

Bridging the Divide: Hermeneutics at Antioch and Elsewhere

Scholars have often viewed the dichotomy between the “allegorical” Alexandrian School and the “literal-historical” Antiochene School as definite and established. Each Schools’ basic “hermeneutic,” as described by this catch-word, serves as a characterization of the entire system of thought in Alexandria and Antioch and a foundation by which to approach the authors and writings occurring as part of that School. Unfortunately, positing such a dichotomy between the two, while heuristically helpful, can be misleading in light of the actual practices of the representatives of these two settings. This research project focuses on the writings of several fourth and fifth century church fathers by highlighting the hermeneutic of each writer rather than their stated or implied method of interpretation or exegetical result. The term hermeneutic in this paper refers to the discipline located at a generalized level above methodology that deals with questions such as the location of meaning, how people understand, and how communication itself functions. A comparison will be presented of the hermeneutic of Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrus (Antiochene representatives) with that of Cyril of Jerusalem, Didymus the Blind, Epiphanius of Constantia, Basil the Great, and Cyril of Alexandria (outside representatives). Initial findings will be presented about how these church fathers expected to find meaning in Scripture, thereby highlighting fresh insights into the foundation of their methodologies or actual interpretations.