

History of Biblical Interpretation March 2022

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As Protestants we take as self-evident the importance of the Bible to Christian belief and practice. Yet we also affirm the rich variety of experience and contexts that comprise the history of Christianity as a global faith. How did the church in different times and places relate to Scripture and understand its meaning? In what ways did significant cultural shifts impact methods of interpreting Scripture in the church? What can the history of biblical exegesis teach us about the diverse questions God's people brought to God's word in various situations, the answers they found, and the implications of these lessons for our reading of Scripture today?

Schedule

Week 1 (3/6)	<i>Heresy and Early Christian Approaches to Scripture</i>
Week 2 (3/13)	Spiritual Exegesis from Origen to Thomas Aquinas
Week 3 (3/20)	The Protestant Reformers and the Bible's "Literal Sense"
Week 4 (3/27)	A Great Cloud of Witnesses: Modern Approaches to Reading Scripture

I. Preliminary Considerations

- A. Biblical Exegesis vs. the History of Biblical Exegesis
- B. Protestant Presuppositions
- C. The Importance of Context

II. Marcion (d. 160 CE) and Canon: Clarifying the Boundaries of Scripture

III. Irenaeus (d. c. 202 CE) of Lyons and Gnosticism: Asserting the Unity of Scripture

From Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (late 2 cent.; trans. Richardson, 1996):

"Since this man [Marcion] has dared publicly to mutilate the Scriptures, and more than any others to malign God shamelessly, I will refute him."

"There is one God, maker and heaven and earth, proclaimed by the Law and the prophets, and one Christ the Son of God."

"Four general covenants were given to humankind: one was that of Noah's flood, by the bow; the second was Abraham's by the sign of circumcision; the third was the giving of the Law by Moses; and the fourth is that of the Gospel, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The sin of the first-formed man was amended by the chastisement of the First-begotten, the wisdom of the serpent was conquered by the simplicity of the dove, and the chains were broken by which we were in bondage to death."