Patristic Exegesis

Introduction

Patristics or patrology is the study of the early Christian writers who are designated Church Fathers.[1] The names derive from the combined forms of Latin *pater* and Greek *patḗr* (father). The period of the Church Fathers, commonly called the **Patristic era** "Patristic" and is a term used historically to describe the time and writings of the Church Fathers. These were the early Christians who defended the Gospel against misunderstandings and rival doctrines, wrote sermons and extensive commentaries on the Bible, recorded relevant events into Church history, and brought together the best thought of their age with their own Christian faith. The Patristic era began sometime around the end of the 1st century (when the New Testament was almost completed), and ended towards the close of the 8th century. Historically focused on the study of the writings of the Fathers (Patres) of the Church, Patristics considers the history of early Christianity through the lens of the handing on of the faith in all of its complexity and unity.

The Church Fathers are generally divided into the Ante-Nicene Fathers, those who lived and wrote before the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, those who lived and wrote after 325. Also, the division of the Fathers into Greek and Latin writers is also common. Some of the most prominent Greek Fathers are Justin Martyr, Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor. Among the Latin Fathers are Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Gregory the Great. There were also Church Fathers who wrote in languages other than Greek or Latin, such as Coptic, Syriac, Ge'ez, and Armenian,

This time period is not as arbitrary as it may seem. It is roughly coterminous with the first seven ecumenical councils of the Church, which defined and defended the two most fundamental dogmas enshrined in the Creed: that we believe in one God in three Persons and that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, is true God and true man. This is also the time period in which both the canon of Scripture was clarified and the great liturgical traditions of the Church (including Roman, Byzantine, and Maronite) took their distinctive forms.

Most of these Church Fathers were saints. Some of them, such as Tertullian, fell into heresy. Saint or not, none of them are personally infallible. It would be remarkable if they agreed on anything, as this disparate group spans seven centuries and three continents. But their teaching does agree on many points, and this is testimony that such teaching did not originate with them but was transmitted by them. It is in their consensus that the Church, from the earliest times, has regarded them as infallible commentators on Scripture and the unwritten apostolic Tradition.

Why is the patristic Study Important to the Catholic Church?

The Patristic Period is a vital point in the history of Christianity since it contexturalizes the early Christian information from the time of the death of the last Apostle (John) (which runs roughly about 100 A.D. to the Middle Ages (451 A.D. and the council of

Chalcedon). Patristic thinkers were primarily concerned with understanding and applying the person and work of Jesus Christ in all facets of life. God had revealed himself in a person, and such a notion was radical when compared to philosophical systems of the day.
Their importance to apologetics and dogmatic theology goes without saying. When people claim that devotion to Mary is a medieval invention, you can prove otherwise simply by going to the Fathers of the Church. The same can be done when *The Da Vinci Code* alleges that Constantine invented the divinity of Christ.

But just as we read Scripture for more than apologetic purposes, so we should with the Fathers. The late Jean Cardinal Danielou said that the Fathers "are not only the truthful witnesses of a bygone era; they are also the most contemporary nourishment of men and women today." One of the greatest ways to grow in the spiritual life and to be imbued with the Catholic spirit is to read the writings of the Church Fathers. In approaching their work, we should not simply be looking for information but formation—to receive from them an authentically Catholic vision and a truly passionate zeal for holiness.

Chapter One

The Patristic Literature

1.1Introduction

The study of the development of patristic exegesis follows the same approach used for studying early Jewish interpretation in the previous chapter. We first make a delineation of patristic literature. Once the period of time has been decided, the historical, political and social influence on patristic literature is indicated. This may be used to study the influence imposed on commentators of the early Christian church. There was a long tradition of exegetical trends formed during this period. Certain types of patristic exegetical methods were employed by commentators to interpret the book of Ruth.

The standard period of the patristic interpretation should refer to the "*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church"*, which places the Patristic Age between the end of the 1st century and the end of the 8th century.[1] That period is full of philosophical innovation and theological development. We may describe this period as the meeting of the Old with the New. The Christian Patristic commentators transformed old problems into new ones, in such a way as to turn the subject in fresh directions. This period of interpretation is continuous, consistent and parallel with early Jewish exegesis. As with Jewish exegesis, we also need to investigate the socio-political and cultural environment of this literature, such as Hellenism, Stoicism and Platonism that affected the patristic interpretation of the book of Ruth in the last part of this chapter.

1.2 The age of hermeneutics in early Christian exegesis

Introduction

The coming of the Christian Church corresponds with some previous religious traditions that interacted with the newly established system of interpretation within the early Christian church. The age of hermeneutics illustrated the dynamics of the merge of old and new values. Moises Silva echoed this view. Christians were faced with the need to confront Greek culture. Philo appeared

[1] F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 265

to have provided a way for doing this in an intellectually responsible way. Origen in particular made the allegorical method a central feature of his exegesis and his theology and his influence was to be felt for many centuries.[2]

The time delineation of the Christian church coincides with my previous study of early Jewish interpretation in chapter two. These two outstanding schools, Jewish exegesis and patristic interpretation, shared the same historical and cultural background. Julius Scott pointed out these shared circumstances. In his work *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, he indicates that the two schools of interpretation have their roots in the historical analysis at the beginning of the Second Temple Period at 516.[3] We have already discussed several historical trends in chapter two on early Jewish exegesis. There are still some more important backgrounds and influences that have to be noted for this period of Christian exegesis. One of them is the influence of the Hellenistic period (333 - 64 BCE).[4] The term "Hellenism" refers to the Greek civilization brought about by Alexander the Great. The other political event refers to the turbulent political time of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) that started in 164 BCE. These two events imposed great influence on the political and cultural background of early Christian exegesis.

Charles Kannengiesser made a good contribution to the study of patristic exegesis indicating it as the age of hermeneutics. He believed that patristic exegesis was at the very core of the cultural legacy of the early church.[5] It was due to generations of believers in the church identifying themselves with the divine revelation received from the Bible. These believers initiated a rare process in the history of hermeneutics. They took over an intrinsically exclusivist body of sacred writings, proper to a particular religious tradition and appropriated it to their own tradition, which is born out of the former one but open to a spiritual self-definition which rejected proper and genuine exclusivism. Kannengiesser further elaborated that the inner dynamic of religious faith expressed in the early church was also strong enough to overcome the artifices of syncretism, when Christian believers spoke out against their pagan religious

[2] Moises Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible*, 46
[3] Julius Scott, *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995)*, 73-91
[4] The period lying between 333 and 64 BCE was based on the fact that Alexander conquered the world in 333 BCE and the Hellenism was started. Then in 64 BCE the Romans conquered Palestine and the Roman period started.
[5] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 13

backgrounds. The hermeneutical circle of early Christianity was complete. Following the Bible the converts to Christianity dared to identify themselves as "Christian". They could do so only as Christians, as the church community which welcomed them claimed to be nothing else but the concrete and collective embodiment of the scriptural message. For that reason, Scripture never failed to satisfy the needs of early Christians responding to their expectations.[6]

We next discuss the age of hermeneutics in several relationships, in which the meeting of the old and the new was experienced. This meeting created a vivid age of hermeneutics.

1.3 Old Testament and Jesus relationships

We start with the discussion of patristic exegesis from the Apostolic Period. Richard Norris explains the origin of the term "Apostolic Fathers". The expression "Apostolic fathers' corresponds to an idea of seventeenth century origin. It originated as the label for a set of writings, at that stage in the process of being recovered and edited, whose authors, though mere "fathers" and not apostles, were taken to have been close to the figures of apostolic authority. Their writings were therefore both associated and contrasted with those contained in the New Testament, since the latter were assumed to have been written either by the apostles themselves or by first-generation contemporaries and disciples of theirs.[7] With regard to Christian interpretation in the Apostolic Period, scholars emphasized the relationship between the Jewish tradition and Jesus' teaching. Israel's Scriptures, the TaNaK (Old Testament), testified to the Jewish practice of interpreting and incorporating new community circumstances within an existing understanding of God. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson further pointed out that these circumstances often presented theological challenges to previous thinking about God and God's relationship to the community of faith.[8] In sum, the early church faced the exegetical challenge already provided to them in Israel's Scriptures.

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[6] Idem

[7] Richard A. Norris, JR. "The apostolic and sub-apostolic writings: the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers" in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature,* Frances Young, Lewis Ayres & Andrew Louth eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11

[8] Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation* Volume 1: The Ancient Period, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 37

The period of apostolic exegesis is one of blending the Old with the New. Alan Hauser and Duane Watson commented that the use of Israel's Scriptures by the early Christian church and the writers of the New Testament is both a continuation of the reinterpretation and adaptation of the Jewish Scriptures in the Jewish community as well as a significant departure from it that sends interpretation into new directions.[9] The continuity is grounded in the fact that the early Christians interpreted their Scriptures using traditional Jewish methods. They did not understand themselves to be forming a new religion.

On the other hand scholars agree that early Christians interpreted the Jewish Scriptures in an new way due to their relationship to Jesus himself.[10] It was because the authority of the apostles came from their knowing Jesus, who appointed them as apostles during Jesus' life. Therefore, the exegetical approach of the apostles was mainly Jesus-oriented.

At this stage, the Christian commentators declared that the whole of the Old Testament pointed to him. Jesus as a central focus dominated the direction of the patristic exegesis. He embodied the redemptive destiny of Israel, and in the community of those who belong to him that status and destiny was fulfilled. For Jesus, the key to understanding the Old Testament was located in his own life and work, for he saw everything as pointed to himself. The New Testament writers following the pattern of Jesus, interpreted the Old Testament as a whole and it its parts as a witness to Christ.

Scholars call this new method "a Christological reading", meaning that Jesus read the Old Testament in light of himself. In other words, Jesus understood the Old Testament christologically. David S. Dockery laid emphasis on the role of Jesus in the early church in that "it is from him that the church derives its identification of Jesus with Israel."[11] We can agree with C. K. Barrett's words.

"The gospel story as a whole differs so markedly from first-century interpretation of the Old Testament that it is impossible to believe that it originated simply in meditations of prophecy; it originated in the career of Jesus of Nazareth."[12]

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[9] Idem, 38; See also Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 8-16

[10] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 25

[11] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 24

[12] Quoted at David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary*

On the other hand, a significant departure from the traditional interpretation of Israel's Scriptures could be expected in the early church because the church was guided by a new set of convictions. Scholars agree that the kingdom of God was inaugurated as a spiritual rather than a political kingdom. [13] Old Testament passages took on christological meaning, often through the use of typology. This exegetical approach will be discussed later. The Old Testament was interpreted in light of the understanding that Jesus was the Messiah who had inaugurated the kingdom of God. The early Christian use of the Scriptures of Israel is extensive. Israel's Scriptures were not utilized to create a systematic commentary as in Jewish writings. Rather Alan Hauser and Duane Watson commented that they were utilized for quotations, allusion, and echoes of Christian themes and patterns. Several interpretive methods were indeed borrowed from Judaism. The Old Testament was interpreted according to its plain or literal meaning, especially on ethical issues.[14] This exegetical approach is dominant in patristic circles of interpretation.

Jesus himself quoted several passages from books that are not part of the Torah, yet he granted them legal force. Jesus was doing no more than follow the Jewish and rabbinic view, which saw Scripture as Law and the prophets as interpreters of the Law. Ultimately, it is the problem of interpreting some obsolete laws which therefore needed an interpretation with an authority on a par with the Law itself to give them new legal force and validity. Julio Trebolle Barrera pointed out that Jesus was different from the rabbis since when interpreting the laws he referred directly to the will of God, superior to the Law itself.[15]

We may say that the Christological approach is a kind of charismatic exegesis in the early church development. E. Earle Ellis is one of the pioneers in this area of investigation. Jesus is said to have expounded the Old Testament with an authority that in the Gospels is related to his claim that He possessed the prophetic Spirit.[16] Likewise, he attributes the response to his 'kingdom of God'

Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 26

[13] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963) 33; Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation* Volume 1: The Ancient Period, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 38

[14] Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, *Introduction and Overview*, 38

[15] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 518

[16] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light*

message and to his messianic signs, both of which are rooted in the interpretation of Old Testament promises, to the fact that God revealed it to some and hid it from others.[17]

There is then a paradox in Jesus' biblical exposition. He follows exegetical methods that were current in Judaism and regards them as a useful means to expound the biblical passages. However, E. Earle Ellis commented that he used it in different ways. Jesus recognizes that the meaning of Scripture and even his exposition remains hidden from many and, at least in the latter part of his ministry, he seems deliberately to veil the presentation of his message. The acceptance of his exposition and of his teaching generally, depends on his view of a divine opening of the minds of the hearers.[18]

1.3.1 Old Testament and New Testament relationship

History is accessible only through tradition in the view of Ernst Käsemann.[19] Tradition must be selected and interpreted. History is therefore accessible only through tradition and meaningful solely through interpretation. To point out that the New Testament documents are characterized by interpreted traditions is to observe that we have access to the way the gospel and pre-gospel traditions were meaningful to those who passed on those traditions.

The 2nd century was the century of the formation of the collection of books, which comprises the New Testament. It seems that the impetus to form the collection of books which made up the New Testament, did not only come from the gospels being put into writing, but rather from the edition of the Acts of the Apostles. Julio Trebolle Barrera commented that in this period, the sacred book of the Christians continued to be the Old Testament.[20] This situation began to change in the period when the most recent book to become part of the New Testament was written: the pseudonymous letter known as Second Peter which, alludes to the rest of Scriptures (3:16), referring to the Pauline letters, including the first letter to Timothy and probably to the gospel of Mark. From that moment

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of Modern Research (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 117

[17] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 117

[18] Idem, 118

[19] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries (London: SPCK, 1989)*, 15

[20] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 514

on Christianity experienced a double conflict according to Julio Trebolle Barrera's research. The church had to decide whether to accept or to reject the OT legacy, and whether to accept or reject the second *praeparatio evangelica*, the world of ideas and institutions of Greek and Roman culture, which acted as a channel to express and extend the new faith.[21]

With the relationship between Christological exegesis and Old Testament in mind, James H. Charlesworth commented that "Jesus is the power paradigm for all the New Testament writers." [22] We must acknowledge that New Testament theology develops out of the tension between tradition and addition. Robert Grant has also shared the same view and observed the way in which the New Testament writers interpreted the scripture. The apostle Paul developed his Christocentric interpretation.[23] Since Paul was the main exegete of Jesus' life and work and really wrote a lot of epistles, he has been a representative of New Testament's writers. In Paul's case the particular task of his ministry was to make known the mystery of the gospel, namely, the inclusion of the Gentile in eschatological Israel. This purpose of God is a divine mystery or wisdom that was not made known and indeed was hidden for ages but is now revealed, made known and manifest. It is revealed especially in the writings of Paul (and other pneumatics),[24] in his preaching 'by the Spirit'[25] and in his messianic/eschatological exposition of Scripture. Such a pneumatic interpreter of the word of God is best exemplified by Paul himself.

Other epistles also witness the presence of this approach of interpretation. Robert M. Grant regarded the book of Hebrews as a detailed analysis of the Christo-centric meaning of the Old Testament.[26] The Law had only a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things.[27] The epistle to the Hebrews played an important role in the history of exegesis. It encouraged the fancifulness of allegorists and others who sought for hidden meanings in the Old Testament. At the same time it achieved more positive results. Robert Grant even singled out the supremacy of this exegetical approach and

[21] Idem
[22] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989), 10
[23] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 17-27
[24] Rom 16:26
[25] See the explanation of "in wisdom" at Eph 3:3, 5; cf. Col 1:28.
[26] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 33
[27] Heb. 10:1

commented that:

"Without the typological method it would have been almost impossible for the early church to retain its grasp on the Old Testament."[28]

One of the perspectives views the typological method is that it is based on the presupposition that the whole Old Testament directs one beyond itself for its interpretation. Just as the prophets made predictions, so the other Old Testament writers wrote what they did with a view to the future. Obviously there was some justification for this presupposition. The Old Testament writers did not record past events because the past events had present significance and future significance as well. Robert Grant insisted that they believed that the God who was working in their own times and would work in the times to come was the same God who had worked hitherto. They had what we might call, an "existential concern" with the history of God's acts. [29] Christian exegetes, believing that the God of the Old Testament was the Father of Jesus who had raised him from the dead, could not fail to regard God's working as continuous and consistent. They therefore regarded the events described in the Old Testament as being of similar type as those in the New Testament and therefore as pre-figurations of the events in the life of Jesus and of his church.[30]

James H. Charlesworth illustrated well the concept of *kerygma* with regard to the concern of New Testament writers. It is focused on the proclamation that God had raised the crucified one. Preaching was the force that created the Christian communities.[31] Teaching (didache) and tradition about whom the one crucified one was, help to provide a background and disclose a process that explains the production of the Gospels. Hence, the Jesus traditions in the Gospels are the result of preaching, teaching and even conflicts (polemics) with other Jews.

On the other hand, there is another interpretative approach common to the New Testament. It is the use of Israel's Scriptures in midrash.[32] We also did a

[28] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible,* rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 33
[29] Idem, 37
[30] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 37
[31] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989), 12
[32] Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation* Volume 1: The Ancient Period, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson

thorough study of this early Jewish interpretation in the previous chapter.[33] Midrash assumes that all the words and passages of Scripture are of equal weight and can be used to interpret one another because they all derive from the mind of God. This provided the base for the comparison between these two exegetical schools in the same period of time.

1.3.2 Old Testament and the Church relationship

Robert Grant pointed out the dynamic relationship between Old Testament and the Christian church. It remains true that the proper place for the Bible is in the church. The religious community existed before there was any New Testament scripture. It is the environment in which scripture functions. Both church and scripture witness to Christ. This environment often allows a sympathetic understanding of scripture, an insight into its genius.[34] Interpreters are not only responsible for the truth as they see it but also to the Christian community, within whose succession of worshippers they stand and to which they are responsible. Humans are not only rational animals but also worshipping ones.[35] Interpreters of scripture have also to realize that like all Christians they stand not only in the community, which is the church, but also in the general community, the world outside.[36]

James H. Charlesworth reported that the Church ultimately derives from Jesus' conviction and proclamation that in his time God was calling into being a special group of people. This group constituted the small band of faithful who awaited and prepared for God's final act at the end of all normal history and time.[37]

The first Council in the history of the Church (56CE), which took place in Jerusalem, had opted for a compromise solution, which would allow the coexistence of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians from Hellenistic origin. Despite the compromise made, Julio Trebolle Barrera comments that it is not surprising that tensions persisted and that in the 2nd century, a strong movement of rejection of the OT, headed by Marcion ran through the whole

(Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 39
[33] See Chapter Three "The Midrash".
[34] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 6
[35] Idem
[36] Idem, 7
[37] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989), 17

Church. The Christian canon was finalized towards the end of the 2nd century CE.[38]

James H. Charlesworth said that the Gospels and other New Testament documents reflect the needs of the early Christian Church.[39] One of these was a concern to remember faithfully something about the pre-cross Jesus.

