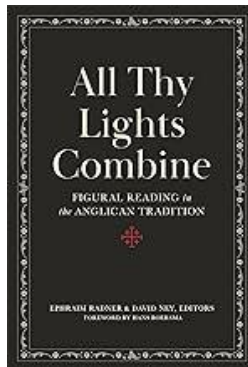




Reading Holy Scripture in the Anglican Tradition



What is the Anglican Tradition of Reading Scripture?

1) Basic Concepts

- a) The Anglican tradition is not privileged; it is *within* the Christian tradition with roots in patristic and medieval church
- b) Its distinctiveness emerged in the English reformation while maintaining continuity with four-fold medieval readings
- c) Scripture “reads us” – the divine nature of its words mean that God uses Scripture to initiate a divine encounter and shape our formation in Jesus Christ
- d) Refusal to privilege any part of the canon, because “all of God’s lights combine” that we are to discern how “all God’s words interlock with others, across history, books, and characters, through “similitude, resonance, and moral form... sees connections in all the corners of the Scriptural text” *
- e) Understands the role of the imagination in reading and formation
- f) *All Thy Lights Combine* describes the above as the “figural reading of Scripture”

2) Historical Roots



- a) William Tyndale
 - (1) 1526 and 1534 illegal translations of the Bible cost him his life
- b) Archbishop Cranmer – appointed Archbishop of Canterbury 1532
 - (1) 1536 directed the issuance the Ten Articles which evolved into 39 Articles of 1570
 - (2) 1549 Book of Common Prayer
 - (i) “all of the Scriptures for all of the people, all of the time”
 - (ii) established the devotional nature of Scriptures in the Anglican tradition

- (iii) its use inspired the use of Biblical words as symbols, types, and metaphors in the English language itself
- (iv) Anglican “figuralism” has its roots in the BCP

3) Why Figural Reading?

- a) Receives Biblical words in canonical context – the relationship between the words of the text within their immediate placement and the context of a chapter, book, testament, and the entire canon.
- a) Embraces the concepts of the medieval fourfold senses of the Scripture that any text might hold: the literal, the moral, allegorical, and the anagogical
 - (1) Literal – understand contextually and according to genre
 - (2) Anagogical – eternal significance, spiritual meaning
 - (3) Allegorical - the biblical narratives as having a second level of reference beyond those persons, things, and events explicitly mentioned in the text.
 - (4) Moral (or tropological) – the practice of Scriptural teaching
- 4) Embraces the power of the imagination

“We who are made in God’s image, from his imagination, reflect our Creator’s image through our acts of imagination. Imagination engages our whole humanity: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. This truth is the starting point of any right understanding of the imagination, including its role, power, and significance.” Karen Swallow, *The Evangelical Imagination*

- a) At its most basic level “imagination” refers to the mind’s process of making an image-the act of imaging
- b) Imagination is more global than our own individual creative pictures or “imagining”
- c) Images, metaphors, stories, experiences shape our experience of ourselves, others, and the world
- d) Reaches beyond the limits of our cognition and forms the unconscious – it is understood as a phenomenon related to perception

In *Imagining the Kingdom*, James K. A. Smith describes imagination as “a kind of faculty by which we navigate and make sense of our world, but in ways and on a register that flies below the radar of conscious reflection...”

- e) Religions are formed and fueled by the imagination
- f) We need to become conscious of what Biblical words and stories have built our imagination
- g) Figural readings enable us to understand how Biblical language has shaped our imagination and our desires

“It is because I imagine the world (and my place in it) in certain ways that I am oriented by fundamental loves and longings. . . . My longings are not simply ‘chosen’ by me; they are not self-generated ‘decisions.’ . . . We don’t choose desires; they are birthed in us.” James K. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*

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