

Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation. Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday, edited by Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. Pp. xvi + 351.*

This festschrift honoring the Reformation scholar David Steinmetz makes a significant contribution to the study of biblical interpretation during the Reformation period. Apart from an honorary preface, a concluding chapter by the editors on the significance of precritical exegesis, and a bibliography of the honoree, the volume contains fifteen essays organized under three major headings: The Medieval and Renaissance Background; Exegesis and Interpretation in the Early Reformation; and Continuity and Change in Mid-Sixteenth Century Biblical Interpretation.

The three essays in Part 1 (The Medieval and Renaissance Background) deal with biblical interpretation during the Reformation period viewed from the perspective of the Middle Ages (Richard Muller); Johannes Trithemius' fourfold exegetical method on the eve of the Reformation (Karlfried Froehlich); and Erasmus's influence on Zwingli and Bullinger in the exegesis of Matt. 11:28-30 (John B. Payne). Muller's essay also serves an extended preface to the entire volume, arguing that most studies of Reformation hermeneutics have failed to explore precursors and interconnections between different exegetes of that period.

Part 2 (Exegesis and Interpretation in the Early Reformation) provides studies of specific instances of exegesis by five different interpreters of the Reformation era: Luther's interpretation of Psalm 116 (Kenneth Hagen); Hübmaier's exegesis of Matt. 16:18-19 (Carl M. Leth); Melancthon's 1522 Annotations on Romans (Timothy Wengert); Martin Bucer's view of the chronology of John 5-7 (Irena Backus); and Zwingli on John 6:63, a crucial text for Zwingli's eucharistic debate with Luther (W. P. Stephens). All of these essays fill important gaps in Reformation and Medieval exegesis, with careful attention being given to the polemical context in which interpretation took place.

Part 3 (Continuity and Change in Mid-Sixteenth Century Biblical Interpretation) proceeds to investigate exegetical practices of later generations of Reformers. In "The Spiritual Man Judges All Things," one of the most fascinating essays of the entire volume, Susan Schreiner considers Calvin and the exegetical debate about certainty in the Reformation. As Schreiner demonstrates, Calvin recognized the difficulty in appealing to the work of the Spirit as a ground of certainty. She also notes the difficulty of grounding the Protestant case in a context where argument was typically supported by traditional or ecclesiastical authorities. Other studies deal with Musculus' interpretation of John's story of the woman taken in adultery (Craig Farmer); Bullinger's exegetical method in relation to Calvin's (Joel Kok); Vermigli's allegorical approach to OT exegesis (John Thompson); Ursinus's exposition of Exod. 20:8-11 (Lyle Bierma); Zanchi's exegesis of Hosea 1-3 (John Farthing); and Selnecker's interpretation of Psalms 8, 22, and 110 (Robert Kolb). While the volume is perhaps too technical to be of interest to the general reader, those with special interest in hermeneutics, and here especially those interested in Reformation scholarship, will find the present work to be a highly suggestive work that fills a major gap in the study of the history of biblical interpretation.

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