



Interpreting the Bible in the Early Church

The First Four Centuries



RGB3902/6902HS
Spring 2012
Wednesday 11-1
Scott Lewis S.J.

This course will examine the methods of biblical interpretation used in the Church from NT times through the 4th century. Areas covered will include the Jewish forms of exegesis found in the NT, the allegorical method, visual exegesis, the schools of Antioch and Alexandria, the impact of the 4th-century Christological debates, as well as interpreters such as Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and St. Augustine. The course will consist of lectures, the reading of some introductory secondary works, and selected readings from Patristic commentaries.

Goals of the course:

- To be familiar with the various ways that the Scriptures were interpreted in the Jewish tradition in the three centuries BCE
- To be familiar with the continuation of those traditions in the composition of the New Testament
- To be familiar with visual modes of exegesis
- To understand the various challenges to early Christianity and the ways in which that affected the interpretation of Scripture
- To understand the theological and Christological currents in the first four centuries of Christianity and how competing schools of interpretation used Scripture in their pursuit of truth
- To be familiar with the two main schools of interpretation – Alexandria and Antioch – as well as some of the influential interpreters in these schools
- To understand how the methods used in the early church may contribute to modern understandings of Scripture as well as the shortcomings of these methods

Course Requirements:

RGB3902: 2 short essays/exegetical papers to be assigned (40% of grade). The final assignment will be an extended essay of 7-10 pages on a topic to be assigned (60% of grade). All readings will be done before class.

RGB6902: AD students will meet in several sessions outside of normal class time. In addition to the readings for RGB3902, Manlio Simonetti's book will be read along with some articles that will be made available. The readings will be discussed in these seminar sessions (participation 20% of grade). There will be a final research paper of 20-30 pages on a topic to be approved by the professor. This will be due on August 15, 2012.

All assignments and handouts will be posted on Blackboard. You will access it through your own portal.utoronto.ca page with your UTORid. Please see the attached page with instructions for logging in. The text-only version of the weekly PowerPoint presentation will also be posted on this website. Please note that I cannot provide internet assistance of any sort.

By taking this course students agree that all written assignments may be subject to submission to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Turnitin.com incorporates all submitted papers in their reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. For more information and an explanation of the terms of service, please see <http://www.utoronto.ca/ota/programmes.html>

Please do not forward your UTOR email to a Hotmail, Gmail, or yahoo mail account. These providers automatically filter email from UTOR addresses into a junk mail folder or they are bounced back to the sender. It is your responsibility to enter a valid UTOR email address in ROSI and to check your account regularly.

My telephone number is 922-5474 ext. 256 (office).

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Required Texts:

Robert M. Grant and David Tracy. *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*. 2nd, revised and enlarged ed. London: SCM Press, 1984.

Manlio Simonetti. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002. (**AD students**)

John J. O'Keefe and R.R. Reno. *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Karlfried Froehlich *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980.

RSV or NRSV version of the Bible.

There will also be some material that will be available via download and/or photocopy.

Extended Bibliography:

Augustine, St. "The Literal Meaning of Genesis." In *Ancient Christian Writers*, 41 and 42. New York: Paulist (Newman) Press, 1982.

Blowers, Paul M. . "Interpreting Scripture." In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Augustine Cassidy and Frederick W. Norris, 618-636. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Brown, Peter. *The World of Late Antiquity: Ad 150-750*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989.

Crouzel, Henri. *Origen*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989.

Dungan, David L. *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Fowl, Stephen E. *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997.

Hauser, Alan J. and Duane F. Watson, eds., ed. *A History of Biblical Interpretation. The Ancient Period*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

Kannengiesser, Charles. *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Kugel, James L. . *Traditions of the Bible. A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Kugel, James L. and Rowan A. Greer. *Early Biblical Interpretation* Library of Early Christianity, Edited by Wayne A. Meeks. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.

Longenecker, Richard N. *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI/Vancouver: Eerdmans/Regent College, 1999.

McLeod, Frederick. *Theodore of Mopsuestia*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Neusner, Jacob. *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament*. Valley forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994.

Norris, Richard A. Jr. . *The Song of Songs: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* Church's Bible, Edited by Robert Louis Wilken. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.

O'Keefe, John and R.R. Reno. *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005.

Origen. "The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies." In *Ancient Christian Writers*, 26. New York: Paulist (Newman) Press, 1957.

_____. "Homilies on Numbers." In *Ancient Christian Texts*, edited by Christopher A. Hall. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009.

_____. "On First Principles." G.W. Butterworth, trans. Gloucester: Peter Smith Publications, 1973.

Mopsuestia, Theodore of. "Commentary on the Gospel of John." In *Ancient Christian Texts*, edited by Joel Elowsky. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010.

Sawyer, John F.A. *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Smalley, Beryl. *The Bible in the Middle Ages*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1984.

Trigg, Joseph Wilson. *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*. London: SCM Press, 1983.

Wallace-Hadrill, D.S. *Christian Antioch. A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Wilken, Robert Louis and Angela Russell Christman. *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* Church's Bible, Edited by Robert Louis Wilken. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.

Yarchin, William. *History of Biblical Interpretation. A Reader*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.

January	11	Jewish exegesis and interpretation from 300 BCE to 70 CE – <i>Midrash, Peshet, Sifra</i>
	18	Paul's exegesis and interpretation – typology, allegory, prophecy, and polemic
	25	The biblical interpretation of the Four Evangelists – prophecy, Messianic fulfillment, Christology
February	1	Visual exegesis: Dura Europos and the Roman catacombs.
	8	The challenge of the 2 nd century – Gnosticism and Marcion. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian
	15	Background of Christological controversies: Arianism and the various attempts to define the relationship of Christ's humanity and divinity.
	29	Alexandria – the story of a magnificent city and even more magnificent Library; Alexandrian exegesis of Greco-Roman texts; Clement of Alexandria
March	7	Alexandria –Origen, the first rigorous and systematic Christian

exegete – allegory and the levels of interpretation
14 Antioch – the city and its interpretive approach – Diodorus of Tarsus
21 Theodore of Mopsuestia
28 Augustine
April 4 Tyconius the Donatist; Ambrose; Jerome

Final papers are due Thursday April 12, 2012. No late papers!
AD final research paper due August 15, 2012.