Marcion marked the rise of different forces imposing a challenge on the traditional and exegetical trends. To understand Marcion's attitude towards the Old Testament it is necessary to observe that it was based on a thoroughgoing dualism. Marcion endeavored to interpret Pauline thought in the light of his own view that there are two gods: the Demiurg God of the law, who created the world and is the God of the Jews; and the good God, who is the Father of Jesus Christ.[40] Marcion not only rejected the Old Testament for Christians. He insisted on a literal interpretation of it in order to emphasize its crudity. It was not a Christian book, and in his opinion no allegorical exegesis could make it one.[41]

The dynamic of the meeting between the Old and the New strengthened the vivid development of exegetical streams in the period of the early church. Its religious and social background indeed influenced the interpretation in the early church.

Scholars also witnessed the presence of another force. Biblical interpretation in the early church indicates in a remarkable way the Jewish-ness of the earliest Christianity. E. Earle Ellis pointed out an important aspect of exegesis related to the traditional background. He stated that:

"It followed exegetical methods common to Judaism and drew its perspective and presuppositions from Jewish backgrounds."[42]

However, he also points out an obvious difference. Early Christian hermeneutics differed from that of other religious parties and theologies in

[38] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 514
[39] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989), 20
[40] Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 42
[41] Idem, 43
[42] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 121

Judaism. In its Christological exposition of the Scripture it totally focused upon Jesus as the Messiah.[43] This different focus decisively influenced both the perspective from which they expounded the Old Testament and the way in which their presuppositions were brought to bear upon the specific biblical texts.

1.4 What is patristic exegesis?

1.4.1 Time delineation in correspondence with Jewish exegesis

We may witness that patristic exegesis corresponds with Jewish exegeses since Christianity started. This comparison and correspondence are formulated by the use of Farrar's classification in terms of historical development of interpretation.[44] Though the exact date provided by scholars may vary, the time period is more or less the same. It was at the time interval until middle age, in which it coincides with the one of early Jewish interpretation.

The term "patristic" calls on a very ancient and vigorous inner church tradition at least since the fourth century CE[45], in which certain former leaders of Christian communities were recognized as *patres*, "Fathers."[46] Charles Kannengiesser pointed out the time delineation of the patristic or early Christian period. The "patristic" era is located in history between the gospel event, of which the New Testament witnesses, and the collapse of the Roman Empire, that is, from the middle/end of the first[47] to the seventh century of the Common Era in the West or to the ninth century in the East.[48] The patristic period is the one in which the fathers of the church established the basic doctrinal framework of Christianity. Gerald Bray related this period with the Ecumenical Council in church history. It may be dated from about 100 CE until at least the Council of Chalcedon (451), after which there was a long period of transition to the middle Ages.[49]

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[43] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 121

[44] See the discussion of "Farrar's historical approach" in the chapter two, starting from page 20.

[45] There is a time difference between the time when the word *patres* was in vogue and became a common term and the actual time of writings by those later on called *patres*. The word was used since the fourth century but the authors lived since the end of the first century

[46] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 3

[47] Jesus was crucified and resurrected approximately in the third decade. Most of the Gospels were written from the middle towards the end of the first century. After that the patristic fathers came upon the scene.

[48] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 3

[49] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 77

Generally the calendar of the church in the West differs from that in the East. The period of the church fathers in the West is said to have ended with the death of St. Isidore, Archbishop of Seville in Spain, in 636. In the Eastern Church (Orthodox Church) the period of the church fathers is said to end with the death of John of Damascus who died around 749.

Thus the period of the church fathers of the Eastern Church lasted for about 100 years longer than the period of the Western church fathers. This delineation of time closely resembles the later rabbinic and Jewish period of interpretation. This is why we can make a comparison of interpretation strategies between them on the book of Ruth in this shared social and cultural framework and context.

The Western Church, concerned chiefly with practical theology and its legal organization, left little space to discussion of hermeneutical problems. The acceptance of the canon of Scripture as rule of faith (*regula fidei*), as expressed in the Trinitarian creed, as well as the financing of the apostolic ministry of bishops entrusted with ensuring orthodox doctrine, led increasingly to a greater development of dogma, leaving exegetical and hermeneutic problems behind.

1.4.2 Patristic study of exegesis

Charles Kannengiesser pointed out the difficulty of finding the essence of patristic exegesis. He indicated the difficulties experienced in patristic study. The lack of consensus on patristic hermeneutics among the experts was furthermore compounded by the negative attitude towards this type of exegesis entertained in most circles of biblical scholarship.[50] As a result, the study of the interpretation of Scripture in the earliest Christian centuries, prior to the Western and Byzantine Middle Ages, was relegated to the realm of erudite curiosities, seen as irrelevant for any form of creativity in contemporary thought, and dispensable for serious theology. It was not only ignorance or indifference that constantly slowed the needed theoretical clarification of patristic hermeneutics. It was also sectarian prejudice and confessional apologetics in the field itself.[51]

[50] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 4
[51] Idem

Frederic Farrar, one of the scholars dedicated to the study of patristic literature, viewed patristic exegesis in a negative way. Farrar's introduction to patristic interpretation is not encouraging:

The history of exegesis thus far has been in great measure a history of aberrations. If we turn to the Fathers with the hope that now at last we shall enter the region of unimpeachable methods and certain applications, we shall be disappointed…[Though admittedly one can find much that is valuable in the fathers,] their exegesis in the proper sense of the word [is] complete revision both in its principles and in its details.[52]

The main culprit behind patristic misinterpretation is of course Origen of Alexandria, who gave respectability to Philo's approach. Farrar had already stated that:

"It must be said quite plainly and without the least circumlocution that it is absolutely baseless… his exegesis is radically false. It darkens what is simple and fails to explain what is obscure. Origen was hardly successful in improving upon Philo. What Origen regarded as exegetical proofs was nothing but the after-thoughts devised in support of an unexamined tradition. They could not have had a particle of validity for any logical or independent mind."[53]

Farrar concludes that the very foundations of Origen's "exegetic system are built upon the sand".[54] Even St. Augustine, for all his greatness, made little advance in interpretive method. For Farrar, Augustine's exegesis "is marked by the most glaring defects. Almost as many specimens of prolix puerility and arbitrary perversion can be adduced from his pages as from those of his least predecessors".[55]

Charles Kannengiesser however advanced the value of patristic exegesis in the circle of Christian scholarship. He indicated the changing importance of patristic exegesis. The achievements of men and women in the early church became more and more perceived as exemplifying the social, political, and spiritual behavior of their time.[56]

1.4.3 Schools/Sects

[52] Frederic W. Farrar, *History of interpretation* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), 162
[53] Frederic W. Farrar, *History of interpretation* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), 153, 191
[54] Idem, 201
[55] Idem, 236
[56] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 5

(a) The Alexandrian School: Clement and Origen

The precursor of the Christian School of Alexandria was Philo the Jew. He rejected the literal and obvious meaning of Scripture in cases where there were expressions unworthy of the divinity, or historical inaccuracies or any other difficulties. It was necessary to resort to allegorical meaning and leave open the possibility of an interpretation allowing many probable senses the text had. Philo's exegetical method, then, was basically apologetic: a correct interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures made them reconcilable with Greek philosophy. The allegorical method, Greek in origin, had its natural and original field of application in the interpretation of the Homeric myths. It was perfect for reconciling an ancient classical tradition, whether Homeric myth or antiquated biblical legislation, to a new situation and a new mentality.[57]

(b) The Antioch School: Theodore of Mopsuestia

Wherever Judaism affected intellectual movements in the Christian Church, the result was a return by Christian exegetes to the literal and historical meaning of Scripture. The school of exegesis that had its centre in the Syrian city of Antioch, is a good example of this approach.[58]

Here the "Eastern" or "Greek" tradition was strongly influenced by Neo-platonic philosophical concepts and a mystical approach to the spiritual life. Another was the "western" or "Latin" tradition, which was shaped by Roman legal concepts, though it also felt the influence of Neoplatonism. This will be examined in a later part of this chapter.

1.4.4 The backgrounds for the formation of Christian / Patristic Literature

Introduction

The early church started from the life and work of Jesus as represented to them by the apostles. The formation of patristic exegesis may be regarded as the preservation of the traditional Jesus' teaching. Therefore, the aim of these

[57] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 528
[58] Idem, 530

exegetes was to uphold the tradition of Christianity as formed by the followers. They were later called “fathers”. The formation of the early church did not happen on an island. It was, influenced by surrounding cultural, religious and political circumstances.

The first two centuries of Christianity were crucial. It was a period of struggle for survival. It was the crucible in which the basic elements of Christian identity and church organization were forged. John Behr points out what the main task of the Christian church was during this time. Christians had to find ways of explaining their relationship to the Jews and also the broader pagan world, while suffering sporadic persecution from both of these. They also had to learn how to resolve internal differences in matters of teaching, liturgy and calendar, church organization and order.[59]

The patristic period of the early church was vivid and diversified. This was the age of the meeting of the New with the Old. There was a tremendous amount of thought and values affecting patristic interpretation. Scholars commented that the early Christian exegetes had to face challenges to Christianity from many sources, including Greek philosophy, [60] Graeco-Roman and Egyptian religions.[61]

It was necessary for the exegetes to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. The early church had to explain why it rejected Judaism, without abandoning the Jewish Scriptures. Christian exegetes faced the challenge of incorporating the new developing tradition into the old tradition. At one extreme were people such as Marcion, who wanted to reject the Jewish heritage altogether, but found that this was practically impossible. On the other hand were people like Tertullian. For him Christianity was a more thorough going legalism than anything the Jews had attempted. The mainline Christian church could accept neither of these positions, but it had to find a viable interpretation of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. Gerald Bray even described that this task *“was such a top priority throughout this period that the history of exegesis can very largely be written in terms of it alone.”*[62] He further commented the mission of early

[59] John Behr, “Social and historical setting” in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature,* Frances Young, Lewis Ayres & Andrew Louth edi. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 55

[60] Cf. Marrou’s introduction in *A History of Education in Antiquity*; R. C. Lilla, Clement of Alexandria: *A Study of Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)

[61] Cf. Harold Idris Bell, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Liverpool: At the University Press, 1954)

[62] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 95

Christian exegetes. It was necessary for them to distinguish Christianity from pagan mystery cults and from Hellenistic philosophy. [63] The following surrounding influences that imposed influence on exegetes of the early church can be indicated:

Gnosticism

Gnosticism developed a system well known during the second century CE. Gnostic ideas were around and were gradually put together in various combinations arranged around different organizing principles. Everett Ferguson pointed out the development of Christian exegesis under influence of Gnosticism. Gnosticism had grown up concurrently with Christianity in a similar environment with the two having some interactions during the first century before Gnosticism eventually developed into a separate religion in the second century. This could account for contacts and mutual influences and for Gnosticism's contributions, positive and negative to the development of Christian theology.[64]

Gnosticism is often defined as a cult of secret knowledge. It emphasized knowledge that initiates have and others do not. Many Gnostic groups shared with Christians a rejection of the Laws of Moses and salvation by works. It was their belief that other beings created the material world. The shared belief of a divine mediator is present between God and man, and finally the belief that nothing worldly is of any importance. Only faith in or knowledge of this divine mediator[65] would lead one to salvation and eternal life.

Gnosticism envisaged the world as a series of emanations from the highest One, being the origin of a series of emanations. The lowest emanation was an evil god, the demiurge[66], who created the material world as a prison for the divine sparks that dwell in human bodies. The Gnostics identified this evil creator with the God of the Old Testament and saw the ministry of Jesus as attempts to liberate humanity from his dominion, by imparting divine secret

[63] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 95
[64] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 289
[65] 1 Tm 2:5
[66] A Demiurge is an inferior heavenly being, who fashioned the world and humanity. See Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 290

wisdom in men. Gnostics like Christians take an allegorical view of the Old Testament.

Gnosticism was regarded as a theological dumping ground for heresies as defined by the main stream Christian Church. Everett Ferguson studied the origins of Gnosticism.[67] According to him it was a process of denial and murder. Christianity and what was called Gnosticism both evolved from common roots in Hellenistic syncretism that followed upon Alexander the Great founding his Empire in the fourth century BCE. This empire stretched from Greece to India and led to the syncretism of many philosophies and religions. It provided a conduit for Eastern religion to move west and Greek philosophy to move east. The birth of Gnosticism occurred from the often ignored period between the decline of the Hellenistic empires and the rise of Rome during the first century BCE. This overlaps with the 300 years between Malachi and Matthew.[68] The Apocrypha gives us more information on what really happened during that time.

The following points are common to at least a great portion of the Gnostic schools and other so called secret organization.[69] With regard to a definite principle of authority, the Spirit is the source and norm of all knowledge. Truth is based upon the revelation by the Spirit. It is the Spirit that decides what is divine or not in the books of the Scripture. While the Old Testament was accepted as the canon by most Christians, it is exposed in these circles to the sharpest criticism and partially to rejection, or to an exclusivistic type of interpretation. It is always what they see as the Spirit's interpretation that has the highest authority. In their case, the Spirit decides as to the acceptation and rejection and the interpretation.

Regarding the doctrine of Christology in these groups, the Savior Christ is seen as a spiritual being sent down from the realm of light above to the earth below in order to reveal divine truth to men and to illuminate their minds. As a divine being He was neither born nor did He die. He was only in outward appearance a man such as we are, only clothing Himself with a human body. His work consisted essentially in imparting higher knowledge and the sacraments.

Referring to soteriology, their view was that redemption is affected by the

[67] Idem, 288-290
[68] The book of Daniel was written in 167-164 BCE and the actual gap is nearer to 150 years.
[69] See B. A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1990), 7-8; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco, 1983), 53-272.

liberation of man from the bondage of the lower gods and by the due preparation for his return to his true home above. This liberation is brought about by the imparting of superior wisdom, the removal of man's ignorance regarding his origin, his destiny, the hindrances in the road and the way to overcome them.[70] Thereby the divine element in man, the Spirit, becomes self-conscious. Then the Christian has to prepare himself for his homeward journey. This is done first by the reception of the sacraments and the seals, which will procure him a safe passage through all the hosts of hostile spirits. Next he or she has to get rid of ascetic practices, by the mortification of the flesh, of all that is the work of the demiurge. Occasionally an unbridled license took the place of this asceticism, both alike springing from the same root—dualism.[71] Such is the course of man's redemption, at once intellectual, magical and physical.

Basically, gnostic doctrine is dualistic.[72] Gnostic dualism opposed God the Creator and God the Redeemer, the Old Testament and New Testament respectively. Even in the less radical forms of Gnosticism, the Old Testament Law had a position intermediate between God, the Redeemer and evil. David Dockery also shared this view. The Fathers resorted to deny the Gnostics their right to use Scripture, extolling the virtues of simple faith.[73]

Julio Trebolle Barrera warned that the mission of the exegete is to prevent early Christianity from fading away into the world of mystery religion and a-historical mysticism or perhaps falling into a philosophy bereft of all reference to time.[74] Basically, the nature of exegesis during that period was homiletical in an effort to uphold its own traditional belief. As a result there was an intense interaction and friction between Gnosticism and the church fathers. This phenomenon is underlined by a vivid but contrasting exegetical approach to the religion and culture of that time.

The main stream church and the patristic fathers developed their answer to heresies in a comprehensive hermeneutical system. This system, stated by Dockery, was to retain the rule of faith as well as both Testaments of the biblical

[70] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 290
[71] Idem, 291
[72] Hans Jonas, *Gnostic Religion* (2nd ed.; Boston, 1963), 42-47
[73] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 80
[74] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 518

canon while simultaneously seeking to meet the challenges raised by the Gnostics.[75] In reaction to the arbitrary nature of Gnostic exegesis, Irenaeus, one of the church fathers, shows no sensitivity at all for allegorical interpretation based on the symbolism of numbers and etymologies. Against the Gnostics, Irenaeus used the allegorical method to interpret the Old Testament christologically and so be able to link the Old Testament and the New Testament against the division defended by the Gnostics.[76]

Irenaeus fought against the Gnostics in the second book of his work *Against the Heresies*. Irenaeus shows that they have lapsed back into heathen pluralism with their exegetical methods. Their gnosis by its very nature operates through mythological hypostatisations and objectifying modes of thought that are projecting upon God human forms and feelings, and human, mental, psychological and even physiological processes. Such people, Irenaeus insists, will be compelled continually to find out new types of images and will never be able to fix their mind on the one and true God. T. F. Torrance commented that they were being indeed elated in their own assumptions, but in reality turning away from the true God.[77]

Gnosticism operates through allegorical variations upon biblical texts and themes. This can be called allegorizing in reverse of the biblical texts and themes and the biblical accounts of events in the life of the Lord and other New Testament figures. Moreover, the sayings and parables that are taken from the Scriptures here are reinterpreted as allegorical presentations of mythical *aeons* that crowd the intermediate realm between the incomprehensible God and the material world.[78] Thomas Torrance commented that in this way the Gnostics brought to the Scriptures their own preconceived framework of hypotheses and quarried at random from biblical passages, forming them into strange new patterns of their own in order to find support for their notions.[79]

Gnostic type of interpretations could not be regarded as compatible with traditional Christian exegesis. First of all, their interpretations were not

[75] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 80
[76] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 517
[77] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 32
[78] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 294
[79] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 32

Christocentric. To the Gnostics, Christ was at best the means to an end, and at worst irrelevant. He was not the end in himself. Second, Gerald Bray commented that they forged a radical division between creation and redemption, which the Christian gospel held together in the person of Christ. This is the importance of John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17, which speak of Christ as co-creator with the Father.[80]

Most important of all, exegetical supremacy did not exceed church tradition in early Christian times. What we call church tradition is in fact the *regula fidei*. Irenaeus already set up this principle of exegesis within the church. This would be further developed later in opposition to what can be called exegesis in cathedra. Exegesis has to be in agreement with the understanding of Scripture held by church tradition. The interpretation does not have to be based only on rational criteria but has to take into account the doctrine and authority of tradition, which the Church transmits from apostolic times onward. Julio Trebolle Barrera even concluded that this principle of interpretation is justified since the tradition of the church is in some way earlier than its Scripture, created by the first apostles and their disciples.[81]

Hellenism

By the end of the third century BCE, the shadow of Rome started to fall across the eastern Mediterranean. Rome fought its First Macedonian War in 215 BCE as incidental to the Second Punic War and in 212 BCE entered into alliance with Pergamum. The last of the Hellenistic kingdoms to be absorbed by Rome was Egypt in 30 BCE at which time the Hellenistic Age passed into the Roman era. Roman rule played an important role in enhancing the spread and development of Greek culture. Roman government provided a stable political environment with systematic organization for the development of Greek culture and language. Everett Ferguson believed that we need to indicate the contact of Hellenistic concepts with Jewish ideas in Palestine. This contact is of special importance for the background of early Christianity.[82] A common consensus in historic orthodox Christianity is the claim that early Christianity was influenced by the intellectual forces of Hellenism. Hellenism refers to the influence of

[80] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 98.
[81] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 517
[82] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 15

ancient Greek philosophy and culture, which spread throughout the Mediterranean world after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE. Specifically, the doctrines of Trinity and the deity of Christ have been identified as ideas that were introduced into Christianity through the influence of Greek philosophy, particularly through the ideas of Plato.

