

Week Eighteen

YEAR ONE

Read

Song of Songs
Collins, Chapter 23, “Psalms and Song of Songs,” pages 236–47

Focus

Given the fact that the Song of Songs does not mention God, in what ways might it convey a theology? Make a case of why or why not the book conveys a theology.

Psalms tell of the kingship of God, the human situation, and the character of God. Name two or three features of the theology found in the Psalms.

YEAR TWO

Read

The Letter to the Romans

Focus

The Letter to the Romans likely contains familiar quotations. Be sure to place any you notice in the context of the letter. Note how the letter is structured and how Paul builds his case.

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 12, “A Church for All People?” pages 396–423

Focus

Persons, events, terms, and writings to note:

King Robert II; Waldensians; Brethren of the Free Spirit; twelfth-century Renaissance; *scholae* educational method; Peter Abelard’s *Theologia Christiana*; friars (*fratres*); Dominic and Dominicans (Blackfriars); Francis, Franciscans, and Francis’s *Testament*; Carmelites; Fourth Lateran Council; transubstantiation (Real Presence); *inquisitor*; Juliana; Thomas Aquinas; *Summa Theologiae* (Sum Total of Theology); Anselm, Ablelard, Hildegard of Bingen; *The Cloud of Unknowing*; Meister Eckhart; Bridget of Sweden; Catherine of Siena

YEAR FOUR

Read

Allen, Chapter 12, “The Sacrifice of the Cross,” pages 117–27

Focus

The chapter discussed teachings on atonement—the only doctrine that has no established consensus. Note different atonement theories: ransom, satisfaction/substitutionary. Key figures who expressed different theories: Paul, Anselm, and Abelard.

Images/metaphors of importance: distance; Suffering Servant

Important concepts: self-limitation of God; ancient meaning of passion; sin as life apart from God; biblical view of God’s power, wisdom, and goodness; atonement as the restoration of the human capacity to know, love, and obey God



ALL YEARS

Respond

Each generation inherits social, political, economic, and technological arrangements that supposedly work for the common good. Whenever these patterns no longer serve individual and corporate needs, times are ripe for change. In unsettling times, reformation of fundamental thought and social patterns occurs. “Re-formation” literally means to create something anew out of that which has grown ineffectual, obsolete, and unfruitful.

In one way or another, readings assigned for this session deal with a reshaping of the conventional patterns. Deuteronomic reforms, how to communicate over great distances, the Christian’s response to political and economic changes in the Latin West, or contemporary reinterpreting of basic theological themes each participate in re-forming.

What specific re-formations, great or small, do you find in your readings?

If past is prologue for the present, describe how what you have been reading connects with your daily life and ministry.

Practice

Take time to reflect on the theme of refashioning basic patterns so that learning can contribute to recognizing and responding to opportunities for ministry in your life.

Identify a focus:

Construct a “mind-map” by making associations with the centering theme “re-formations.” For example, the mind map starts with a theme placed in the center of paper. As you make associations from your assigned

reading over the past few weeks, write those associations around the theme and draw a line between the theme and each association. This link, <http://mindmap.nu/how-to-do-radiant-thinking-based-on-mindmapping/>, provides for more information on “mind-mapping” or “radiant thinking.” Find other sources of information on this process.



After making several associations, study the entire map.

- What images or metaphors express the nature of “re-forming?”
- Select one to explore.

Explore the world of the metaphor/image:

Identify a specific point from which to explore the chosen image. For example, if the image is “Jumping into an Abyss,” then be sure to explore the image from a standpoint such as the person jumping into the abyss. Do not shift to other possible standpoints such as observing someone jump into the abyss or leading someone to the edge of an abyss.

Develop two or three questions and explore the image through those perspectives. For example, what questions would explore the destructive dimensions of the image (Sin)? What questions explore the nature of the world of the metaphor-image (Creation)? What questions bring in the Judgment dimensions of the metaphor? Or the Repentance and/or Redemption perspectives?

Connect with other areas of life:

Begin connecting with your life by briefly stating when you experienced the world depicted in the image/metaphor. Remember to work from the standpoint previously identified. For example, when have you metaphorically “jumped off into an abyss”?

Connect with other sources, such as contemporary culture and the Christian tradition. You may find that something from your reading over the past few weeks comes to mind.

Bring in your personal beliefs. What do you believe? What do you hold to be true?

Apply to your life going forward:

Notice how what you learn from the reflection applies to your life. For example, what light does this reflection shed on how you engage opportunities for ministry?