

Hermeneutic and Homiletic: “Under Umbrella of Love” by Augustine

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There are many hermeneutics of Bible and sometimes they make preachers confused. But now I do encourage preachers to know most useful and famous two hermeneutics in the Christian history: Historical Interpretation and Spiritual Interpretation. I warn preachers interpreting Bible literally.

For example, when Jesus made dead man alive when we interpret literally then we can make dean man alive. In this case we should use spiritual interpretation. Also we should go to the historical situation and biblical background. Most of reformers like Luther and Calvin did historical interpretation compared to spiritual interpretation of Middle Ages. But Luther and Calvin all followed Augustine who taught preachers should interpret biblical text under the umbrella of love.

Augustine said God is love so all God said in the Bible should come to us through love. If it is not love, we have to rethink and reinterpret. Augustine followed Origen who interprets Bible allegorically and spiritually. Many theologians argue which biblical interpretation is better and which is bad. But to my understanding we can't reject this instead of that.

Although there are many arguments between literal interpretation and spiritual interpretation or historical interpretation and allegorical interpretation, we should know that Augustine embraces all interpretation and he changed his hermeneutics as “under the umbrella of love” because God is love. It doesn't matter if we interpret literally or spiritually or historically as long as we interpret Bible with love of God under the umbrella of love of God.

If we argue literal is wrong or right while spiritual is wrong or bad, we must face some difficult problems when we interpret whole Bible, because some parts we have to interpret literally like Jesus' incarnation and resurrection, while some parts we have to interpret spiritually like the killings of innocent people cruelly. We can't and

must not interpret literally the story of cruel killings in the bible. So I believe Augustine is right when he combines all different interpretation under the umbrella of love of God. Some teachers of hermeneutic teach not to use spiritual interpretation while other teachers teach not to use literal interpretation.

What should we do then? Even reformers like Luther and Calvin also rejected spiritual interpretation in their teachings and preaching but as a matter of fact, they used both interpretations in their preaching. What an irony? So I believe that Augustine is right. He is father to Reformers like Luther and Calvin but Augustine was bigger than Luther and Calvin when he embraces all possibilities of interpretation under the umbrella of love of God.

So my friends I encourage you to use all interpretations according to your situation following Holy Spirit, but remember always test if your interpretation is under the umbrella of love!