First we examine the features of Hellenism. Thomas Torrance gave a definition of Hellenism. [83] It is from Hellenism that we derive our term hermeneutic, meaning first to bring news or to convey a message and then to interpret or explain or to translate from one language to another. Something similar to this is found in the works of Plato who used myth to suggest in a narrative form a speculative notion that could not be reduced to exact statement. It was the dramatic presentation of a timeless or eternal idea in temporal form. Torrance further indicated the hidden meaning of double interpretation and stated that "the object of knowledge in the proper sense is what is eternal and wholly intelligible that is, ideas or forms, but the objects of sense-experience such as natural events or actual facts, which cannot be considered fully real."[84]

The above views were set out in many of Plato's dialogues but they are also found in the *Timaeus*, a work in which he expounded his cosmological theory, and one that fascinated and influenced countless people for centuries, and not least the world of Gnostic and Neo-Platonic thought in the early centuries of the Christian era when the Hellenic mind was struggling with the biblical doctrines of creation and incarnation.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, the theory of Hellenism took two basic forms: a Stoic form in which God came to be thought of in terms of a cosmic soul informing a cosmic body, and a Neo-Platonic form in which the distinction between the two realms was thrown into a sharp difference between the world of reasons and the world of reality.[85] The Platonic concept introduced the two worlds, the intelligible and the sensible.

This Platonic distinction between a realm of sense and a realm of pure thought has had an immense influence upon the history of hermeneutics. The distinction in other words refers to a sharp difference between a crude literal

[83] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 16
[84] Idem
[85] Idem, 18

sense and an underlying spiritual or philosophical meaning. Thomas Torrance commented that the visual image or figure represented in the realm of pure thought was often regarded as mere shadow quite disparate from the reality that casts it. Moreover, he illustrated that therefore once it has played its part it is regarded as something to be left behind in the attainment of knowledge of the real.[86]

Hellenism had indeed an important contribution to make to the history of hermeneutics, through the teaching of Aristotle, notably in his work *De Interpretatione*, which later had a considerable influence upon mediaeval thought. Under the direction of Aristotle attention was given more to form and method, and because form and matter may not be divorced from one another, there resulted a more realistic form of exegesis with serious consideration of the straightforward sense interpreted according to the rules of grammar and logic.[87]

Another significant influence of Hellenism is that individual statements are interpreted in relation to the whole. The whole was interpreted as the sum total of the particulars. It was through analytic and synthetic examination that meaning was determined. At the same time attention was also paid to the author himself in his use of speech, that is, to questions of rhetoric and philology. It was realized that interpretation or translation from one language to another or from one thought-world to another thought-world, required some knowledge of the historical and ideological background. Thomas Torrance pointed out that "in order to bridge the gap between the reader and the letter of older documents some attention to historical matters and philosophical developments were unavoidable."[88]

Hellenism was a cultural force that touched most areas in the ancient Mediterranean world. Thus, since Christianity arose in the Mediterranean world, it is not surprising that early Christians had to deal with its effects. We know that there were various reactions to Hellenistic philosophy among early Christians. Tertullian claimed that Christianity and Greek philosophy has nothing in common at all. On the other hand, Justin Martyr felt quite comfortable making comparisons between Christianity and Greek philosophy in order to attract

[86] Idem, 19
[87] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 20
[88] Idem

Hellenistic pagans to the Gospel. Justin was not alone in trying to create bridges from Greek philosophy to Christianity. Like Justin, many early Christians were willing to borrow certain terms and ideas from the cultural world of their day in order to communicate the Gospel to those around them. Hellenistic ideas were allowed to creep into the Gospel message and were used to formulate this message.

Hellenism indeed imposed influence on the development of Christianity. The Jewish world from which, Christianity arose, had already been influenced by Hellenism prior to the birth of Christ. Critics against Hellenism often make it sound as if the life and culture of Jesus and the first disciples were untouched by Hellenism, and that only in later centuries was it allowed to 'infect' the church. However, we know from history that this is simply not the case. In his groundbreaking study, Judaism and Hellenism, Martin Hengel[89] has shown that, from the middle of the third century BCE, Jewish Palestine had already experienced the effects of Hellenism in various ways. He listed the following items:

(1) Under Ptolemaic rule, the Jews were forced to deal with Hellenistic forms of government and administration;

(2) As inhabitants of an important coastal land, Palestine served as one of the crossroads for international trade, which brought along many Hellenized merchants through the area;

(3) The Greek language, the common language of the Roman Empire, became a part of Jewish culture (and became the language of the New Testament!);

(4) Greek educational techniques were, adopted, in part, by the Jews. Thus, the idea of a pristine Judaism, untouched by Hellenism, giving rise to an equally untouched early Christianity that was later “corrupted” by Hellenism is simply a false historical picture.

However, recent studies have shown that the influence of Hellenism on various

[89] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period,* 2 vols. (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974). See also Hengel's J*ews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); and *The 'Hellenization' of Judea in the First Century after Christ* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989)

peoples in the ancient world was largely superficial, and primarily attracted the ruling class and those with political and administrative hopes. In his comprehensive study of the Hellenistic period, Peter Green demonstrates that the effects of Hellenism on local cultures in the ancient world operated like a forced cultural veneer over an otherwise healthy and distinct traditional worldview.[90] G. W. Bowersock has come to similar conclusions:

The persistence of all these local traditions has suggested that there was no more than a superficial Hellenization of much of Asia Minor, the Near East, and Egypt [Hellenism] was a medium not necessarily antithetical to local or indigenous traditions. On the contrary, it provided a new and more eloquent way of giving voice to them.[91]

These observations point to the fact that Hellenism did not tend to infiltrate and "corrupt" the local religious traditions of the ancient world. Rather, people maintained their religious traditions in spite of Hellenistic influence in other areas of their lives.

Although Judaism and early Christianity were affected by the surrounding culture in certain ways, they diligently guarded their religious beliefs and practices from Hellenistic pagan influences, even to the point of martyrdom. We now come to the heart of the issue. The historical and archaeological evidence shows that both Judaism and early Christianity carefully guarded their religious views from the surrounding Hellenistic culture. For example, with regard to Judaism, the archaeological work of Eric Meyers on the city of Sepphoris in first-century Upper Galilee reveals that, in spite of wide-spread Hellenistic influence on various cultural levels, the Jewish people maintained a strict observance of the Torah.[92]

When it comes to early Christianity, it is clear that the religious influences are Jewish rather than Hellenistic. The essence of the Christian Gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenantal promises through the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. It is the climax of the history of Yahweh-God's dealings with the Jewish people through a series of covenants, culminating in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Gregory Dix's conclusions on the question of the

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[90] Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 312-335.
[91] G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 6-7
[92] Eric Meyers, *The Challenge of Hellenism for Early Judaism and Christianity*, Biblical Archaeology 55 (1992), 84-91

Hellenization of the Gospel confirm this claim: the central core of the Gospel consists of "*a Jewish Monotheism and a Jewish Messianism and a Jewish Eschatology; which is expressed in a particular pattern of worship and morality.*"[93]

This conclusion does conflict with what used to be a popular view of Christian origins in the early twentieth-century. This view, held by a group, of critical scholars known as the "History of Religions School", claimed that many early Christian beliefs and practices were actually borrowed from Hellenistic pagan mystery cults. In recent years, however, this view has largely been abandoned by the scholarly world. The evidence now demonstrates that early Christianity is best understood as mainly arising from the Jewish thought world. In his book, *Christianity and the Hellenistic World*, philosopher Ronald Nash wrestles with the claims of the History of Religions School. His findings are worth noting:

Was early Christianity a syncretistic faith? Did it borrow any of its essential beliefs and practices either from Hellenistic philosophy or religion or from Gnosticism? The evidence requires that this question be answered in the negative.[94]

Nash's conclusion fits the findings of many others. The work of historians and biblical scholars such N. T. Wright and David Flusser[95] confirm that first-century Judaism is the proper context within which to understand the rise of early Christianity. It is true that Christianity eventually broke with Judaism. Unlike Judaism, it understood God as a Triune Being, and the Messiah as both divine and human. However, these theological perspectives were rooted in the experience of the early Jewish Christians as recorded in the New Testament. As Dix has noted, *"Christianity ceased to be Jewish, but it did not thereby become Greek. It became itself--Christianity."*[96]

Many of the central elements of Matthew are diametrically opposed to the Hellenistic mind-set. This claim can be demonstrated by offering the following examples. First, like Judaism, the Christian Gospel proclaims that God created all things "out of nothing" ("*ex nihilo*"). This is contrary to the Greek view of pre-existing eternal matter. Second, since God created all things, including

[93] Gregory Dix, *The 'Hellenization' of the Gospel* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1953), 3
[94] Ronald Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 270
[95] See the work of N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (New York: Adama, 1987)
[96] Gregory Dix, *The 'Hellenization' of the Gospel* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1953), 29

matter, Christianity (with Judaism) understands matter in general and the human body in particular, as "very good." [97] The Hellenistic worldview understood matter as questionable at best. The body was seen as something like an unnatural tomb, within which the eternal human soul was temporarily trapped until released by death. Whereas, along with Judaism, Christianity proclaimed that to be human was to have a body, and thus that we would experience resurrection of the body in the after-life, the Greek view of the after-life was freedom from the body.

Some have noted similarities between certain Greek systems of ethics and New Testament teachings on morality. However, even here there are significant differences.[98] While one can identify certain common features, such as literary styles and basic moral codes, there are prominent differences in the motivation. Christians are motivated by regard for God and His call to holiness. The Greeks through the reason urged for living a moral life. Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Greeks rely upon their own innate wisdom and ability. Finally, unlike the Greek philosophical view, the hope of heaven provides the foundation for Christians to persevere under moral pressure.

Finally, we must address the claim that the doctrines of the deity of Christ[99] and the Trinity[100] are later Hellenistic pagan corruptions of the early and 'pure' Christianity. Two responses will suffice to show the weaknesses of these claims. First, the scholars who pointed out that New Testament Christianity was corrupted by later Hellenistic influence fail to give account for the fact that it is the New Testament data itself which led the early Christian fathers to confess the deity of Christ and the Trinity of God. While space considerations do not allow for a detailed biblical defense of these doctrines, reference can be made to a number of significant studies demonstrating that these doctrines are rooted in the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ (see endnote for suggested resources). Second, recent research has forcefully shown that the early

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[97] Gn 1:31

[98] For a more detailed discussion see Paul R. Eddy, "Christian and Hellenistic Moral Exhortation: A Literary Comparison Based on I Thessalonians 4," in *Directions in New Testament Methods* (ed. M. Albl, P. R. Eddy, and R. Mirkes; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993), 45-51.

[99] On the deity of Christ see: Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); Robert M. Bowman, J*ehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); Millard Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991)

[100] On the Trinity see: Robert M. Bowman, *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity: An Answer to Jehovah's Witnesses* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); Gregory Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992)

Christian idea of Christ's deity developed not in a Hellenistic context but in a distinctly Jewish thought-world. Richard Bauckham, a contributor to this relatively new scholarly movement (sometimes known as the “New History of Religions School”) states these conclusions succinctly:

When New Testament Christology is read with this Jewish theological context in mind, it becomes clear that, from the earliest post-Easter beginnings of Christology onwards, early Christians included Jesus, precisely and unambiguously, within the unique identity of the one God of Israel The earliest Christology was already the highest Christology.[101]

In conclusion, although the claim that early Christian belief and practice was corrupted by Hellenistic influence is commonly argued by critics of orthodox Christianity, the historical evidence does not support this claim. Rather, like the Judaism from which it arose, the Christian faith rigorously guarded its unique religious identity in the midst of the religious and philosophical diversity of the ancient community.

Neoplatonism

The Hellenistic philosophical ideas we have surveyed found their climax in the development of Neoplatonism. The eclecticism of philosophy in the early empire was brought into an ordered system by Plotinus, the creator of Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism was a later form of spiritual Greek religion, although some of its representatives combined it with magic. Everett Ferguson pointed out that Neoplatonism provided the focus for the intellectual challenge to Christianity in the paganism of the fourth century.[102] On the other hand, as a metaphysical system it had enormous influence on Christian thought. The Church fahter Origen was educated in the same thought-world as that from which Neoplatonism came. This philosophy was the background of the work of the Cappadocians in the fourth century CE and through them it influenced Greek Orthodox theology. It was also decisive in the intellectual development of Augustine and through him had a great impact on the medieval Latin development.[103]

[101] Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), vi-vii.
[102] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 367
[103] Idem, 367

The Platonic tradition continued not through these dialogues but through the activities of Plato's Academy, which lasted until 539 BCE, almost a thousand years of intellectual activity and ferment. The philosophy of Plato changed dramatically over the centuries and the general outline of that change is described by dividing the Platonic tradition into two categories: Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism (meaning "new Platonism"). The most significant and far-reaching innovation of the Middle Platonists was the development of the view that the eternal forms or ideas that underly the world of appearances are the thoughts of some single god or divinity. This means that all abstract categories and all mathematics are closer to the mind of God than anything else. The Neoplatonists, on the other hand, sought to combine Platonism with the other major philosophies of antiquity, such as Stoicism, Aristoteleanism, and various theologies. Neoplatonism is often credited to Plotinus (c. 205-70 BCE) and his disciple Porphyry (232-300 BC) who expanded Plato's philosophical ideas into something more like a full-fledged cosmology. Porphyry assembled these teachings into the six Enneads.

During the Middle Ages, the Platonic tradition survived in three distinct traditions: the European tradition, the Byzantine tradition, and the Islamic tradition. In Europe, Neo-Platonism never really died out because it formed the philosophical heart of the thought of Augustine and Boethius. Many of the standard Neoplatonic ideas, such as the existence of higher ideas in the mind of God and the reflection of those ideas in the real world were standard aspects of medieval thought. The knowledge of Plato was never lost. Plato's most thorough description of the structure of the universe, the *Timaeus*, was preserved and read throughout the middle ages in a Latin translation.

The term Neoplatonism is a collective designation of the philosophical and religious doctrines of a heterogeneous school of speculative thinkers who sought to develop and synthesize the metaphysical ideas of Plato. Such synthesis occurred especially in Alexandria and included Hellenistic Judaism, as exemplified by the Jewish-Hellenistic philosopher Philo Judaeus of Alexandria. The doctrine kept its essential Greek character, however.

In summary, the following are distinguishing features of Neoplatonism:

(1) the visible, tangible forms of the physical world are based on immaterial

models, called Forms or Ideas.

(2) Tangible forms are transitory, unstable, and imperfect, whereas ideal Forms are eternal, perfect, and unchanging.

(3) Physical forms are many and diverse, but ideal Forms are single and unified.

(4) Platonism places a definite hierarchy of value on these qualities: Eternity is superior to the temporal; unity is superior to division; the immaterial is superior to the material.

(5) In Platonism, the fleeting physical world that humankind inhabits becomes a kind of flawed manifestation of a perfect and eternal model that can be perceived only by the intellect, not by the senses.

According to this line of thinking the Soul is a transcendent, ineffable, divine power, the source of everything that exists. It is complete and self-sufficient. Its perfect power overflows spontaneously into a second aspect, the Intelligence (Mind or Nous), which contemplates the power of the One. By contemplating the One, the Intelligence produces Ideas or Forms. The unity of the One thus overflows into division and multiplicity. Neoplatonism is a form of idealistic monism. Plotinus taught the existence of an ineffable and transcendent One, from which emanated the rest of the universe as a sequence of lesser beings. Later Neoplatonic philosophers added hundreds of intermediate gods, angels and demons, and other beings as emanations between the One and humanity. Plotinus' system was much simple.

These Forms are translated into the physical world through the creative activity of the World Soul. In the immaterial realm, the higher part of the Soul contemplates the Intelligence, while in the material realm, the lower part of the Soul acts to create and govern physical forms. According to Plotinus, the Soul, in descending from the immaterial to the material world, forgets some of its divine nature. All human individual souls, therefore, share in the divinity of the One and will eventually return to the divine realm from which they came, after they shed their physical bodies. Porphyry further developed Plotinus' ideas about the soul, asserting that individual human souls are actually separate from and lower than the World Soul. However, by the exercise of virtue and

contemplation of the spiritual, the human soul can ascend from the lower, material realm, toward the highest good, the absolute beauty and perfection of the immaterial One. The world Soul has the option either of preserving its integrity and imaged perfection or of becoming altogether sensual and corrupt because it is intermediate between the N*ous* and the material world.

