

Week 2: Sacramental Interpretation

1. An Approach to Biblical-Theology (Chart) & The Great Tradition

2. Allegorical, Spiritual, Sacramental Reading of Scripture

- a. Sacramental View of Reality = visible realities point to and make present invisible realities. No spiritual/material dichotomy. Not opposed (*cf Jn 14:9-11).
- b. Allegorical or Spiritual Reading. Finds within the revealed, historical, reality, unseen and greater realities.
- c. At a fundamental level, patristic readings of the Song are Sacramental.

3. Hippolytus= Ecclesial Reading

- a. Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) was one of the leading theologians and preachers of the third century. He wrote the first extant commentary on the Song of Songs in three Easter sermons, ends at Song 3:8.
- b. Jewish Exegesis greatly influenced the exegesis of Hippolytus, Origen and the early church exegesis with their starting point in the Old Testament nuptial metaphors for the relationship between God and Israel.
 - i. His interpretation is grounded in the historical narrative of salvation (in Origen as well and to a lesser extent with Ambrose).
 - ii. Or put another way, he places the deeper spiritual (allegorical) meaning of the Song *WITHIN* the historical and ecclesial realities of Israel and the Church (*allegory doesn't avoid God's historical dealings with his people, it finds the inner or deeper meaning).
- c. *Hippolytus = Ecclesial Reading = Interprets the Bride as the Church*

4. Origen = Personal Reading

- a. Origen of Alexandria (185-254) was a Christian scholar, ascetic, and theologian who was born and spent the first half of his career in Alexandria.
- b. His homilies (preached between 241-242) and subsequent commentary on *The Song* owes much to Hippolytus as his interpretation also takes place against the backdrop of salvation history and maintains an ecclesial reading. Easter sermons preached

- c. Interpretive Approach on Three Levels
 - i. There is a “Literal” meaning = historical, plain, surface, simple meaning
 - ii. There is an “Inner, or Spiritual” meaning = pointing to greater realities
 - iii. There is a “Personal” meaning which speaks to the “life of the soul” = the individual soul
- d. *Origen = Personal Reading = Interprets The Bride as the Soul of the Believer (as part of the people of God [Ecclesial])*

5. Ambrose = Ascetical Reading

- a. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (340-397) if Origen added a personal aspect to the Ecclesial interpretation, Ambrose then, builds upon both by placing an emphasis on moral purity (virtue). Ambrose is not unconcerned with our bodies and what we do with them.
 - i. Moves the song into the realm of the body *and the soul*, into the realm of moral theology and ascetics.
 - ii. He brings the Song “back to earth” to the day-to-day dangers and pitfalls of the moral lives of his congregations.
 - iii. *For Ambrose, spiritual union with Christ is closely patterned on physical union; pursuit of virtue (in body and soul) to attain the Bridegroom as an undefiled and spotless bride.
 - iv. Thus his pastoral call to virginity, setting apart maids as virgins: the church is to be as a virgin, the virgins typify the virgin church (Bride).
- b. *Ambrose = Ascetical Reading = Interprets The Bride as The Moral Life of the Believer.*

6. St. Paul’s Interpretive Approach (1 Corinthians 10)

- a. Literal/Spiritual (vv. 1-5)
- b. Ecclesial-Moral (vv. 6-11)
- c. Personal/Anagogical (v.33 “That they may be saved)