story ever written. He has set the standard for all Romantic literature. Great stories by nature and design, whether intentional or not, follow His divine story outline.

God's romantic imprint is chiseled into the tablet of every human heart. Our task is to discover His story for our own personal lives and to see the Church as His one true love.