The same choice is open to each of the lesser souls. Through ignorance of its true nature and identity, the human soul experiences a false sense of separateness and independence. It becomes arrogantly self-assertive and falls into sensual and depraved habits. The Neoplatonist maintained that that human enabled to choose its sinful course by virtue of the very freedom of will. This traced in the opposite direction the successive steps of its degeneration, until it is again united with the fountainhead of its being. The actual reunion is accomplished through a mystical experience in which the soul knows an all-pervading ecstasy.

Neo-Platonism did not acknowledge Christ. The reality being even if Christians denied it was the Trinity was Platonist in origin. Most of the early church Fathers were Platonists. The ultimate One of Platonism became the Hebrew God for Christians. For Gnostics, the One was still unknowable and was not the Old Testament Hebrew God. They considered an inferior being that created a corrupted material world. Another exception was Neo-Platonism didn't have a devil either. It attributed evil to a lack of good.

They did not believe in an independent existence of evil. They compared it to darkness, which does not exist in itself. Evil is simply the absence of good. Things are good insofar as they exist. They are evil only insofar as they are imperfect, lacking some good that they should have. Neoplatonism also taught that all people will return to the Source, which is called “Absolute” or “One”, is what all things spring from and as a super consciousness is where all things return. It can be therefore said that all consciousness is wiped clean and returned to a blank slate when returning to the source. In other words, the soul as defined as immortal. Human body are not part of that soul but of the material sphere.

1.5 Developmental period of Patristic exegesis

Introduction

During the first five centuries the canonical texts came into being and acquired its eventual authority. It was also during this time that the doctrinal framework which Christians still regard as normative for their faith was worked out. The patristic period was characterized by debates about the Trinity and the person of Christ. It was during these centuries that the distinctive trend of Christian theological discourse was worked out, and two great traditions of Christian thought made their appearance.[104] The first of these was the so-called eastern or Greek tradition strongly influenced, by Neoplatonic philosophical concepts and a mystical approach to the spiritual life. The second was the western or Latin tradition, which was shaped by Roman legal concepts though it also felt the influence of Neoplatonism. Within these two groups, we have two main exegetical approaches. They are the literal and the allegorical method of interpretation influenced by historical, theological and cultural circumstances.

1.5.1 The Beginning of Christian Hermeneutics (30-100 CE):

An initial stage began in New Testament times and extended to about 100 CE. In this period, living contact with the apostles was still felt in the church. Gerald Bray indicates this stage as the apostolic era. He added that Christian writers often continued to follow the apostolic practice of writing letters to individual congregations, which were then circulated more widely.[105]

Jewish scripture was first and foremost the authoritative, inspired Word of God. Indeed, not only did the earliest church inherit its Scriptures from the Jews, it also inherited various methods of interpretations of it as well. David S. Dockery added one more point. The interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures by the earliest church included an additional factor that stamped a new meaning upon Scripture: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.[106] This new method was a Christological reading, meaning that the Old Testament was read in light of

[104] Gerald Bray, “Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present” (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 77
[105] Idem, 95
[106] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 23

Jesus himself.[107]

David Dockery commented that Jesus understood the Old Testament in terms of his mission and it is from him that the church cristologically derives its identification of Jesus with Israel.[108] The view was that the whole of the Old Testament pointed to him. He embodied the redemptive destiny of Israel, and in the community of those who belong to him that status and destiny is to be fulfilled.[109] For Jesus, the key to understanding the Old Testament was located in his own life and work, for everything pointed to himself. The New Testament writers, following the pattern of Jesus, interpreted the Old Testament as a whole and it its parts as a witness to Christ.

We have already seen that Jesus and the apostles were dependent upon hermeneutical practices established in late Judaism, but that they adapted these methods to the church with the addition of a Christological focus. The early church practiced the exegetical procedures of later Judaism. However, the Jewish context in which the New Testament was born was not the primary paradigm for the formation of Christian hermeneutics. As C. F. D. Moule maintains, *"At the heart of their biblical interpretation is a Christological and christocentric perspective."*[110]

Regarding the commentaries and literature of this period, Christian writers often continued to follow the apostolic practice of writing letters to individual congregations, which were then circulated more widely. There are few direct quotations from the New Testament in these letters, though there are several allusions to it. There is little indication that it was regarded as canonical Scripture. Gerald Bray commented that many writings of this period reveal that the church generally regarded the Jewish Scripture as prophetic of Christ. This is the kind of interpretation found in the *Epistle of Barnabas* and in Melito of Sardis.[111]

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[107] See the section of "Old Testament and Jesus" at page 2
[108] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 24
[109] Idem, 25;*Gerald Bray, Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 78
[110] Quoted at David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 44
[111] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 78

1.5.2 From Functional to Authoritative (II century)

At the close of the apostolic age, some marked changes began to occur. Primarily, the New Testament was in the process of becoming accepted canonical Scripture. During the second century CE, Gerald Bray indicates some heresies that the church was battling with.[112] Marcion tried to dispose of the Old Testament and of a large section of the New, which he regarded as being too Jewish. Moreover, Tatian attempted to merge the four canonical gospels into a single text in his *Diatesseron*.

In addition, an issue confronting the 2nd century church raised by the Gnostics [113] , was the relation between the New Testament and the Old Testament. David Dockery indicated this as one of the crucial factors affecting the relationship between the church and heretics. The motivating factor that raised the issue among the orthodox Christians was the Gnostic view that the God of the Old Testament was incompatible with the God revealed in Christ in the New Testament.[114] As texts were challenged, altered and even abandoned, the church had to demonstrate on biblical grounds that the it was the same God revealed in both Testaments and that the church should not abandon the Old Testament.

We will later focus on how the apostolic fathers continued the New Testament hermeneutical practices and how they modified those practices so that the emphasis was placed on the moral use of Scripture. Dockery named this approach a "functional hermeneutic." [115] This showed that the exegetical approach undeniably strengthened the position of Scripture in the Christian community.

Besides the defensive function of Scripture against heresies, worshipping God

[112] Idem
[113] A number of heretics proposed a type of hermeneutic which viewed Scripture as a riddle, pointing to a higher reality, which could be discerned only by those who had some kind of special enlightenment. This super-spiritual approach is now categorized as "Gnosticism", a term developed in the nineteenth century to describe a series of different movements which had little connection with each other, apart from a similar approach to hermeneutical issues. See *Gerald Bray, Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996),78; See also the previous section of "The historical, theological, traditional and socio-cultural background for the formation of Christian / Patristic Literature"
[114] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 45
[115] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 45

was intended to authorize the position of Scripture. We should be aware that hermeneutical activities occurred in a specific context. David Dockery made it clear that the church's hermeneutical concerns developed within the church's worship.[116] The New Testament letters were read in the public meeting of the churches. In this way they became the object of study and meditation. The reading of Scripture was accompanied by its exposition. David Dockery pointed out that almost all of the church's interpretation of Scripture and corresponding theologizing developed in the context of the sermon.[117]

To clearly illustrate the concept of authority during this period, it should be pointed out that the apostles' theology in their preaching was built around the elements of the *kerygma*: the incarnation, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ. In this sense preaching in the context of the worshiping community re-enacted the event of Christ. David Dockery illustrated this event and elaborated on the application of the community in the exegetical work of the early Christian church. He stated that the event of preaching provided shape and meaning not only to worship it self, but also to the every day lives of the worshipers.[118] The main mission of the exegetes was based on practical reasons. The Fathers were primarily concerned with moral and ethical instruction, rather than explaining what the text says in detail.

We next examine the characteristics of patristic literature before 200 CE. Gerald Bray summarized the characteristics and delineation of patristic literature.[119] The period up to about 200 CE can be characterized by what might be called "pre-systematic biblical exegesis". Before the time of Origen there were no Christian commentaries on Scripture, and little attempt was made to offer any methodical exposition of its contents. The most frequent type of exegetical literature during this period was "the homily, or sermon, a mode of discourse which has continued to the present, and which was popular throughout patristic times."[120] At that period, the Christian literature was in an

[116] The exposition of the Word was of utmost importance in the church's worship. The church's pattern followed that established by Jesus' exposition of Isaiah 61 at the beginning of his ministry, which he interpreted in light of his messianic mission and continually practiced in the early church's worship. Justin Martyr, in his First Apology, a work written to the emperor Antoninus Pius, summarized an early church worship service into two basic parts. See idem, 46
[117] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 47
[118] Idem, 48
[119] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 97
[120] Idem

"unsystematic way" in Gerald Bray's comment.[121] Many writers were probably unaware of what they were doing, as they sought to relate every Scriptural passage in some way or another to Christ.

In this historical context, second century Christianity witnessed a most unique literary phenomenon. Helen Rhee pointed out that it was the concurrent emergence of the Apologies, Apocryphal Acts, and Martyr Acts.[122] The second half of the second century witnessed a plethora of literature that appealed to and engaged with the Greco-Roman values and culture in an attempt to define formative Christianity. These three bodies of literature were the products of the prevailing Greco-Roman literary culture and were deeply rooted in that cultural soil. E. J. Kennedy commented that the general acceptance of classical and contemporary Greek culture by the Romans from the second century CE had been conspicuous in the Roman literary tradition.[123] Educational curricula as well as literary and rhetorical theory and practice followed Greek models and Latin literature was constructed by using Greek methods and in clear reference to the Greek literature.

Earlier second-century Christian writers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus identified both a literal and typologically or allegorical meaning in a number of biblical texts. Justin refers to Noah and the flood as representing a number of important Christological themes:

For righteous Noah, along with the other mortals at the deluge, i.e., with his own wife, his three sons and their wives, being eight in number, were a symbol of the eighth day, wherein Christ appeared when He rose from the dead, forever the first in power. For Christ, being the first-born of every creature, became again the chief of another race regenerated by Himself through water, and faith, and wood, containing the mystery of the cross; even as Noah was saved by wood when he rode over the waters with his household.[124]

Irenaeus read Scripture in a number of interesting ways, combining literal exegesis with two different types of allegory. Simonetti distinguishes them as "typological" and "vertical" allegory. Typological allegory presumes that an Old

[121] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 97
[122] Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 20
[123] Kennedy, E. J., "Books and Readers in the Roman World," in E.J. Kennedy ed. *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature, vol. 2: Latin Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 5
[124] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho,* ANF 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 268

Testament text possesses a deeper meaning fulfilled in the actions and words of Christ. For Irenaeus, even the smallest details of a biblical text can bear new and exciting fruit when viewed in light of Christ's coming.[125]

Furthermore, Irenaeus is acutely concerned to preserve the lasting value of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God presented in them againts the attacks of Gnostic teachers. Many Gnostic exegetes pictured the Old Testament deity as a lower, second-class god responsible for the mistake of creation. According to Simonetti, "Their dualism and their disregard for the material world led them also to disdain the Old Testament as being the revelation of the God of creation, the Demiurge, in contrast to the New Testament, the revelation of the supreme, good God."[126] Irenaeus's allegorization of key Old Testament passages, then, defended the authority of the Old Testament against its detractors and more fully illustrated the connection of these passages to the New Covenant established by Christ.[127]

Manlio Simonetti argues that Irenaeus never clearly formulated a hermeneutical principle to regulate his own allegorizing. Irenaeus faulted his Gnostic opponents for exercising imaginations that "they having in their hearts surpassed the Master Himself, being indeed in idea elated and exalted above [Him], but in reality turning away from the one true God."[128] Yet Irenaeus, Simonetti believes, left himself open to the same critique. Irenaeus's only defense, as far as Simonetti is concerned, was his dependence upon the principle of authority: "The Catholic Church alone is the touchstone of truth in the interpretation of Scripture in that it is the storehouse of authentic apostolic tradition."[129]

1.5.3 Third century: from 200 to 325 CE (The First Council of Nicaea)

The third century witnessed the development a growing importance of more systematic literature. From about 200, the commentary style of exegesis introduced a note of greater systematization into Christian biblical interpretation.

[125] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 139
[126] Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*" (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 14-15
[127] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 140
[128] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.19.1, 486-87
[129] Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesi*" (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 24

This systematization meant that the exegetes made more regulated interpretation according to different themes. The commentary form itself originated centuries back in the intertestamental period, especially among the Hellenistic literary critics of Alexandria. It was originally applied to the classics of Greek literature, which they interpreted allegorically. The Jewish scriptures were influenced by Hellenists. There are many Jews who adapted this tradition to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Gerald Bray laid much emphasis on the contribution of Philo in this regard.[130] Philo inherited his ideas from disparate sources, and much of what he wrote was basically a collection of earlier material. Following him, commentary writing was initially associated with allegorical exegesis, and the fathers never fully liberated themselves from that tradition.

Philo, living between 20 BCE and 50 CE, relied heavily on allegorical exegesis in an attempt to make the Bible more accessible to a Hellenistic audience by emphasizing the close relationship between Greek philosophy and Jewish theology. In addition, Philo attempted to tame those "aspects of Scripture that seemed barbarous in an alien cultural context." [131] Moreover, Simonetti commented Philo's allegorical exegesis:

… allowed him, on the one hand, to give satisfactory explanations of so many anthropomorphisms in the earlier books of the Old Testament, which, like the Greek myths, upset the sensibilities of educated pagans. On the other hand, by a process of interpretation which made plentiful use of philosophical concepts and terminology, especially Platonic and Stoic, he was able to introduce to the Greek mind a religious perceptive which had been quite foreign to it.[132]

Simonetti identifies the interpretive key Philo used to perceive and unlock biblical allegory:

For Philo, the Bible has far greater importance than this or that myth might have for a pagan, so that he does not entirely ignore the literal meaning of the passage before him. But the value he assigns to it its quite secondary; it is for the many, while the hidden meaning, attainable by the allegorical approach, is

[130] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 99
[131] Joseph W. Trigg, "Allegory," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland, 1990), 23
[132] Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 7

for the few who concern themselves with the realities of the Spirit… The progression from the literal to the allegorical level is facilitated by certain indicators in the text which hold special significance for the shrewd exegete. This could involve details to which (for various reasons) the literal meaning is not pertinent: names of people or places. These are then interpreted etymological, following a procedure given general application by the Stoics in their interpretation of the Greek gods. These are all procedures which we shall have to recall when dealing with Christian exegesis in Alexandria.[133]

Philo's influence was especially strong in the Alexandrian school of theology. Clement and Origen used him freely, and through them and later through St Ambrose and other Latin Fathers his allegorical interpretation of Scripture became an accepted form of Biblical exegesis in the Christian Church.

Scholars also listed another source of influence, the great exegete, Origen (c 185- c 254 CE). Under his influence, we can construct another exegetical stage. The Origenistic stage began about 200 and extended until the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. In this period, biblical exegesis was dominated by the towering genius of Origen. Origen borrowed heavily from the writings of the Jewish Platonist, Philo of Alexandria, whose ideas came into their own in this period. Origen demonstrated a lively faith from an early age as well as precocious intellectual abilities. In Origen we meet someone who Karlfried Froehlich describes as "one of the great minds and probably the most influential theologian of the early Christian era."[134] Joseph Trigg writes Origen is "the most influential early Christian interpreter of the Bible," whose "extant works comprise by far the largest body of work by a single author to survive from the first three centuries of the Christian church."[135]

Origen was guided in his interpretation of Scripture by a deep pastoral concern which is not immediately apparent in his more theoretical writings. His most important work of biblical interpretation is his book on first principles (De Principiis or Peri Archon), in which he develops his allegorical theories.[136] Origen argued that the authority of the Old Testament is confirmed by Christ so

[133] Idem
[134] Karlfried Froehlich ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 16
[135] Joseph W. Trigg, Biblical Interpretation, *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, vol.9 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988), 23
[136] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 84

that all interpretation of the Old Testament must ultimately be Christocentric. He added that the Scriptures have a threefold sense, corresponding to body, soul and spirit. This tripartite division is based on an anthropology different from that of Philo, who identified the soul with the spirit --- an option not available to the Christian, for whom soul and spirit were divided by the two-edged sword of the Word of God [137] . The first sense is the literal one, designed for the non-intellectual mind, but necessary as the basis from which the other senses were to be discerned.[138] The second is the moral one, corresponding to the life of the soul. The third is the spiritual sense, the highest and most important of all. Origen gave it the special name *theoria* (vision), because it could only be grasped by revelation. For him, it was necessary for the Christian reader of the Bible to proceed from the literal to the higher senses, which he termed "analogical" (leading), because they led the believer closer to Christ.[139]

Origen regarded the Bible as a divine revelation concealed in human form. God's commands are eternal and absolute, in accordance with his nature. Our circumstances however are relative. This is why Scripture, which conceals God's law in human events, is often ambiguous and unclear to us. Only the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, using the gifts of biblical scholarship, can unlock the key to the Scriptures and make them intelligible to the church. The first rule of interpretation is that the clearer parts of Scripture are the basis for understanding the harder parts. It is interesting to note that this principle has survived the test of time, and is widely applied today, even though allegorical exegesis has long been rejected.

In his interpretation of Scripture, Origen usually took the literal sense at face value. He did not want to reduce the miracles of Jesus and other supernatural events to allegory, because he genuinely believed that God had intervened in human history. In these instances, he regarded the spiritual sense as an addition to the literal, not as a substitute for it.
Origen did not see history as an interlocking series of cause and effect, as it was seen centuries later. In fact, he scarcely knew what to make of it. He explicitly stated that historical events are not to be regarded as types of other historical events, but as types of spiritual realities (Comm. On John 10, 18) It is this which distances him from earlier typologists, and which is characteristic of

[137] Heb. 4:12
[138] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 101
[139] Idem, 102

allegory. Particularly susceptible to allegorical interpretation were proper names, which were known to have a deeper meaning.[140]

Allegory may be summed up both positively and negatively as follows. On the positive side, it emphasized that Scripture must be approached spiritually, and be applied practically to the life of the believer. The Bible had to be a living book in the experience of the church, not a dead historical record. Allegory also made it possible for the church to appropriate very obscure passages of the Bible, which would not otherwise have been usable. We must not forget that the ancients did not have the same understanding of history and the historical context of the Old Testament as we have. We should also remember that much Christian art, and some Christian literature, relies heavily on allegory for its themes. Without allegory, iconography would not have been possible, nor would we now have the great literary monuments of Dante, Milton or Bunyan.

