

Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers

This workshop will introduce you to the rich, wise, and sometimes surprising ways the earliest pastors of the church read the Bible. We will discover that they had a distinctive theology of Scripture, a set of expectations that might look different to our own, and much to teach us about everything from preaching to personal devotions.

Daniel Hames is Associate Director of Union where he is also Lecturer in Theology. He is pursuing a PhD in Systematic Theology at the VU Amsterdam and is a minister at St Aldates, Oxford.

I. Approaching the Church Fathers (Patristics)

II. The Central Theme of Scripture

A. Justin Martyr (100–165AD): God in the Old Testament

B. Irenaeus of Lyon (130–202AD): A Bible Overview

C. ‘The patristic writers... regard the text as a continuous narrative of the Logos himself. It was the Word who spoke through all the prophets, the Word who inspired the psalms, the Word who appeared to Abraham, Moses, and Jacob, and so on. In every instance the text (be it Old or New Testament) relates to the Logos’ revelation of God, whether in the life of the Trinity or the earthly economy of salvation... This thoroughgoing christocentricity, and the different understanding of historical reality, marks off their exegesis from contemporary interpreters...’

J. McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (New York: SVS Press, 2004), 190.

III. The Identity of Jesus and the Unity of Scripture

A. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428AD): Going against the flow

B. Cyril of Alexandria (412–444AD): One Christ, one Bible

‘Although the discourse of the holy prophets is always obscure, it is full of hidden thoughts ready to deliver to us the premonition of divine mysteries. Christ, in fact, himself is the fulfilment of the Law and the prophets, as the Scripture says. Those who want to clarify such traces and the obscure of thought need to apply themselves with the eye of the mind and keen understanding both the precision of the facts and a development of a spiritual interpretation.’

Commentary on Isaiah, translated by Robert Charles Hill.

IV. Conclusion: Christ in All the Scriptures

Suggested Readings:

Fairbairn, Donald, *Life in The Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Irenaus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* (book 3) [[online](#)]

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* [[online](#)]

Needham, Nick (ed.), *Daily Readings from the Early Church Fathers*. Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2017.

Reeves, Michael, *Introducing Major Theologians*. Nottingham: IVP, 2015.