

debate concerning tradition and innovation in late antique philosophical and moral thought and fills a void in today's research, in particular regarding Paulinus.

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Tyconius' book of rules. An ancient invitation to ecclesial hermeneutics. By Matthew R. Lynskey. (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 167.) Pp. xviii + 456. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2021. €138. 978 90 04 45483 5; 0920 623X
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Students of Augustine will locate Tyconius' *Liber regularum* within the array of sources repurposed by the bishop of Hippo, noting its author's ambivalent relationship to his own Donatist communion. Deploying elements of this hermeneutical handbook as scaffolding for his own method of scriptural interpretation, Augustine's approbation helped to preserve Tyconius from the taint of schism, bequeathing the *Liber* to the repository of Western Christianity. In this work are found the seeds of Augustine's description of the Church as an ambiguous body, a mix of sinners and saints; and those, though presently undistinguishable, who are predestined to starkly different eternities. Aside from his Augustinian reception, Tyconian scholarship has revealed his intrinsic interest as an important voice in the complex story of North African Christianity, and the development of Latin scriptural interpretation at the turn of the fifth century.

Matthew Lynskey's contribution to the resuscitation of Tyconius resists easy definition. While Lynskey engages with Tyconius on his own merits (Augustine is present, but in the background), this is not a straightforward historical and theological survey of Tyconius' life or work. Lynskey's study aims to demonstrate how Tyconius' ecclesiology and understanding of biblical interpretation are intimately connected; and that both are drawn entirely from the content of Scripture. The result is a minutely worked-out analysis of Tyconius' hermeneutics, with a clear intention that it be put in the service of the Church, reading the Bible. This is a book for those who 'seek the meaning of the Scriptures' (p. 4), and particularly for exegetes, who have responsibility for conveying that meaning to others. In a world of 'interpretive fragmentation' (p. 5) where Christians also argue about Scripture, Lynskey turns to Tyconius for *ressourcement*, so that 'the church can humbly and critically listen to biblical exegetes of the past' (p. 6) for present direction. In this project, Tyconius' marginality is an important factor: as an African Christian drawn into a European narrative of Christian history; as a member of the Donatist Church but atypical within it and as a neglected theologian whose ideas can stand alone without the overlay of his own, more illustrious, interpreter.

Lynskey's study is divided into two uneven halves. Part I first introduces the work's purpose and method, before offering a lengthier second chapter on Tyconius and his North African context. Part II comprises five chapters, treating the key ecclesiological motifs of the *Liber*, and the hermeneutical principles which are their counterpart. Thus chapter III surveys the motif of the Church as Body of Christ, and the 'ontological hermeneutics' which flow from it, whereby the ecclesial reader comprehends his or her identity within that Body, and in relation to its Head. Chapter IV explores the Church as a bipartite body, and

'transformational hermeneutics', which challenge the reader to a process of inner conversion within a Church which is moving towards eschatological judgement. Chapter v examines the Church as spiritual world, and 'spiritual-spatial hermeneutics', through which the reader grows in wisdom, by cooperating with the movement of the Holy Spirit in a right reading of the inspired text. Chapter vi looks at the Church as universal people of God, and 'ecumenical hermeneutics', whereby the interpreter reads in a way which is 'communal, contextual, catholic and conciliatory' (p. 273). Chapter vii scrutinises the Church as eschatological community, and 'eschatological hermeneutics', in which the reader locates him or herself in the 'total history' of salvation, whose consummation the Church presently anticipates. A short conclusion recapitulates each of these hermeneutical 'trajectories', suggesting their applicability in contemporary biblical exegesis, and avenues for further Tyconian research.

Lynskey writes at length and in microscopic detail; the careful structuring of the book through numbered headings and subheadings is a welcome aid to the reader. Taking ecclesiology and hermeneutics by turns in chapters iii–vii, Lynskey's exposition can sometimes feel repetitive, where textual material viewed in one context is then reviewed in another; but this is part of the study's overall commitment to grand argument from granular evidence. As such, Lynskey's book is extremely citational, both in the body of the text and in its very extensive footnotes. Some of these amount to full reference lists of a word or phrase in the Tyconian *corpus*, and overload the text on page. Their usefulness for subsequent textual work is undeniable, but they might be better situated in an appendix. Through the study, Lynskey also exhibits a huge quantity of secondary scholarship, casting a wide net over patristic study, contemporary hermeneutics and linguistics, quoted in multiple languages.

Some omissions in an otherwise impressively researched study stand out. Chapter ii offers a portrait of Tyconius' 'personal profile' within a broader picture of North African Christianity; but the textual history of the *Liber* within this life and wider context is largely bypassed. Similarly, the narrative progression of the *Liber* gets rather lost in Lynskey's thematic analysis: even though chapters iii–vii follow the 'general' flow of Tyconius' rules (p. 17), they garner material from across the text as a whole. One must accept that this is not primarily a historical study, or a commentary, but something more synthetic and theologically constructive. For a reader less familiar with contemporary biblical hermeneutics, the material referenced in the conclusion comes as a helpful key, but very late. A fuller walk through this area in the body of the introduction, together with a review of recent Tyconian studies (otherwise lacking, unless one deciphers the footnotes), would help situate this study, and its significance, more transparently in a space between several disciplines. Finally, in a book which touches on the idea of the 'sacramental' in its meditations on Tyconian 'total history', the absence of church order and sacraments elsewhere in its reading of the *Liber* is striking. This may be to impose an Augustinian lens on a text which is otherwise preoccupied; but if these topics are absent from a work originating in a community defined by sacramental dispute, this may itself be worthy of enquiry. These *caveats* aside, Lynskey presents an unusual and provocative hermeneutic, drawn from an ancient source, with meticulous erudition and theological conviction.