On the negative side, allegory removed the text of Scripture from history, which went against the main thrust of the Christian religion. It encouraged an irresponsible use of the biblical text by permitting interpretations which were fanciful, even if spiritually they were more helpful than harmful. In modern times, an essentially allegorical hermeneutic has made it possible for the Roman church to proclaim dogmas such as the immaculate conception of Mary, her bodily assumption into heaven, and the infallibility of the pope, with little scriptural basis other than an allegorical interpretation of texts which have no literal hearing on any of these things.[141]

1.5.4 Exegesis between the third and fifth centuries

This stage experienced the great importance of patristic exegesis. The great conciliar stage began from the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and extended to the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE). This was the golden age of patristic exegesis, in which two main schools of thought vied for influence. Scholars identified two main exegetical schools.[142] One of these was closely associated with the church of Alexandria, and generally followed the Platonic type of exegesis associated with Philo and Origen. The other was rooted in the theological school of Antioch, which offered a contrasting type of exegesis,

[140] Idem
[141] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 103
[142] Idem, 78

more literal and more in tune with what would nowadays be regarded as scientific.

(a) The Antiochene School

In order to describe the roots of the exegetical school of Antioch, we will have to return briefly to the second century CE. It was the time shortly predating the apologist Irenaeus (130-200 CE)[143] and Tertullian (160-200 CE). The primary representative of the first Antiochene school was the apologist Theophilus of Antioch, who became bishop of Antioch about 169 CE. Karlfried Froehlich observes that the city of Antioch was a scholarly environment well known for producing interpreters versed in "careful textual criticism, philological and historical studies and the cultivation of classical rhetoric."[144] The Antiochene School and its tradition reacted to the Alexandrian allegorists. Richard Davidson commented that the typological correspondences drawn by the Antiochene school related more to the church and the sacraments while in Alexandrian typology the stress was placed upon the mystical-spiritual (the inner life).[145] Joseph Trigg identified the emergence of a distinctive Antiochene approach with the work of Theophilus of Antioch, the scholar from the late second century mentioned above. It was not until the late fourth and early fifth centuries, however, that a significant flowering of Antiochene hermeneutics took place[146] in the time of John Chrysostom (c 347-407 CE) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (c 350-428 CE), particularly in the influence of Aristotelian thought and the place of typological exegesis in their overall hermeneutical scheme.

(i) Early Antiochene Exegesis: The Beginning of Historical Interpretation

The distinctive feature of the Antiochenes was their conviction that the primary sense of interpretation was historical. Wherever possible, the Antiochenes adopted an historical interpretation. The most widely known representatives of the early Antiochene school was Tertullian. He was against the free use of allegory and realized the need for tightly formulated rules for governing the use

[143] See the previous discussion of "The Second Century: From Functional to Authoritative Hermeneutics"
[144] Karlfried Froehlich ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 20; See also Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 530
[145] Richard M Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: a study of hermeneutical typos structures* (Michigan: Andrew University Press, 1981), 17
[146] Joseph W. Trigg, *Biblical Interpretation, Message of the Fathers of the Church*, vol.9 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988), 31

of allegory. However, Christopher A. Hall pointed out the inadequacy of literal exegesis as a defensive mechanism against an allegorical approach of interpretation. He states that:

"…but were less successful in formulating an adequate framework for the safe use of hermeneutic so open to abuse. With the emergence of a rival school of interpretation at Antioch, a school that largely eschewed the allegorical exegesis practiced at Alexandria, the stage was set for a lively debate."[147]

When Theophilus was confronted with an anthropomorphism that appeared to contradict the omnipresence of God, he did not shift to allegorical exegesis to handle the enigma, but instead viewed the passage literally and historically as a theophany of the second person of the Godhead. Theophilus placed great stress on the Old Testament as a historical book containing the authentic history of God's dealings with his people. Dockery presents a thorough discussion of Theophilus' exegetical work.[148] Theophilus established a biblical chronology from the creation down to his own day. Involved in this historical emphasis was his view of the Bible's inspiration. He maintained that the Old Testament reveals to humankind that the God to whom it bears witness is the creator of the universe. This is possible because the human writers were inspired and instructed by God, and therefore able to write about those things that happened before or after their own times.

Exegetes such as Theophilus were not averse to viewing Scripture as a layered text. One could interpret the Bible in an anagogical fashion in which, as Froehlich explains, "the biblical text leads the reader upward into spiritual truths that are not immediately obvious and that provide a fuller understanding of God's economy of salvation."[149] Though Theophilus emphasized the historical meaning of the biblical text, the Old Testament was also given a Christian interpretation, like the interpretations of Jesus and the apostles. This means that God generated the Logos and through the Logos he made all things.[150] The Logos also spoke through Moses and the prophets. Dockery added the point that Theophilus also emphasized the literal meaning of the moral

[147] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 156
[148] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 104
[149] Karlfried Froehlich ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 20
[150] Jn 1:3

exhortations in Scripture.[151]

(ii) Later Antiochene Exegesis: Rejection of Alexandrian Allegorical Interpretation

Jerome (c 432-420 CE), the translator of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate), under the influence of his Jewish mentors, turned from allegorical hermeneutics to an increasing respect for the literal meaning of Scripture. Dockery witnessed the trend of this change. It is likely that wherever the synagogue's influence was felt, the church's interpretation of Scripture had a tendency towards literalism. Certainly this was the case at Antioch. The artificiality of much allegorical interpretation, however, could not fail to cause a negative response and the outright rejection of allegorical exegesis was centered in Antioch.[152] Antioch, the birthplace of Gentile Christianity[153], and a great city of the eastern part of the empire, had a long tradition of theological learning. David Dockery commented that the earlier tradition of the Antioch school centered round the practices of Theophilus and was passed on to Lucian (d 312 CE), Diodore (d 390 CE), and the later Antiochenes, who were also influenced by the Jewish teachers of Antioch.[154]

Lucian was born at Samosata and completed his education at Antioch. Lucian is best remembered for his revision of the Septuagint (LXX) and is generally regarded as the founder of the later exegetical school of Antioch. In addition to his study at Antioch, he attended school at Caesarea, where he became acquainted with the allegorical method, as well as methods of text-critical studies. His reputation suggests that he was a fine classical scholar and preacher, and supposedly was well versed in Hebrew.[155]

Lucian emphasized careful textual criticism, and philological and historical studies. Following the paths of the pagan schools in the city, Lucian and the Antiochenes applied the classical learning of rhetoric and philosophy. The result was a sober-minded hermeneutic emphasizing the literal sense of the

[151] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 104
[152] Idem, 105
[153] Cf. Ac 13
[154] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 105
[155] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 106

biblical text. They took the historical sense seriously, but also developed a typological exegetical approach very similar to early Christian typology.[156]

Diodore, the bishop of Tarsus, had become suspicious of allegory. David Dockery commented that in the eyes of Diodore, allegorical interpretation was foolishness.[157] It introduced silly fables in the place of the text. He contended that allegorizers abolish history and make one thing mean another. Moreover, the distinctive feature in the Antiochene hermeneutical method was *theoria*. Joseph Trigg defines it as an interpretive disposition and device that identifies:

"…the spiritual meaning of a text which both inheres in the historical framework and also takes the mind of the reader of scripture to higher planes of contemplation…Theoria was the disposition of mind, the insight, which enabled prophets to receive their visions in the first place; it was thus both the necessary condition for scripture and its highest interpretation. Diodore then could acknowledge the typological interpretation of the Old Testament which had long been a standard reading in the church without accepting an allegorical reading."[158]

Diodore rejected the Alexandrian opinion that the reference of the prophets to the coming of Christ was something added to the original prophecy, and that it was an allegorical understanding. Dockery illustrated the meaning and use of *theoria*. By the use of theoria, the Antiochenes maintained that the prophet himself foresaw both the immediate event, which was to come in the history of ancient Israel and the ultimate coming of Christ. The prophets' predictions were at the same time both historical and christocentric.[159] Gerald Bray illustrated more about *theoria*. This type of exegesis corresponded with their Christology, which stressed that the humanity of Christ was not modified in any way by his divinity.[160] The Antiochenes argued that the double sense was different and distinct from that which the allegorists superimposed upon an original literal meaning.

Diodore insisted upon the factuality of the original setting and explored setting and explored the text for clues to its historical reconstruction. However, in addition to the historical meaning, there was the typological or *theoria* that

[156] Idem
[157] Idem, 107
[158] Joseph W. Trigg, *Biblical Interpretation, Message of the Fathers of the Church*, vol.9 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988), 32
[159] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 107
[160] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996)

taught ethics and theology. The content of Scripture was thus lifted to a higher analogy, but the historical meaning did not oppose or contradict the theoria.[161] During this time Diodore of Tarsus wrote many significant exegetical and polemical works, among them an important commentary on the book of Psalms. A closer look at Diodore's treatment of Psalms would be helpful again in illustrating the principle of *theoria*. In Diodore's prologue to his commentary on Psalms he writes that "Scripture teaches what is useful, exposes what is sinful, corrects what is deficient, and thus it completes the perfect human being."[162] The applicability of the Psalms, Diodore rightly stresses, reveals itself to those reliving the situation of the psalmist, rather than to the person who simply chants them unreflectively.

Because of this potential of the Psalms for providing God given remedies to the existence to the existential and spiritual quandaries all Christians face, Diodore is eager to explicate sound hermeneutical principles for understanding the Psalms well. He specifically explains that he will discuss the "plain text" of the Psalms. He does not want his reader "to be carried away by the words when they chant, or to have their minds occupied with other things because they do not understand the meaning." Instead, Diodore wants his readers to comprehend "the logical coherence of the words."[163]

As a whole, the school of Antioch protested against the allegorical hermeneutics of Alexandria. Generally it can be said that the Antiochene school had a strong historical and philological interest and wanted exact interpretations based upon historical and contextual factors. The school also had a rational tendency with strong ethical-personalistic interests, in contrast to the mystical-allegorical tendencies of the Alexandrians. The two great Antiochene exegetes were Theodore of Mopsuestia, regarded as "the interpreter par excellence" and Chrysostom as the expository preacher.

Another Antiocheen theologian was Theodore of Mopsuestia (c 350 428 CE). He was one of the greatest interpreters of the Antiochenes, was also the most individualistic of them while remaining the most consistent in emphasizing historical exegesis. It is certainly true that all Christian theology during this

[161] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 108
[162] Diodore of tarsus, *Commentary on the Psalms: Prologue, in Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, ed. Froehlich, 82
[163] Idem, 83

period was based on Scripture, yet this was especially true for Theodore. That this was the case can be traced to Theodore's hermeneutical method. Theodore seems to have employed a more Jewish exegesis than many of his contemporaries. He expressed in a clear fashion the exegetical tradition of the Antiochene school established by Diodore.[164]

In order to understand Theodore's method, it is necessary to recognize his distinction between typological, allegorical, and prophetical material. Although this is a useful summary, in reality Theodore did not always clearly make such distinctions. Perhaps, it is better to think of typological as the normative method of Antiochene exegesis. Allegorical exegesis, if legitimate at all, and distinct from Alexandrian allegorical practices, represented "left wing typology," while fulfillment of prophecy represented "right wing typology."[165]

In his study of the Old Testament, it is clear that Theodore's knowledge of the Biblical languages did not carry him too far. Because of his deficiency in Hebrew, Theodore was forced to rely on translations. Following the accepted practice of his day, he accepted the Septuagint as an authorized version, though many including Origen, considered this Greek version to be divinely inspired. Theodore went further by claming that the Septuagint followed the Hebrew text more closely than other translations. He rejected Job and the Song of Songs as canonical. Job, according to Theodore, was an Edomite who had heathen associations. Song of Songs was unacceptable because, instead of an allegorical picture of Christ and the church, the book, interpreted literally, was nothing more than an erotic poem.[166]

Theodore's exegesis was the purest representation of Antiochene hermeneutics. Theodore was first to treat the Psalms historically and systematically, while treating the Gospel narratives factually, paying attention to the particles of transition and to the minutiae of grammar and punctuation. His approach can be described as "anti-allegorical," rejecting interpretations that denied the historical reality of what the spiritual text affirmed. This was evident in our brief look at his exegesis of Galatians 4. Even where allegorical interpretation could have possibly served to his advantage to bring unity to the

[164] David S. Dockery, "Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church" (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 109
[165] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 110
[166] Idem

overall biblical message, he failed to use it or see its value. For instance, this he could have seen he chose instead to reject Job and the Song from the biblical canon.[167]

They laid emphasis on the historical nature of biblical revelation, which ought not to be broken up into symbols and allegories. The intellectual temperament of the Antiochenes was more Aristotelian than Platonic. The biblical prophecies had a twofold meaning: at once historical and messianic. The Christocentric meaning of the prophecies was in the text, not something imposed on it through allegorical exegesis. According to Theodore of Mopsuestia, books containing no prophetic elements, either historical or messianic, and so with no more support than mere human wisdom, ought to be removed from the canon since they are not inspired books.[168]

In the Second Council of Constantinople (553 CE), the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who had been the most influential Antiochene exegete, were condemned as tainted with Nestorianism and were, ordered to be burned. As a result, suspicion was cast upon the entire Antiochene School. Its emphasis upon the literal sense was preserved in the sermons and commentaries of Chrysostom, and in the commentaries of Jerome (d. 420) written near the end of his life. Richard Davidson pointed out that the Antiochene school never recovered its lost influence, and the allegorical method of Alexandrian came to dominate medieval Christian exegesis for over a thousand years.[169]

(b) The Alexandrian School

The Alexandria school of exegesis consisted of fathers who expected to find different layers of meaning within a biblical text. The questions they posed to each other were in what way and to what degree this layering manifests itself.[170] The Alexandrian school dealt with typological interpretation, "whereby parts of the Hebrew Bible are read as a foreshadowing and prediction of the events of the Gospels". This approach was used to a lesser or greater extent by virtually all the patristic fathers.[171] Allegorical interpretation, defined by James L.

[167] Idem, 112
[168] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 530
[169] Richard M Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: a study of hermeneutical typos structures* (Michigan: Andrew University Press, 1981), 17
[170] Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 25
[171] James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia:

Kugel and Rowan A. Greer as an interpretive approach in which "biblical persons and incidents become representatives of abstract virtues or doctrines," was enthusiastically embraced by certain fathers and viewed with suspicion by others. [172] Now, we move to the origin, principles and representatives of Alexandrian exegesis.

(i) Origin of the school

It will be helpful to observe the beginnings of allegorical interpretation and its influence on Philonic exegesis. David Dockery stated that most ancient witness as well as the majority of modern scholars regard Theagenes of Rhegium as the founder of the practice of allegorical interpretation. Some others suggest Pheresydes of Syros (early sixth century BCE) as the founder of this practice. This opinion is based on a quotation from Celsus's *True Word* found in Origen's refutation:[173] 'Regardless, he kept on tracing the allegorical tradition starting at the pre-Socratic period of classical Greece, which eventually influenced much of pagan, Jewish, and Christian philosophical and religious expression'. Several major works have traced this history of allegorical interpretation.[174]

On the other hand, Zeller laid emphasis on the role of the Stoics. The Stoics sought to discover the essentially true contents. This attempt led to allegorical interpretation that served to bring the old myths, taken mainly from Homer and Hesiod, into relation with the philosophy of the interpreters. In Zeller's works, etymology was the principal instrument for this activity.[175] Moreover, Dockery also echoed the same view. Philo regarded the biblical text as having a multiplicity of meanings. Because of his view of inspired Scripture, every expression, every word, and even every letter contained a hidden meaning. Etymology was an important way to discover the hidden meaning of words, and numbers were also a fruitful source for allegorical exegesis.[176]

The next major influence on the Alexandrians came from heterodox Judaism. While other groups and individuals practiced allegorical interpretation, Philo

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Westminster Press, 1986), 80
[172] Idem, 81
[173] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 76
[174] Idem
[175] Zeller, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 1:55-58; cf. Walter Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1954)
[176] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 78

Judaeus of Alexandria Philo regarded the Jewish Scriptures as divinely inspired, infallible, and the all-sufficient Word of God, which required an unconditional submission by the interpreter. Dockery even pointed out that the Alexandrian Jews were more cosmopolitan than many of their Palestinian relatives, especially the lower classes of Palestinian Judaism that tended to be reactionary as a result of their disenfranchisement. [177] Furthermore, the Alexandrian Jews were more directly exposed to Greek culture and philosophy than their compatriots.

(ii) Representatives or commentators of the Alexandrian school

1. Philo (c 20 BCE – c 50 CE)

What was significant for Philo was his opinion that their, is a philosophical meaning contained in the Bible and this is discoverable by using allegorical interpretation. For Philo, this philosophical meaning was the essence of religion, culminating in mystic visions and holy-communion with God. Dockery commented on the contribution of Philo's work that his eclectic appropriation of Greek philosophy was primarily an attempt to communicate the truth of Judaism to his enlightened Hellenistic contemporaries.[178]

Philo the Jew was one of the precursors of the Christian School of Alexandria. He rejected the literal and obvious meaning of Scripture in cases where there were expressions unworthy of the divinity, or historical inaccuracies or any other difficulties. It was necessary to resort to allegorical meaning then and leave open the possibility of an interpretation allowing many senses for the text.

Undoubtedly, Philo's purpose was apologetic in the sense of wedding Judaism and Greek philosophy. In Dockery's opinion in Philo's mind Judaism differed little from the highest insights of Greek revelation.[179] God revealed himself to the people of Israel, God's chosen nation, but this revelation was not radically different from his revelation to the Greeks. The point of tension arose for Philo with Israel's understanding of their election and their special place in God's redemptive plan. Another problem for him was the theological distinction between revelation in Scripture and revelation in nature.

[177] Idem, 77
[178] Idem, 78
[179] Idem

The Alexandrians' intellectual commitments demanded that they attempt to deal with these issues in a manner superior to the approach of Irenaeus of the Antiocheen school. Just as Philo had sought to reconcile Judaism with Hellenism, particularly Platonism, so Clement and Origen from Antioch turned to Platonic philosophy and allegorical hermeneutics to handle the pressing objections to the rule of faith and the Bible.[180]

Julio Trebolle Barrera indicated that the rise of the allegorical method was led and influenced by contemporary thoughts and traditions. Therefore, Philo's exegetical method was basically apologetic. She regarded it as a correct interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures that made them not unworthy of Greek philosophy. She illustrated that the allegorical method was used in Greek myths, for example Homeric myth.

