

more adequate appreciation. A few of the selections are more devotional than scholarly. However, at that time women were denied entrance into formal theological studies, thus this book draws attention to, and applauds the skills of, these self-taught female writers.

The footnotes are also informative and rich including a letter written by Harriet Beecher Stowe to her scholar/husband:

If you studied Christ with half the energy that you have studied Luther— . . . If you were drawn toward him and loved him as much as you loved your study and your books then would be formed in you, the hope of glory—But you fancy that you have *other* things to do . . . you *must* write courses of lectures— . . . you must keep up with the current literature—& read new German books—all these things you *must* do then if there is any time, any odds and ends of strength & mental capability left, why they are to be given occasionally brushing up matters within, & keeping a kind of Christian character. (Letter to Calvin E. Stowe, cited in Gail Smith, “Reading the Word: Harriet Beecher Stowe and Interpretation,” [PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1993], 58; [12n33, emphasis Stowe’s]).

There is also a valuable eleven-page Appendix and Bibliography for anyone drawn to further study in this area.

This reviewer did wonder whether there was other substantive material that could have been included from the hundreds of nineteenth-century female writers mentioned by the editor and whether other biblical women in the gospels could have been given a chapter as well. Also, whether more direct evidence might be included of the women who had taught themselves biblical languages. But such is the nature of any anthology. One has to trust the judgment of the two experienced editors which left only a few minor lingering questions. Biblical scholars and church historians of either gender will find this collection all important in its attempt to restore nineteenth-century women to their rightful place in New Testament interpretation.

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Toom, Tarmo, ed. *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation: The Latin Fathers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xvi + 262 pp. Hardcover. USD 99.99.

This is a great resource for those seeking a stimulating collection of essays on ancient Christian views of biblical interpretation. It is important, however, for the reader to be attentive to the book’s purpose, as indicated through its title. Although it may not be immediately obvious, this work describes how elected Latin Fathers, from the fourth to the seventh century, articulated their *theories* of biblical interpretation. Words on Tertullian’s or Cyprian’s actual perspectives of the Bible are to be found elsewhere, because of the nuanced objective of the book. Toom explains the goal of the book in the introduction, stating, “This volume provides an in-depth analysis of patristic hermeneutics” focusing on authors “whose writings contain substantial discussion of

hermeneutics and who were known, read, and cited in the Middle Ages and beyond" (i). Latin Fathers prior to the fourth century did not write a clear hermeneutical theory, thus, they are excluded.

The individuals presented in this volume are roughly in chronological order as they appear in the book: Tyconius, Jerome, Augustine of Hippo, John Cassian, Junillus Africanus, Flavius Cassiodorus, Gregory the Great, and Isidore of Seville. Isidore of Seville, who is normally not the subject of discussion when it comes to Patristic studies, is included therein in the attempt to lay out theories on biblical interpretation which influenced Medieval Christianity. The tendency of the book to connect with the Middle Ages is notable in the selection of its authors who currently work on Medieval cultures, like Rita Copeland (on Medieval Rhetoric) and Thomas O'Loughlin (Medieval Exegesis).

Unlike popular resources on Patristic biblical interpretation, like Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook on Patristic Exegesis: Handbook on Patristic Exegesis, The Bible in Ancient Christianity 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) or Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), this volume focuses on theory. As the title reads, it is important to realize that this is a collection of essays on *theories* of biblical interpretation and not *exegetical practice*. This is also aptly clarified by Toom in the introduction when he classifies patristic literature on Scripture into four categories (taking a cue from Cassiodorus): First, exegetical writings or commentaries; second, homilies; third, hermeneutical theory deduced from actual exegesis; and fourth, hermeneutical theory properly explained. As Toom discusses in the introduction, few of the Fathers clarified their theoretical framework for biblical interpretation. These categories explain the selection of ancient works and individuals in this volume. When one compares the categories with the debate on each chapter, however, it can be argued that the established framework is not actually followed. Although Toom claims that all of the ancient authors investigated in the book fall under category four, the perusal of the chapters on Jerome, Cassiodorus, and Gregory the Great suggest that they could easily fall under category three. Even the authors writing on these individual Fathers state that Jerome, Cassiodorus, and Gregory the Great did not clearly explain hermeneutical theories (49, 160, 187).

