

Book Reviews

The Letter to the Romans. Translated and edited by Ian Christopher Levy, Philip D. W. Krey, and Thomas Ryan. *The Bible in the Medieval Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. x + 329 pages. \$35.00 (paper).
doi: 10.1017/hor.2015.62

Remarkably little of the prolific production of medieval biblical commentary has been translated into English, even though its thousand-year outpouring directly continued the excellent patristic tradition. Eerdmans' series *The Bible in the Medieval Tradition* presents medieval scriptural interpretation (mostly heretofore untranslated) in order to "reacquaint the Church with its rich history of biblical interpretation" and to show its "contemporary applicability" (i). Many of the commentators studied emphasize the "spiritual" senses of interpretation (the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical), but others present the "literal" sense as understood at the time. All of them offer deep insights into the era's theological-intellectual culture in general, especially its immense differences from today in religious outlook and practice, even though the Bible was very much at the center of religious life.

This volume, *The Letter to the Romans*, is introduced by a fully documented discussion of the medieval writers, the first part of which presents the patristic tradition in the church in some detail, including commentaries by Ambrosiaster, Rufinus, Pelagius, and the lost work of Cyril of Alexandria, before a lengthy treatment of Origen and Augustine (4–20). The essay goes on to describe the identity and context of the eight medieval commentaries presented in the volume, regarding them as "representative medieval interpreters," and locates them in their theological and historical contexts (20–58). These include William of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Peter of John Olivi, Nicholas of Lyra, and two anonymous writers. After a "Prologue to Romans" by Peter Lombard, the editors present, for each of the sixteen chapters of Romans, a clear and idiomatic English translation of a substantial part of the commentary of one of these medieval writers.

We learn that in the ninth century the bulk of Carolingian scholarship was oriented to biblical exegesis. The anti-Pelagian *Glossa Ordinaria* ("Standard Gloss") of the twelfth century selectively collected fragmentary patristic texts and reproduced them as glosses on the Bible. The anonymous author of Mont

Saint-Michel conflated patristic texts almost seamlessly into a commentary on Romans 14. By the thirteenth century, theologians of the mendicant orders dominated exegesis in the schools. Peter of John Olivi saw the controversy about evangelical poverty reflected everywhere in his Bible. His later Franciscan confrere Nicholas of Lyra was able to keep the affairs of the order separate from exegesis, but in his theory of a “double literal sense” (one for the prophet’s own time and one for the future as foreseen by the prophet), he protected the historical person of the text while he propounded a future sense that “firmly grounds Christ and the New Testament itself in the unfolding events of salvation history” (51).

Far different from these is the work of systematic theologians like Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas. According to the editors themselves, their commentary “often offered fanciful etymologies and was anachronistic in its conflation of past and present” (viii). For example, in his discussion on chapter 8 of Romans, Aquinas first lays out the logic he imagines Saint Paul used to construct each argument in good scholastic form. He goes on to discuss questions that Saint Paul never brought up, such as whether “the movement of covetousness flowing from original sin...is worthy of condemnation” (175). Aquinas’ arguments use nonrelated and even much later theological formulations of the church in his exposition of the Pauline text—what would be called “eis-egesis” by today’s exegetes. Another drawback, of course, is the medieval reliance on the Vulgate translation. This can cause quite a bit of speculation on a problem in a Latin text that is in no way present in the original Greek, as, for example, the Vulgate translation of *phronēma*, “mind-set; mentality,” in Romans 8:6 by *prudētia*, and its rendering of the same word as *sapientia* in Romans 8:7 (183).

The unavoidable truth is that much of medieval exegesis has not been translated into English because there has been no great demand for it. Although the texts in this study are extremely valuable for understanding medieval religious culture and especially the burning theological questions of the day, they often as not fail to advance our understanding of the original biblical texts.

ELLIOTT MALONEY
Saint Vincent Seminary

Thinking through Paul: A Survey of His Life, Letters, and Theology. By Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. 408 pages. \$44.99.

doi: 10.1017/hor.2015.63

The title of this textbook, *Thinking through Paul*, provides a key to the book’s major strength. Longenecker and Still provide readers with a thorough