Naturally, Christians used this process to interpret the Old Testament as well as to interprete difficult and obscure passages from the gospel, such as the parables of Jesus. Some parables went through a whole process of allegorisation, which allows the message of a parable originally aimed at the scribes opposed to Jesus, to be applied to a new audience comprising Christian believers. Paul, who always has elements in common with Philo, uses allegorical methods when speaking of leaven as an image of impurity[181], or the rock of Moses as a spiritual rock, which accompanies the Israelites.[182]

Another early Christian exegete, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c.215 CE) used the allegorical method for a Christocentric interpretation of the Old Testament in the same way other Christian writers had done previously. Scripture as a whole, each one of its words and even each written sign speaks a mysterious language which has to be uncovered and is made up of symbols, allegories and metaphors. Julio Trebolle Barrera therefore concluded that Scripture according to this view point has a whole range of meanings of every kind: literal and historical, moral and theological, prophetic and typological, philosophical and psychological and finally a mysterious meaning. [183] The philosophical meaning was an inheritance from the Stoics. According to this

[180] Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, "Christian Theology in the Patristic Period, "in *A History of Christian Doctrine* ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones with Benjamin Drewery (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 64-84
[181] 1 Cor 10:4
[182] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 529
[183] Idem

meaning Julio Trebolle Barrera pointed out the following example: The tablets of the Law symbolize the universe, just as Sarah and Hagar symbolize true wisdom and pagan philosophy respectively. According to the mystical meaning, Lot's wife is a symbol of the attachment to earthly things, which prevent the soul knowing the truth.[184]

2. Origen (c 185 –c 254 CE)

Another great exegete, Origen of Alexandria, brought the touch of a master to what had "been nothing much more than the exercise of amateurs."[185] He was the greatest of the interpreters associated with the Alexandrian school of interpretation, those Christian scholars who understood biblical inspiration in the Platonic sense of utterance in a state of ecstatic possession.[186] In Origen's view, Scripture sets out to reveal intellectual truths rather than narrate God's series of interventions in the course of history. Sometimes history does no more than hide the truth. It is not possible to take most OT legislation literally. Origen rejected the literal meaning of the OT on the principle of rationality. The literal meaning is the one seized by more simple believers who are incapable of appreciating the meaning of metaphors, symbols and allegories, believing instead in the raw realism of the more improbable biblical stories. They all have a spiritual meaning, the only one, which allows the mystery contained in Scripture to be perceived.[187]

Origen did not set out precise rules of interpretation. He trusted in an exegete's intellectual ability and common sense more than in conventional opinion and popular tradition. He does not seem to be so inclined as Irenaeus and the Western Church in general to apply what would later be called the "rule of faith" as an exegetical maxim. Origen declares that without the allegorical method it is easy to make countless mistakes in interpretation.[188]

Origen tried to salvage the principle of rationality in faith and gained the intellectual respect of pagan writers. It must be acknowledged that the critical

[184] Idem
[185] R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond: John Knox, 1959), 360
[186] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 75
[187] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 529
[188] Idem, 530

and rational intention that inspired Origen was more decisive than the tool he used the allegorical method, which was prone to great misrepresentation and misunderstandings. For Origen, the three meanings of the Scriptures (literal, moral and spiritual) correspond to the division of the real world into body, soul and spirit, and in turn correspond to interpretation in three stages: grammatico-historical, physical and allegorical.[189]

Origen's typological-allegorical exegesis tended to depreciate the historical value of biblical accounts. The purpose of Scripture was in his thoughts primarily the presentation of intellectual truths and not the account of God's actions in history. Utilizing concepts and means employed by Philo, such as rabbinic gematria, numerical/ geographical/etymological symbolism, and the Platonic dualism of eternal ideas versus the inferior sense perception, Origen assigned to everything in Scripture spiritual-allegorical meanings as well as (or often instead of) literal meanings. Since every text of Scripture was thought to contain a spiritual sense, when this was not readily discernible the fault was considered to lie in the interpreter's lack of spiritual insight. In theory, if not always in practice, Origen actually propounded a threefold sense of Scripture, corresponding to the body, soul, and spirit of man. The "bodily" (or literal) meaning was least important and readily discernible even to neophytes. But only those with a mature faculty of spiritual wisdom could apprehend the highest, i.e. the spiritual (or allegorical) sense.[190]

3. Other commentators

In the third century CE, Dionysius the Great of Alexandria (264 CE) asserted that the human experiences of Christ should be taken literally, because of the historical reality of the incarnation and the genuineness of his humanity. This idea was taken up and developed by Athanasius (c 296-373 CE), who regarded the incarnation as the key to understanding Scripture, in spite of the difficulties, which he had in accepting the limitations of Jesus' humanity. For him the Bible was not merely a linguistic shell, behind which ineffable theological truths could be discerned, but the very Word of God in its literal ("incarnate") sense. Athanasius therefore rejected the Platonic (and Origenistic) division between the material and the spiritual, and believed that they were in harmony with one another. For Athanasius, the inspiration of Scripture was directly parallel to the incarnation of Christ, and the relationship between Word and Spirit was the

[189] Idem
[190] Richard M Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: a study of hermeneutical typos structures* (Michigan: Andrew University Press, 1981), 17

same for both. Like Jesus, the Bible was fully human (though without error) and fully divine. By stating this doctrine in the way he did, Athanasius was able to link the ancient Christocentric interpretation of Scripture with the most up-to-date dogmatic affirmation of Christ's two natures.[191]

In the course of his arguments against the atomistic "proof-texting" interpretation of the Arians, Athanasius said that it was not enough to base one's interpretation of a biblical text on exegesis alone. All interpretation must take place in a context, and for the Christian, that context was the life and spiritual experience of the church. It was the church, and therefore the Scriptures must be interpreted in a way, which is consistent with this testimony. Athanasius was the first Christian exegete to place the church so firmly in the centre of his hermeneutics, and his approach remains characteristics of both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox interpretation to this day.[192]

Once the church's doctrine was established in the creeds, they could be used as rules to govern allegorical interpretation. The more difficult parts of Scripture were regarded as presenting known Christian truth in an allegorical way, and it was the duty of the exegete to point this out.[193]

Didymus the Blind (c 313-398 CE) reaffirmed the value of the literal sense of the Old Testament, by saying that although it had been abolished in Christ, it had previously been fully operational as the Word of God. It was therefore perfectly natural that the Jews should reject allegorical interpretation of their Scriptures, which became necessary only after the coming of Christ. Didymus insisted that the Old Testament was not to be understood as a veiling of eternal truths, which were just as valid as those of the New Testament, but rather as a preparatory teaching, pointing the ancient Israelites towards the future coming of Christ. In other words, even an allegorical reading of the Old Testament could never reveal the fullness of the gospel, which was made plain only at the time of the incarnation of the Word of God.[194]

(C) Exegesis in the West: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great

[191] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 104
[192] Idem, 105
[193] Idem
[194] Idem

Christopher Hall introduced the concept of "the four doctors of the West"[195], who reflected the exegetical trend in the West. The four Latin doctors represent an exegetical tradition noted for its variety and richness. Latin exegetes such as Jerome and Ambrose mirror the Alexandrian tradition's reliance upon allegory in making sense of biblical texts. Jerome, whom Gerald Bray describes as "undoubtedly the greatest biblical scholar that the Latin churches ever produced," was initially attracted to the allegorical method of Origen, although later he severely criticized it.[196] Ambrose was Augustine's first instructor in the Scriptures and taught allegorical interpretive methodology to Augustine. Augustine, in turn interpreted Scripture in both a literal and allegorical fashion. Gregory the Great, one of the great pastors in the church's history, is similar to Ambrose in his love for discerning a deeper allegorical meaning in the text of Scripture.[197]

The history of Western exegesis reflects the same comings and goings between East and West as in the history of the formation of the canon, of the transmission of the text and of translations into Latin. Julio Trebolle Barrera affirmed the importance of various study. The interrelationship of canon, text and exegesis is the key to understanding their history as a whole.[198]

The Western Church was concerned with practical theology and its legal organization left little space to discussion of hermeneutical problems. The setting up of the canon of Scripture and of a rule of faith (*regula fidei*) as expressed in the Trinitarian creed and the financing of apostolic ministry of bishops entrusted with ensuring the orthodox of doctrine, led increasingly to a greater development of dogma, putting exegetical and hermeneutic problems into the background.[199]

(i) Ambrose (c 339-397 CE)

Ambrose was born into a Roman family already graced with a distinguished Christian and Roman lineage. Charles Kannengiesser comments on

[195] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 102
[196] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 91
[197] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 102
[198] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 530
[199] Idem

Ambrose's Roman heritage:

While formally enrolled as a catechumen, he remained true to his Christian family heritage but did not become involved in any theological dispute. His training prepared him for public service. His taste inclined him to prefer the Greek authors, old poets, and classical historians, as well as more recent authors. Of course, he knew Virgil and Cicero by heart. A son of wealthy landowners, eager to assimilate the humanistic traditions patronized by the Neoplatonic philosophers of his time, Ambrose is seen as one of the last Roman gifted with complete acquaintance with Greek culture.[200]

Christopher Hall summed up Ambrose's background. He indicates that this cultural and linguistic background proved quite handy when Ambrose's career path suddenly changed, and he found himself chosen to replace the Arian bishop Auxentius as bishop of Milan. Ambrose's exposure to the Greek fathers such as Basil, would clearly influence how Ambrose interpreted the Bible.[201] Ambrose's background had prepared him well for the Christian ministry of the exegete, including "his knowledge of Greek, his exegetical aptitude from the practice of reading and interpreting the literal and allegorical sense of a poetic text (Homer and Virgil) and above all its moral meaning".[202]

With regard to Ambrose's exegetical approach, Julio Trebolle Barrera commented that Ambrose promoted allegorical interpretation, which emphasized the hidden meaning of the biblical text and so favoring the loss of interest in philological study of the Scriptures.[203] Christopher Hall widened the scope of the exegetical method of Ambrose that Ambrose tended to read the Bible in a new way, arguing that any biblical text possessed three senses --- the literal, moral and anagogical or mystical. The possibility that the Bible might have a deeper meaning layered within its literal sense.[204] Most important of all, Christopher Hall commented that Ambrose developed a moral and mystical sense from interpreting the text.[205]

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[200] Charles Kannengiesser, *Early Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 26
[201] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 103
[202] Bertrand de Margerie, S. J., *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*, vol. 2, *The Latin Fathers* (Petersham, Mass.: Saint Bede's Publications, 1995), 76n.2.
[203][203] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 530
[204] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 105
[205] Idem, 106

(ii) Jerome (c 342-420 CE)

Jerome's exegetical approach involved both East and West. He was led to change from allegorical exegesis to literal and historical interpretation. He is the best example of the kind of influence, which Jewish hermeneutics could have on Christian exegesis. Julio Trebolle Barrera commented on the impact of the fusion of different cultures on Ambrose. The rabbis with whom he kept contact influenced his intellectual conversion, which involved a complete change of direction towards the Hebrew language and the Hebrew text of the bible, to Greek translations by Jews and towards rabbinic methods of interpretation.[206]

Jerome was undoubtedly the greatest biblical scholar that the Latin church ever produced. Jerome undertook a fresh translation into Latin, which he based on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and on the Hexapla of Origen.[207] The result was a magisterial translation which, together with the deutero-canonical books which were added by later hands, became known subsequently as the Popular, or "Vulgate" Bible (*Biblia Vulgata*). The Vulgate quickly established itself as the main Latin version of the Scriptures, and for over a thousand years it was the standard text of the western church. Jerome began to translate a number of Origen's homilies on the prophets and two on the Song of Songs. But as Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew and of Jewish exegesis increased, so his attraction to Origen diminished.[208]

Jerome's exegetical work reflects the development of his thought away from Origen and back to the Hebrew. A closer look at two letters of Jerome to Pope Damasus will illustrate how Jerome functioned as a skilled biblical exegete. Christopher Hall commented that we have here a good example of how Jerome moved easily between what he understood as the literal, moral and allegorical meanings of a text.[209] As a whole, Jerome's letters reveal his views on a wide variety of theological topics and exegetical possibilities. His commentaries on Ecclesiastes and Psalms belong to his Origenistic phase, while that on Genesis marks the later transition. His later work on the minor prophets belongs to his

[206] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 530

[207] Jerome produced his new Latin translation of the Old Testament based on the Hebrew terxt, the older Latin versions that were based on the Septuagint continued to be preferred by most in the church. See Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 38

[208] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 91

[209] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 112

anti-Origenist phase.[210]

(iii) Augustine of Hippo

For Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), the literal and spiritual meaning is equally valid (*signum et res*). The *regula fidei* determines which of the two meanings, literal or figurative, dominates in each case. This resort to the *regula fidei* poses the problem concerning the kind of relationships between biblical hermeneutics and dogma. Any progress of hermeneutics with respect to dogma results in a contradiction.[211]

Augustine's treatment of Scripture is very extensive. *De doctrina christiana* stands as his testament to scriptural hermeneutics. However, Augustine's axioms of biblical interpretation are scattered throughout his works, especially throughout his sermons.

Frederick Van Fleteren indicated the vivid diversification of Augustine's exegesis. In Augustine's interpretation, an entire theological enterprise is involved. This meant that biblical exegesis is at the core of the theological undertaking in the patristic era. Scientific, philosophical, dogmatic, polemical, catechetical, homiletic, ascetical, moral and historical considerations are within Augustine's purview. Scripture is not merely an historical document to be explained. It is a living text of salvation. [212] Christ himself guarantees the success of Scriptural study. The exegesis's task is to ask, to seek, and to knock on the door of knowledge.

Frederick Van Fleteren believed that Augustine's exegetical technique varied according to purpose and audience. His exegesis was scientific according to late antique science.[213] Moreover, Augustine was also under the influence of his surrounding exegetical schools. He developed allegorical interpretation along the line of Origen and Ambrose as a response to Manichean ultra-literal exegesis. Richard M Davidson echoed the same view. In the West, Augustine

[210] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 92
[211] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 530
[212] Frederick Van Fleteren, *Principles of Augustine's Hermeneutic: An Overview in Augustine: Biblical exegete*, ed. Frederick Van Fleteren, Joseph C. Schnaubelt, OSA., 2
[213] Idem, 3

made liberal use of the Alexandrian mode of allegorical exegesis.[214] The Latin world had its own literalist tradition, which went back to Tertullian. In the fourth century, this was systematized by, Tyconius (400 CE) in his famous seven rules, which provided Augustine with his basic exegetical framework. The seven rules are as follows:

(1) *De Domino et corpore eius* (on the Lord and his body)
(2) *De Domini corpore bipartito* (on the twofold body of Christ)
(3) *De promissis et lege* (on the promises and the Law)
(4) *De specie et genere* (on the particular and the universal)
(5) *De temporibus* (on times)
(6) *De recapitulatione* (on abbreviation)
(7) *De diabolo et corpore eius* (on the devil and his body)[215]

The above rules of exegesis can be compared with the Jewish principles of Hillel's seven rules in terms of importance. In practice, Gerald Bray explained that Tyconius's exegesis was governed by the fact that he was a renegade Donatist. It was a basic Donatist belief that the church was spotlessly pure, and Tyconius spent much of his time demonstrating that this was not so. [216] Augustine adopted Tyconius's rules and made great use of them, especially of the first, but he was also aware of their deficiencies. In an effort to make up for these, Augustine added the following important points:[217]

(1) The authority of Scripture rests on the authority of the church. It is according to the order in which the church receives the sacred text that it acquires its authority, so that books which are less universally recognized are correspondingly less authoritative.

(2) The obscurities in Scripture have been put there on purpose by God, and may be interrupted on the basis of the many plain passages. This doctrine, which repeats the view of Origen in a non-allegorical context, has continued to function as a main principle of biblical exegesis up to the present time.

[214] Richard M Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: a study of hermeneutical typos structures* (Michigan: Andrew University Press, 1981), 17
[215] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 107
[216] Idem, 108
[217] Idem

(3) When Scripture is ambiguous, the rule of faith can be used to interpret it.

(4) Figurative passages must not be taken literally. In the debate over liberalism, attention must be paid to the literary form of each text. Of course, Augustine had his way of deciding what was figurative, which causes problems for modern readers.

(5) A figure need not always have only one meaning. Meaning may vary with the context, as when the word "shield" signifies both God's good pleasure (Ps. 5:13) and faith (Eph. 6:16). Augustine goes on to say that because a figure may have several meanings, it may be interpreted in a way, which the author did not intend, but which accords with what can be found in other parts of Scripture. Augustine believed that the Holy Spirit had already provided for this possibility, and legitimized such a handling of the text.

(6) Any possible meaning, which a text can have, is legitimate, whether the author realized it or not. Augustine argued that truth could be apprehended at many different levels, and it was wrong to limit a biblical text to only one meaning. This was the argument he used to justify his widespread use of figurative (allegorical) interpretation.[218]

Fifth-seventh century: From 451-604 CE

Gerald Bray identified the final phase of patristic study in this section of the developmental processes. The final or late conciliar was staged from after the Council of Chalcedon to the time of Gregory the Great (604 CE) or even to that of Charlemagne (800 CE).[219] Subsequent exegetes did little more than repeat the classics, often abbreviating them in the process, confined originally to their own speculations about the meaning of obscure words and phrases, or the peculiarities of biblical style. The one truly creative writer was Gregory the Great (c 540-604 CE) from whom we have the Gregorian Calendar. He insisted that the historical or literal sense must be preserved as the foundation on which typological and moral allegory could be built. With these principles in mind, he sifted through the vast store of patristic exegesis, and retained only those elements, which he believed were of permanent value. In a sense, Gregory made a canonical selection of patristic exegesis for the benefit of future

[218] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Illinois: Inter Vasity Press, 1996), 108
[219] Idem, 78

generations. His own contribution to the development of exegesis lay mainly, I his belief, in his view that Scripture is a mirror of the soul. In reading the Bible, the Christian learns, from the way in which God dealt with the saints, how God also deals with us.[220]

Summary

The period of early Christian interpretation is from second century to eighth century that patristic writings start to appear. They are the reflection of patristic theology and church's dogma, which are undeniably influenced by its surrounding thoughts and philosophy. In other words, they are the exegetical products of patristic socio-political circumstance starting from the coming of Jesus Christ. We also witness the continuity of the trend and direction from exegetical method, which impose effect on the interpreters when the process of exegesis starts.