It can clearly be argued that the works from Latin interpreters such as Hillary of Poitiers and Adrian could have made it into this book under category three—a fact which Toom recognizes, explaining their exclusion (9–16). It is clear that Augustine, Tyconius, Cassian, Junillus, and Isidore describe their hermeneutical theory at some length, however it wasn't clear how much the Latin fathers had to write about hermeneutical principles in order to be classified under category four. This methodological critique is not aimed toward the exclusion of Latin fathers from the collection, rather directed towards why the book is not more comprehensive, including more individuals. There seems to be a thin line between categories three and four, and since the volume is a great collection of Patristic hermeneuts, as a student and teacher, I would love to have at least three more chapters including

other figures such as Hillary and Adrian. Since the book has 262 pages, I think it would have been feasible. Such an addition would enrich the already great collection of main Christian thinkers whom discussed hermeneutics in the late antiquity. Another advantage of this collection is that it updates English-speaking scholars on French literature which covers the topic of Christianity in late classical Antiquity Christianity—literature that is still indispensable for Patristic scholars.

Reflecting on the book from the perspective of the history of ideas, I could identify at least five prominent themes that are found in almost every chapter. First, that Scripture is obscure and needs interpretation. As Tyconius puts it in his prologue to his *Book of Rules*, God spoke of “treasures out of darkness and secret riches” (Isa 45:3, quoted on 25), which he identified as Scripture. It is the role of the Christian interpreter to understand the hidden message of God’s word, thus, the necessity of hermeneutical principles.

Second, that God’s word is ever-present. As Junillus Africanus explained in his *Handbook of the Basic Principles of Divine Law*, Scripture speaks “either about God, or about our own age, or about the future” (1.11, quoted on 144). This is probably the major theme in Patristic hermeneutical theory, that the Bible is, as James L. Kugel once aptly labelled it, omnisignificant (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981], 103–104). This means that the Bible is not primarily about the past, but about the personal present relationship with God and the future of this relationship. In contrast, modern biblical criticism works on the assumption that the Bible is primarily, if not only, about the past. Understanding how these ancient interpreters negotiate between a historical (past) and an allegorical/spiritual/ethical (future) reading of Scripture can be helpful in appreciating the gap between these two modes of encountering Scripture.

A third theme, which follows the ever-present reality of the text, is the notion that Scripture is primarily for human salvation and ethical transformation. As Gregory visualized it, the process of biblical interpretation has one goal, the edification of the listeners. As he wrote, “Whoever speaks about God, it is necessary that he take [sic] care to examine thoroughly whatever might provide moral (*mores*) instruction for his hearers; and should believe (*deputet*) this to be the correct method for his discourse” (*Moralia in Job*, dedic. 2, translated on 200). Cassian is a prominent figure of an ethical hermeneutics, shaped by his ascetic understanding that reading Scripture was a process of constant contemplation for the cleansing of the heart, described by Christopher Kelly in chapter five.

Fourth, most saw the Spirit guiding the process of a correct understanding of Scripture. The expectation of a personal divine guide, the illumination of the Spirit to Scripture, was not detrimental to a deep study of the text, but quite the opposite. Augustine, in his *en. Ps. 118*, reflecting on the passage of Luke 24:45, taught that humans “Cannot do what the Lord did, for the Gospel tells us, *Then he opened their minds to understand scriptures . . .* [the disciples] took in what he said only because he had opened their minds (*aperuit*) and enabled them to do so” (quoted on 90). Building on this, Gregory

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saw that the enlightened reader became a channel of revelation, as he was revealing the mysteries of God to monks through his commentary on Job.

The last prominent theme I found in the theories of these Patristic Fathers is the importance of language. The whole chapter on Augustine deals with semiotics. The discussion on Jerome, Cassiodorus, and Isidore also highlights the fact that the meaning (theory) of language was where the idea of an omniscient and soteriological/ethical idea of the biblical text and actual exegesis met. It was linguistics, distilled through the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, which shaped how Western Christianity understood Scripture. Although many ancient authors explained their view of scriptural language in a three-partite model, I think Thomas O'Loughlin is right (216–219) in his chapter on Isidore that, in practice, what we really find in these Christian theories of Scripture is a two-fold system. At stake here was how to read presently (allegorically, morally, spiritually) an ancient text (historically). The chapter on Junillus Africanus, which brings fresh reflections on the school of Nisibis and Theodore's hermeneutics, shows that this concern transcended the traditional Antioch-Alexandria or East-West description of how early Christianity viewed Scripture. For students of the Bible, the hermeneutical challenge remains: What is the relevance of this ancient text deemed holy by believers? For those seeking a satisfying answer to this perennial question, this book surely provides much to reflect on, led by the authors of antiquity who had a passion for the text and a theological acumen that few possess today.

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