



Mal Couch: Principles of Dispensational Hermeneutics; J. D. Douglas: Pioneers in Allegorical Hermeneutics; Couch: Medieval Hermeneutics

Couch, Mal (ed.). *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996), 9-11:

Third, dispensationalists believe that God set forth His plan of the ages progressively; that is, not everything is explained at once. For example, the doctrines of the Trinity and the church were revealed "line upon line." The succeeding biblical generations were given an unfolding revelation until a doctrine was fully developed. (pp. 9-10)

Fourth, God has dealt differently with mankind at distinct times in history. The Lord worked differently with Abraham than He did with Moses and Israel. He now works differently with His church than He did with the Jews under the Law. Dispensationalism is the recognition of these distinct economies in biblical history.

Fifth, world history will not end suddenly with the return of Christ. For His own divine purposes, the Lord laid out a plan for end time events. This plan involves the rapture of the church, the Tribulation judgment of the nations, and the restoration of the Jews to their promised King and kingdom. Then follows a judgment of the lost and a new heaven and new earth. Dispensationalism recognizes these and other prophetic events and holds to them in their proper order.

Finally, although the salvation of the elect is part of the merciful plan of God, dispensationalists believe that the Scriptures teach that the outworkings of His providence will bring glory to Himself, not simply the salvation of the lost. What God has purposed for the angels, the lost, the nation of Israel, and creation itself will ultimately bring honor and glory to Himself. (p. 10)

1. Let me give you some idea of the problems that have developed because of erroneous systems of hermeneutics.
2. First of all we must define the term "allegory" as it applies to biblical interpretation:

Douglas, J. D. (ed.). *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 27-28:

ALLEGORY. The use of language to convey a deeper and a different meaning from that which appears on the surface.

In biblical usage a distinction must be drawn between allegory as a medium of revelation and allegory as a method of interpretation. There are undoubtedly allegorical passages in Scripture; Paul explicitly declares his use of the method in Galatians 4:21-31, but evidently this was a departure from his usual practice. In the early church, allegory found expression, e.g., in the works of Clement \klem' ent\ of Rome, Irenaeus \ī-rē-nē' us\, and Tertullian \ter-tul' yan\. Jerome, Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine gave more or less prominence to the allegorical hermeneutic. Bernard \ber' nard\ of Clairvaux \kler-vo\ was the supreme allegorist of the Middle Ages. Aquinas \a-kwī' nes\ took up the earlier fourfold system of interpretation and made it normative for Catholicism. It was not, however, until the time of the Reformation that the allegorical method was seriously challenged.

15. Examples of poor hermeneutics throughout the Church Age would take months to study. However, I do want to give you a brief overview of the problem. We will first note the hermeneutics popular in the Middle Ages and for this we again consult:

Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, 142-43:

HERMENEUTICS, MEDIEVAL. The logical, grammatical principles used to interpret and explain the Bible in the Middle Ages were dominated by allegorical persuasions and the authoritative doctrinal rule of the papacy.



A shift from the literal hermeneutic of the first-century church to an allegorical approach began to take place as early as the third century. (p. 142)

Origen (ar' e-jin) was the first theologian to spiritualize, or explain away, the future kingdom as the present reign of Christ in the human heart. During the Middle Ages, millenarianism was generally regarded as heretical. (pp. 142-43)

A movement that came to be known as scholasticism began around the year 1000 with Anselm (an' selm) and Thomas Aquinas recognized as the most influential leaders. Depending almost exclusively on the allegorical method and giving no recognition to the importance of the original language of biblical texts, this movement further perverted the truth of Scripture. This method of interpretation dominated the Middle Ages and was characterized by unlimited speculation without any objective, consistent standard for correctness.

Medieval interpretation was influenced and restrained by three factors: the prevalence of illiteracy among both the clergy and the congregation; the study of Scripture was restricted primarily to monasteries; and the desire to support the dogmas of Rome.

One of the most significant dogmas that developed from medieval hermeneutics was transubstantiation. Declared as dogma by (Pope) Innocent III in 1215, it decreed that priests had the power to transform the bread and wine into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.

From the Middle Ages also emerged the dogma of purgatory that proclaimed the temporal punishment and purging of sins by fire was necessary for entrance into heaven. With no literal support from Scripture, it has been used by Rome to supplant God in His righteous judgment of sin. It was in conjunction with this doctrine that the practice of selling indulgences developed. The church began to give indulgences as a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins by means of reducing time spent in purgatory.