[220] Idem, 110

Chapter Two

Typology in Patristic Exegesis

Introduction

This chapter deals with some techniques of patristic exegesis. Most scholars will acknowledge some form of development both in exegetical trends and in Christian theology. Various models of development have been constructed in order to characterize what is meant by the idea of development. The development of exegetical method involved the most influential factor affecting how this method was presented. David Dockery singled out the importance of context. He indicated that the context was an influential factor in the early Christian trends of interpretation. [1] Understanding the Christian exegetical features, context including historical, political and cultural background played a major part.

He further introduced some kinds of techniques found in Christian exegesis. There have been at least three different approaches to patristic hermeneutics. The first concentrated on describing how the text of Scripture is assimilated by the theology of the early church. This was in reality, eisegesis, reading the meaning of a passage into Scripture rather than reading of the meaning out of Scripture.[2] This approach views the early church's interpretation as a major misunderstanding of the Bible. A second approach to patristic hermeneutics as a descriptive method does not seek to evaluate the correctness or validity of the interpretations. The above two approaches can be severely criticized by the standard of modern interpretation. He went on pointing out the third one: typology. It focuses upon the method being used more than the contents of the early church interpreters. The strengths of the third approach enable us to see the relationship between Christian exegesis and its Hellenistic and Jewish sources, as well as the relationship between the various Christian

[1] He points out that models of development include four perspectives: contextual, syllogistic, innovational and inherent advancement. Each of these, to various degrees, is present in the early church's hermeneutical developments. The uniqueness of this study involves not only the comparison of the hermeneutical debate in the early church with the contemporary issues in modern hermeneutical theology, but primarily the synthetic overview of the patristic approach to Scripture. See David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 17

[2] Refer to the chapter three of Midrash

perspectives.[3] Scholars indicated typology as a major exegetical trend in early Christianity against a vivid cultural background. Typological interpretation had been employed earlier in Judaism.[4] One of the outstanding examples was the salvation of Israel out of Egypt in the book of the Exodus, which provided the model or "type" by which the Old Testament prophets understood God's subsequent acts of redemption of Israel (Isa. 40-66) and of Gentiles. Moreover, Hays added that typology was widely used in early Christianity, as a basic key by which the Scriptures were understood.[5]

Undeniably, the discussion of this approach in this section resembles my previous indication of the context as a major factor affecting the exegetical trend in early Jewish interpretation and early Christian church. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson echoed this view. They believed that the surrounding background will impose some effect on hermeneutics. Several interpretive methods are borrowed from Judaism. The Old Testament is interpreted according to its plain or literal meaning, especially on ethical issues.[6]

It is important to note that the comparative study of early Jewish and patristic exegesis lies on legitimate ground. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson pointed out that common to the New Testament is the use of Israel's Scriptures in midrash. [7] They advocated that Midrash assumes that all words and passages of Scripture are of equal weight and can be used to interpret one another because they all derive from the mind of God. Any word or passage of Scripture can be used to interpret any other word or passage.[8] Therefore, the arrangement of midrash in early Jewish exegesis, which was discussed in chapter three, was an exegetical approach to interpret the book of Ruth in chapter four. This part referred to typology of Christian and patristic stage as an illustration of an exegetical method to provide the interpretation on patristic Ruth.

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[3] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 19-20

[4] Cf. M. Fishbane, "Use, Authority and Interpretation of Mikra at Qumran," *Compendia* II, 1 (1988), 373; D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London 1963); D. Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic* (Missoula 1975), 170.

[5] R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, (New Haven: CT, 1989), 91-102.

[6] Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 1: The Ancient Period*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 38

[7] See chapter three.

[8] Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 1: The Ancient Period*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 38

Definition and meaning

Geoffrey W. H. Lampe and Kenneth J. Woollcombe gave a brief definition of typology. Typology has often been used in a broad sense to cover the study of the linkages between the two Testaments.[9] He further elaborated that typology, considered as a method of exegesis, used in term of the relationship between Old and New Testament, may be defined as the establishment of historical connections between certain events, persons or things in the Old Testament and similar events, persons or things in the New Testament. He also considered typology as a method of writing. It may be defined as the description of an event, person or things in the New Testament, borrowed from the description of its prototypal counterpart in the Old Testament.[10]

We can only be sure of types identified in the New Testament. A real point of resemblance must be found between a type and its New Testament antitype. There must be an integral, internal connection between the two. There should be scriptural evidence that a particular person or event is a type; that God in His foreknowledge of history intended this to be a pre-figuration of Christ and His redemptive work. This does not mean, however, that nothing should be regarded as typological which is not expressly identified as such in the New Testament. The *Protevangelium*[11] is nowhere specifically quoted as fulfilled in Christ with the exception of the allusion to the passage in Romans 16:20. Yet, none of us would deny that it is directly Messianic. The viewpoint that one dare speak only of types identified in the New Testament as true types is far too restrictive.

Julio Trebolle Barrera joined the discussion and indicated the relationship between the Old Testament and New Testament in terms of the principle of typology. The understanding of the Old Testament as promise and as prophecy of the New Testament developed into the understanding of the Old Testament as a type of the New Testament. The events, characters and institutions of the Old Testament are changed into pre-figurations of the New Testament.[12] Ellis also echoed this view. In the New Testament usage of this method it rested upon the conviction of a correspondence between God's acts in the past and

[9] Geoffrey W. H. Lampe and Kenneth J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology, Studies in Biblical Theology* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 39
[10] Idem, 39-40
[11] Gn 3:15
[12] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 521

those in the person and work of Jesus that inaugurating the age to come. From past Old Testament events and institutions it drew out the meaning of the present time of salvation and in turn interpreted present events as a typological prophecy of the future consummation.[13]

Other scholars also presented a definition of typology. They also paid much emphasis on the relationship between Old Testament and New Testament. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson indicated that typology is an interpretive method that combs the Jewish Scriptures to find a fore shadowing or prototypes of the work of Christ and the church in form of the persons, events, things, and ideas mentioned in the text.[14] David Dockery pointed out that typological exegesis seeks to discover a correspondence between the people and events of the past and of those of the present or future.[15]

Different Types of "Types"

Typology is a study of types. Etymologically the word "type" is derived from the Greek word *tupos* which denotes the impression made by a blow, the stamp made by a die, thus figure or image and an example or pattern. The latter is the most common meaning used in the Bible.[16] It is a type which prefigures some future reality. Types are Old Testament pointers which direct one to the New Testament's concrete realities. God preordained certain persons, events, and institutions in the Old Testament to prefigure corresponding persons, events, and institutions in the New. These types point to and anticipate their matching historical New Testament antitypes.

Therefore, Julio Trebolle Barrera introduced and illustrated the concept of a type and its antitype. Typology combines a type and its anti-type. Types prefigure something or someone, but their nature can only be seen in the light of the anti type. It reflects and interprets an event, which has already happened or a person already revealed. The new becomes the hermeneutic key to the old.[17] The antitype is no mere repetition of the type, but is always greater than

[13] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 105-6
[14] Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 1: The Ancient Period*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 39
[15] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the light of the Early Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 33
[16] See the discussion of meaning and definition of typology above.
[17] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the*

its pre-figuration. This type-antitype relationship can be compared to an object reflected in a mirror. The type is the vague mirror image or picture of the New Testament reality. Typological exegesis then is based on the conviction that God the Father determined that certain persons and events in the history of Israel would prefigure what He would accomplish in the fullness of time in the person of His only begotten Son. Geoffrey Lampe and Kenneth Woollcombe pointed out that the matter is summarized in this statement of Augustine:

Abraham our father was a faithful man who lived in those far-off days. He trusted in God and was justified by his faith. His wife Sarah bore him a son . . . God had a care for such persons and made them at that time to be heralds of his Son who was to come; so that not merely in what they said, but in what they did or in what happened to them, Christ should be sought and discovered.[18]

Typology does not denigrate the verbally inspired text. The literal sense of the text is its basis. It does not ignore the historical meaning of the Scripture but begins with that historical meaning and looks to its New Testament fulfillment. Typology has its origin in God's own foreknowledge of history. Horace Hummel speaks of this relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament fulfillment as a "sacramental" connection. He stated that "especially Lutherans should have little difficulty with the use of the word "sacramental" in this connection. The external history (or elements) must be real enough but "in, with, and under" it lies the ultimate meaning. There is an integral and internal connection between type and antitype."[19]

Types may be divided into three different categories: Persons, events, and institutions. The judges of Israel, who were actually deliverers, are types of Christ, our true Deliverer from the bondage of sin. Moses is a type of the real Prophet who should come, namely Jesus Christ. [20] David is a type of his Greater Son. The flood in the days of Noah prefigures Baptism.[21] Christ is the anti-type of Passover, *Yom Kippur*, and all the Old Testament sacrifices.

These categories may also be subdivided into vertical and horizontal typology. Most typology is by far horizontal. It prefigures some earthly future reality. It is

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History of the Bible (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 521
[18] Geoffrey W. H. Lampe and Kenneth J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology, Studies in Biblical Theology* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 13
[19] Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh,* 17
[20] Dt 8:18
[21] I Pt 3:21

both eschatological and Christological, reaching its full consummation in Christ. For example, the tabernacle is a type of the Incarnate One who tabernacled among us and who had far greater glory than Solomon's temple.[22] At the same time, the tabernacle and the temple appear to have had a vertical aspect. They are a pattern or a copy of heavenly worship.[23] Also this vertical typology is fulfilled in Christ who in the new heaven and new earth will dwell with His people and be their God and will wipe every tear from their eyes.[24] He is the true tabernacle and the true temple.

We can witness that there are many types in the Old Testament that are not specifically designated as such in the New. However, some examples are certain of those which are identified in the New Testament. The bronze serpent pointing to the cross[25] is a good example. An uncertain case refers to Samson, who accomplished more in his death than his life, is a picture of Christ's passion even though this type was used throughout the history of the church. Samson can be seen as a type or picture of Christ, as were all the judges of this era. Each of these saviors was to remind Israel of God's full liberation in the Promised Messiah. Already in his wonderful birth with the appearance of the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, we are reminded of the far greater conception and birth of Jesus Christ. They were also alike in their lives' purpose. Samson was to defeat the enemies of God's people, while Jesus' purpose was to defeat our greatest enemy, the old evil foe. Finally they were alike in their death. Concerning Samson it must be said that he accomplished more in this death than he did in his life, for in His death he destroyed the temple of Dagon and thousands of his enemies.[26] Likewise, Christ's death was the purpose of His life. He gave Himself as a ransom for many so that He might conquer hell. A typological figure was used for the illustration of doctrinal concept of gospel by early Christian exegetes.

In patristic exegesis, a typological passage touching a certain doctrine must be expounded in the light of passages which speak of the matter in plain literal terms. The account of Melchizedek as an illustration giving bread and wine to Abram may be seen as a picture of the Lord's Supper, but it is not proof for the sacrifice of the Mass. Such an interpretation is contrary to the clear passages of

[22] Jn 1:14
[23] Ex 25:9
[24] Rv 21:3-4
[25] Nm 21:9; Jn 3:14
[26] Jdg 16:30

Scripture, the analogy of faith. Typology has primarily been used by our forefathers in homiletical and devotional purposes. Here lies the practical value of typological interpretation for the Lutheran pastor and teacher. In patristic typology, the Old Testament is the book of Christ. It demonstrates that the passages of the Old Testament are prefigured for the work of Christ.

Moreover, most patristic perspectives are eschatological, pointing to the coming of an ideal world and type. The exegetes introduced a judgment type of typology. In judgment typology God's earlier acts of destruction are understood as types or examples of eschatological judgments, also appearing in the New Testament. The flood and Sodom, for example, are used in eschatological way. Likewise, the faithless Israelite is a type of the faithless Christian; the enemies of Israel a type of the religious enemies of the eschatological Israel, that is, of the church.[27]

Development of typology

From Biblical stage

Although it derives from a word frequently used in the Bible itself, it should be stressed that "typology" does not refer to some exegetical method by which one extracts meaning from Scripture, but primarily connotes an underlying mentality or confession. Because Yahweh is taken as constantly guiding history toward its Messianic goal, not merely occasionally bestirring Himself to intervene (although certain events and people will stand out), one sometimes gets the impression that, humanly speaking, the biblical writers made an almost random selection of examples to illustrate the point. That would explain why the Old Testament is often quoted very freely in the New Testament, why it usually follows the LXX rather than the Hebrew, and why modern scholars often vary as much as they do in their perceptions of what kind of typological patterns are being followed. That is also why debate about precisely how many types or prophecies there are, is misguided. All of the Old Testament is prophetic and in the same broad sense all of it is typological, all of it Christological, and all of it eschatological. Basically typology is simply an expression and exemplification of the conviction that type and antitype are of the same genus or family, which is commonly referred to as the unity of Scripture. For all the external differences,

[27] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 109

both are religions of grace, not of works, and both center in Jesus Christ.

Some biblical examples can illustrate this concept of typology. In I Corinthians 10:6 the Greek word *typos* is employed to speak of certain Exodus events as a type of Christian life, in Romans 5:14 that Adam is a type of Christ, and in I Peter 3:21 a related word is used to indicate that Baptism is an antitype of the flood. Julio Trebolle Barrera added some more examples. The first Adam is a type of the second Adam who is Christ. Baptism is the anti-type of Noah's ark (Col 2:17; 1 Pt 3:21). Manna is the type of the true eschatological bread, which is Christ (Jn 6:31). Moreover, Israel's wandering in the desert is the type of the Christian community (Heb 3:7-4:13).[28]

Early Church Fathers

Numerous recent studies have examined the patristic use of typology.[29] We summarize the more significant results of this research. Through the patristic literature the Scriptural "types" are generally understood to consist of divinely designed pre-figurations of Christ or of the realities of the Gospel brought about by Christ.[30]

While in the extant works of the Apostolic Fathers typology often seems to be "surprisingly unimportant," it does appear in I Clement[31] and particularly in the Epistle of Barnabas. [32] Barnabas' typology is consistently Christocentric. However, the NT eschatological perspective seems lacking, and his typological correspondences frequently appear to the based upon incidental and

[28] Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Michigan: Brill Academic Publishers, 1993), 521

[29] For analysis of method and listing of major proponents during this period, see especially Brown, *Hermeneutics*, 611-12; Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Wulstan Hibberd (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1960); Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1986),161-242; Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 57-101; Richard P. C. Hanson, *Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church*, 412-53; Glen W. Olsen, "Allegory, Typology and Symbol: The Sensus spiritualis" Part I: Definitions and Earliest History Part II: Early Church through Origen *ICRC* 4 (1977): 161-79 and Kenneth J. Woollcombe, "The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology", in *Essays on Typology, Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 22 by Geoffrey W. H. Lampe and Kenneth J. Woollcombe (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 56-75.

[30] This understanding of the "types" of Scripture by the Church Fathers can be deduced from numerous examples of patristic usage. See Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1419 and see also ean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Wulstan Hibberd (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1960)

[31] *1 Clem.* 12:7

[32] See especially Barn. 7:3, 6-11; 8:1-7; 12:2-6; 13:5

superficial resemblances.[33]

The Apologists of the second and early third centuries, especially Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Irenaeus made copious use of typology. In defending Christianity (primarily against the Jews and the Gnostics) they often employed typology to establish that the OT had value (contra the Gnostics) but was fulfilled or super-ceded by the New Testament (contra the Jews). In their desire to make Christianity appealing to their contemporaries, however, the Apologists sometimes allowed typology to become blurred with Hellenistic allegory.[34]

The fathers often also spoke of a "mystical sense" as they called it in their catechetical instructions. Contemporary Roman Catholic usage does not speak of any mystical sense but in their common talk about the paschal mystery they combine typological, liturgical, and sacramental perspectives. We are acquainted to speak of a "mystical sense" of Scripture to some sort of esoteric allegory or mysticism as a theological posture. Another option is to speak of a spiritual sense.

Exegetical schools

(a) The Alexandrian school

It was in the exegetical school of Alexandria that Christian typology became thoroughly fused with Hellenistic allegorism. In Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) the allegorical method of Philo was "baptized into Christ."[35] Danielou summarized the various elements of Philo's exegesis which molded Alexandrian allegorism. For Philo, Scripture cannot contain anything unworthy of God or useless to man, and therefore insignificant details, accounts of

[33] "While recognizing a strand of allegorization already in the Apostolic Fathers and the early Apologists, nevertheless contends that the biblical perspective on typology was also maintained in the early church even in numerous instances where only ostensibly surface resemblances are drawn between type and antitype. See Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, 244-60

[34] We are here employing the distinction that is commonly drawn in modern discussion of allegory and typology. In typology the literal, historical meaning of the passage is taken seriously, and the typological correspondence is built upon --- not unrelated or opposed to the original meaning. Allegory, on the other hand, is not primarily concerned about the literal meaning, but assigns to the words and phrases of the text meanings that are foreign to the original meaning. Irenaeus was somewhat more cautious than other early Apologists in his application of typology.

[35] Richard M Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: a study of hermeneutical typos structures* (Michigan: Andrew University Press, 1981), 21

patriarchal misdeeds must have a non-literal, hidden meaning.[36] Furthermore, everything in Scripture is declared to have a figurative meaning. The literal meaning must be peeled off in order to get at the deeper allegorical sense. In harmony with Platonic dualism, Philo sees the inferior, transitory world of the senses as a reflection of the superior eternal ideas. Thus the narrative accounts are hidden allegories of the moral states and progress of the soul, to be unlocked by the initiated interpreter. This involves the assigning of allegorical meaning to details of the narrative.[37]

Philo's activity falls into the first half of the first century CE. It was natural that towards the end of this century and beginning of the next Alexandria should become a point of fusion for Christian and Philonic exegesis. We can see the process at work in Origen, who praised Philo, while regarding himself as a disciple and continuator of St. Paul. He combated and borrowed from both Jewish rabbis and Gnostic heretics.

