

The Song of Songs was one of the most frequently interpreted biblical books of the Middle Ages. Most scholarly studies concentrate on monastic interpretations of the text, which tend to be contemplative in nature. In *Out of the Cloister*, Suzanne LaVere reveals a particularly scholastic strain of Song of Songs exegesis, in which cathedral school masters and mendicants in and around 12th and 13th-century Paris read the text as Christ exhorting the Church and clergy to lead an active life of preaching, instruction, conversion, and reform. This new interpretation of the Song of Songs both reflected and influenced an era of far-reaching Church reform and offered a program for secular clergy to combat heresy and apathy among the laity.

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