Origen inherited the Christian teaching that the Old Testament prefigures or foreshadows the New. This conception of allegory differs from Philo's in that both the sign and the thing signified are conceived as historical and would have no significance if they were not. Today it is sometimes distinguished from allegory and called typology. Beryl Smalley advocated that Origen found four kinds of types in the Old Testament: prophecies of the coming of Christ, prophecies of the Church and her sacraments, prophecies of the Last Things and of the kingdom of heaven, finally figures of the relationship between God and the individual soul as exemplified in the history of the chosen people.[38]

Moreover, in the stage of Origen, the method was systematically developed and clearly expounded. [39] Origen's typological-allegorical exegesis tended to depreciate the historical value of biblical accounts. The purpose of Scripture

[36] Danielou, Jean, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), 103-12

[37] Philo shows how the account of creation in Gen 2 is not to be taken literally. Heaven and earth refers to Mind and Sense-perception. The garden is Virtue. The four rivers are the four particular Virtues, Prudence, Courage, Self-Mastery and Justice. The man is a symbol of Mind and the creation of Eve signifies the origin of Sense-perception which becomes active when Mind sleeps. See Richard M Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: a study of hermeneutical typos structures* (Michigan: Andrew University Press, 1981), 21

[38] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 7

[39] For discussion of Origen's allegorical method, see his *De Principiis*; Robert M. Grant, "A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible" rev. ed. (New York, London: Macmillan, 1963), 90-104; Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SCM Press, 1959)

was primarily the presentation of intellectual truths and not the account of God's action in history. Utilizing concepts and means employed by Philo-such as rabbinic gematria, numerical / geographical / etymological symbolism, and the Platonic dualism of eternal ideas versus the inferior sense perception. Origen assigned to everything in Scripture spiritual-allegorical meanings as well as literal meanings.[40] Since every text of Scripture was readily discernible the fault was considered to lie solely in the interpreter's lack of spiritual insight. In theory, if not always in practice, Origen actually propounded a three-hold sense of Scripture, corresponding to the body, soul, and spirit of man.[41] The "bodily (or literal) meaning was least important and readily discernible even to neophytes. More advanced insights could grasp the "psychical" (or moral) sense. However, only those with a mature faculty of spiritual wisdom could apprehend the highest, i.e., the spiritual (or allegorical) sense.

In the West, such Latin Fathers as Hilary of Poitiers (315-67 CE), Ambrose (339-97), the early Jerome (ca 329-419 CE), and especially Augustine (354-430) made liberal use of the Alexandrian mode of allegorical exegesis.[42]

(b) The Antiochene school

The exegetical school at Antioch, founded by Lucian of Samosata, reacted strongly against Alexandrian allegorism. Adherents to the Antiochene school notably Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia wrote treatises denouncing Origen and his allegorical method.[43] The exegetical principles of this school were also propounded in these works and popularized in the writings of John Chrysostom. Antiochene exegesis, in contradistinction to that of Alexandria, was firmly anchored to history and to the literal meaning of Scripture. The Antiochene concept of "theory"[44] in which the prophet saw and recorded both the immediate historical and the future Messianic meanings did

[40] De Principiis 4.1.20 (ANF, 4:369): "For, with respect to Holy Scripture, our opinion is that the whole of it has a "spiritual", but not the whole a "bodily" meaning, because the bodily meaning is in many places proved to be impossible."
[41] De Principiis 4.1.11 (ANF, 4:359): "For as man consist of body, and soul, and spirit, so in the same way does Scripture, which has been arranged to be given by God for the salvation of man." In practice however, Origen often makes use of only two senses, the literal and the spiritual.
[42] See Chapter Five.
[43] Diodorus of Tarsus wrote *On the Difference between Theory and Allegory*, of which only fragments remain. The five volumes of Theodore of Mopsuestia *Concerning Allegory and History against Origen* were ordered burned at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE and are no longer extant.
[44] See chapter five

not depreciate the literal meaning of Scripture but rather was grounded upon it. The relation between type and antitype was seen to be real and intelligible, not hidden and discernible only to the spiritual initiates as in allegory. The number of types employed was of a limited number in contrast to the Alexandrian application of allegory to every text of Scripture. The typological correspondences drawn by the Antiochene school related more to the Church and the sacraments while in Alexandrian typology the stress was placed upon the mystical-spiritual (the inner life).

In the Second Council of Constantinople (553 CE), the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who had been the most influential Antiochene exegete, were condemned as tainted with Nestorianism and were ordered to be burned. As a result, suspicion was cast upon the entire Antiochene School. Its emphasis upon the literal sense was preserved in the sermons and commentaries of Chrysostom, and in those commentaries of Jerome written near the end of his life.

Exegetical presuppositions of typology

Behind the use of the typology by the earliest Christians stood not only a body of testimonia portions, but also certain distinctive presuppositions. If we are to appreciate their exegetical practices, it is necessary to have an awareness of their basic hermeneutical outlooks and attitudes. [45] It has been pertinently observed that "it is doubtful whether we can hope to understand the contents of any mind whose presuppositions we have not yet learned to recognize."[46]

Corporate Solidarity

In the first place, the concept of "corporate solidarity" or "corporate personality" had a profound effect upon the exegesis of early Jewish Christians. Since H. Wheeler Robinson's pioneer essay on this subject of 1935, this fact has been increasingly recognized. [47] Reumann indicates that the concept has been defined as "that important Semitic complex of thought in which there is a constant oscillation between the individual and the group --- family, tribe or

[45] Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 93
[46] Geoffrey W. H. Lampe and Kenneth J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology, Studies in Biblical Theology* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 18
[47] H. W. Robinson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," in *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (1964), 1-20

nation --- to which he belongs, so that the king or some other representative figure may be said to embody the group, or the group may be said to sum up the host of individuals."[48] He further elaborated that the precise nature of the relationships involved is not always entirely clear from the literature of the Jews, nor from that of their Semitic neighbors. Probably this is due in large measure to the fact that "ancient literature never does fit exactly into our categories."[49] Richard Longenecker however believed that though there are uncertainties as to precisely how the idea expressed itself in ancient life generally and as to the degree of influence it exerted in specific instances in the literature, there seems to be little question of its presence in the structure of Jewish and early Jewish Christian thought.[50]

In biblical exegesis, the concept of corporate solidarity comes to the fore in the treatment of relationships between the nation or representative figures within the nation, on the one hand, and the elect remnant or the Messiah, on the other. It allows the focus of attention to "pass without explanation or explicit indication from one to the other, in a fluidity of transition which seems to us unnatural."[51]

Correspondence in History

J. Danielou commented that the history of the people of God was evidenced as forming a unity in its various parts.[52] Dodd echoed the same view. Referring to both Jews and Jewish Christians, he says historical occurrences are "build upon a certain pattern corresponding to God's design for man His creative."[53] The nature of man, the relations between man and man, the interaction between man and the universe, and the relation of both to God, their Creator and Redeemer, are viewed in wholistic fashion. In such a view, history is neither endlessly cyclical nor progressively developing due to forces inherent in it. Rather, in all its movements and in all its varied episodes, it is expressive of the divine intent and explicating the divine will. With such an understanding of history, early Christians were prepared to trace correspondences between persons then and persons now. Such corresponding were not just analopous in

[48] J. Reumann, "Introduction" to H. W. Robinson's *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, v
[49] Idem, 16
[50] Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 93-4
[51] J. Reumann, "Introduction" to H. W. Robinson's *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, 15
[52] J. Danielou, "The New Testament and the Theology of History," *Studia Evangelica, I*, ed. K. Aland (1959), 25-34
[53] C. H. Dodd, *According To the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 128

nature, or to be employed by way of illustration. Richard Longenecker pointed out that for the early Christians they were incorporated into history by divine intent, and therefore to be taken typologically. Their presence in the history of a former day is to be considered as elucidating and furthering the redemptive message of the present.[54]

Eschatological Fulfillment

An obvious presupposition also affecting early Jewish Christian interpretation is the consciousness of living in the days of eschatological fulfillment. This theme is recurrent throughout the preaching of the earliest Christians. As with the covenanters of Qumran, early Jewish believers in Jesus understood their ancient Scriptures in an eschatological context. Unlike the Dead Sea sectarians, however, whose eschatology was mainly proleptic and anticipated, Christians were convinced that the coming of the Messiah had been realized in Jesus of Nazareth, and the last days inaugurated with him. Richard Longenecker pointed out that while awaiting final consummation, their eschatology was rooted in and conditioned by what had already happened in the immediate past. The decisive event had occurred and in a sense all else was epilogue.[55]

Messianic Presence

In addition, as F. F. Bruce reminds us, "the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament is not only eschatological but Christological."[56]This theme was thoroughly discussed before.[57] For the earliest believers, this meant (1) that the living presence of Christ, through his Spirit, was to be considered as a determining factor in all their biblical exegesis, and (2) that the Old Testament was to be interpreted Christocentrically. W. D. Davies has pointed out that at least in popular and haggadic circles within Judaism demonstrated this trend of Messiah's coming through the Davidic line of dynasty. There existed the expectation that with the coming of the Messiah the enigmatic and obscure in the Torah "would be made plain."[58] Moreover, such an expectation seems to have become a settled conviction among the early Christians, as evidenced by the exegetical practices inherent in their preaching.

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[54] Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 95
[55] Idem
[56] F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, 77
[57] See the discussion of the section of *"Old Testament and Jesus relationship"* in Chapter Five.
[58] W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (1952), 84-94

Typology, allegorism and others techniques

Probably the best introduction to and survey of the patristic use of typology is Jean Danielou's *Sacramentum Futuri*[59] Danielou has published other important works in this area, perhaps most significantly his 1951, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (English, 1956). However, when one reads these books, especially the first, he is often hard pressed to distinguish what we would call allegory from typology. It is usually agreed that Pauline and patristic allegory ultimately differs radically from the Philonic type, usually called symbolic vs. the biblical historical type. Allegory has today almost universally come to imply an approach which demeans, ignores, or even denies the literal or historical sense of the text, and hence, is no longer useful. In contrast, typology builds on the literal sense although aware of discontinuities, proclaims the extension, prolongation, and consummation of the literal sense of the text.

John Breck pointed out that typology stressed the connection between actual persons, events, places, and institutions of the Old Testament, and their corresponding reality in the New Testament which they foreshadowed.[60] Moses the Lawgiver foreshadows Christ, the ultimate Lawgiver. Aaron, the High priest, foreshadows Christ, the ultimate High Priest. Manna, which fed the people in the wilderness foreshadows the Christ (the Heavenly Bread), which provides ultimate spiritual nourishment.

We now focus on the difference among various kinds of exegetical approaches. New Testament typological interpretation is to be distinguished from certain other approaches. Earle Ellis pointed out that unlike allegory it regards the Scriptures not as verbal metaphors hiding a deeper meaning but from the salvation-history of Israel.[61] Unlike the use of "type" in pagan and some patristic literature, which assumes a cyclical-repetitive historical process, Earle Ellis illustrated that it relates the past to the present in terms of a historical correspondence and escalation in which the divinely ordered pre-figuration finds a complement in the subsequent and greater event.[62]

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[59] English translation subtitle: *Studies in the Origins of Biblical Typo*logy (1950), translated into English a decade later under the title, *From Shadows to Reality*.
[60] Fr. John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and it Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2001), 22
[61] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 106
[62] E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light*

However, typology shared some similarities with other exegetical approaches. Like rabbinic midrash, it applies the Old Testament to contemporary situations, but it does so with drawin historical distinctions different from those of the rabbis. Like Qumran exegesis, it gives to the Scriptures a present-time, eschatological application, but it does so with an eschatological and messianic orientation different from that at Qumran.

Allegory, on the other hand, finds hidden or symbolic meaning in the Old Testament, which is inherent in text and does not depend on a future historical fulfillment. It seeks to go beyond the text. Allegory searches for a secondary and hidden meaning underlying the obvious meaning of the narrative. This deeper level of meaning may have no connection with the historical framework of revelation. Because the allegorical interpretation is not intimately bound to the framework of salvation history, it has a potential of utterly abusing the biblical text. Allegory divorced from a historical base drifts into artificial and absurd analogies.

The following biblical examples illustrate the concept of allegory. I Corinthians 9:8-10 see the law forbidding the muzzling of an ox while it treads the corn as having the hidden meaning that a minister of the Gospel should be supported by the people he ministers to. The Song of Solomon is also often interpreted as an allegory of God (the Lover), and His love for His people (the beloved). The allegorical approach also often sees multiple correspondences in a given narrative which illustrate some point. For example, St. Paul explicitly uses allegory in Galatians 4, in which he sees the child of the slave woman (Hagar) as representing those under the Law, while the child of the free woman (Sarah) as representing those under the New Covenant, and the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael as representing the inferiority of the Old Covenant to the New.[63]

Allegory often makes connections on the level of words and numbers. That is, associations of words or numbers trigger the reader to recall some aspect of Christian thought not directly in view in the text. Sometimes the connection is quite fanciful. In the *Epistle of Barnabas* we find a lesson about Christ's Cross drawn from the story of Abraham having his 318 servants circumcised (Genesis 17). Greek uses letters for its numbers, so that “A” stands for 1, “B” for 2, etc.

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of Modern Research (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 106

[63] Gl 4:21-31

The author works out the connection as follows:

Notice that he [Moses] first mentions the eighteen, and after a pause the three hundred. The eighteen is I (= ten) and H (= 8) -- you have Jesus [because IH are in Greek the first letters of the word Jesus] -- and because the cross was destined to have grace in the T he says 'and three hundred' [T = 300 in Greek]. So he indicated Jesus in the two letters and the cross in the other.[64]

We are now in a position to see the difference between allegorism and typology as methods of exegesis. Typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons or things within the historical framework of revelation, whereas allegorism is the search for a secondary and hidden meaning underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a narrative. Geoffrey Lampe and Kenneth Woollcombe made a clear point that this secondary sense of a narrative, discovered by allegorism, does not necessarily have any connection at all with the historical framework of revelation.[65] Beryl Smalley pointed out that the chief function of allegory was apologetic.[66]

The allegorical interpretation marks a stage in the history of any civilized people whose sacred literature is primitive. It is only at a much later stage that they come to see it as a process of historical development. Greek commentators found allegories in Homer, and the Hellenized Jew, Philo of Alexandria, found them in the Septuagint, Philo Judaeus has been called “the Cicero” of allegory. Beryl Smalley pointed out the importance of Philo that he did not invent but popularized without reconciling a number of allegorical traditions. [67] Philo’s purpose of allegorical interpretation was to show that whatever the letter of the inspired text might say its inner or spiritual meaning was in harmony with Platonism, the current philosophy of the Gentiles. Beryl Smalley again believed that Philo was a practicing Jew. He represented his people on a delegation to the Roman emperor.[68]

Philo, on the other hand, paid much emphasis to the importance of literal

[64] Epistle of Barnabas 9:8.
[65] Geoffrey W. H. Lampe and Kenneth J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology, Studies in Biblical Theology* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 40
[66] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 4
[67] See chapter five; Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 2-3.
[68] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 3

meaning. The Law is an historical institution, literally binding on Jews, as well as having an inner meaning. Philo must have admitted the propriety of a study of the literal sense of the text, since he says that he will leave it to those who specialize in such matters.[69] His *Questions and Answers* even contain an occasional literal solution to the difficulties arising from Scripture.[70] But he brings out the overriding importance of the allegorical sense when he says of the prophet Samuel:

"Probably there was an actual man called Samuel; but we conceive of the Samuel of the scripture, not as a living compound of soul and body, but as a mind which rejoices in the service and worship of God and that only."[71]

Allegory conferred the quality of a university on Jewish law and history. Philo expressed this view in a metaphor which gains in meaning if we think of its political background: the Romans had fused their conquests into a world empire. Those who interpret in the literal sense only are "citizens of a petty state." Beryl Smalley pointed out that the allegorists are "on the roll of citizens of a greater country, namely, this whole world."[72]

Philo conformed to the intellectual tendency of his day, which stressed the "other worldly" and moral element in Platonism and sharpened the contrast between indulging the appetites and cultivating the spirit. Introspection was revealing a ghostly demesne of abstractions and experiences which could be expressed most naturally. Scripture enabled Philo to make his conceptions more precise and intelligible. Further, it allowed him to develop a train of thought and yet dispensed him from the need to build up a system. He allegorized not only the text he had taken as his starting point, but other passages suggested by the first. Any attempt to classify or systematize his ideas involves the construction of a gigantic card index. The result may be something that Philo himself would hardly have recognized.[73]

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[69] H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), 57-63
[70] For the editions and translations of the *Questions and Answer* see H. L. Goodhart and E. R. Goodenough, *A General Bibliography of Philo* (New Haven, 1938), 133
[71] *De Ebrietate*, xxxvi (Loeb Classical Library, op. cit.), iii 395
[72] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 3
[73] See the review of E. R. Goodenough of A. Wolfson's *Philo, Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1xvii, 87-109

Typology was widely used as an exegetical mean to interpret the Biblical texts in the early Christian Church. We may witness a pair of exegetical methods. There was midrash in early Jewish interpretation, which was discussed in Chapter Three and typology of the patristic age discussed in this chapter. We will focus on this last approach in the next chapter to see how typology was used to explain the book of Ruth by Christian writers. Once again, this exegetical method cannot be separated from the study of the historical, theological and social background in early Christianity, and the purpose of exegetes themselves. They are all interrelated and interdependent.

Conclusion

The patristic scholar, Father Boniface Ramsey, remarked: "The (Church) Fathers were the first to face certain problems that Christianity was bound to encounter and continues to encounter, and they provided responses that are classic, if not canonized. The nature of God, God's relation to the world, the humanity and divinity of Christ, the nature and structure of the church, the authority of Scripture, the moral obligations of the human person: these are among the issues that the Fathers first addressed … " ("Beginning to Read the Fathers," p. 15). This subject of the authority of Scripture is inseparable from its interpretation, which is simply the correct understanding and practical application of God's Word for faith (what we believe) and for morals (how we are to act). On this topic of biblical interpretation, the Church Fathers made a lasting contribution to the Catholic faith by two main patristic "schools": Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt