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Book Review: Reading the Bible Theologically

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Cyril's Greek is difficult enough, but there are terms that are vital to his exegesis that challenge any reader or interpreter. Thankfully, in his preface, Lunn not only alerts the reader to the underlying Greek vocabulary but also gives his reasons for choosing one possible translation over another. Scholars familiar with Cyril will be aware of different readings of Cyril's exegesis, based on particular understandings of what he means when he uses technical terms. Competing interpretations of Cyril rest on (and often determine) how these terms are understood and, therefore, translated. Lunn bases his choice of English vocabulary on both lexical evidence and recent scholarship. Providing this information upfront affords the English-only reader with additional resources regarding Cyril's exegesis. Lunn's awareness of the theological issues at stake and the varied uses of technical terms in the commentary give the reader confidence.

To conclude, the translation is most helpful as it gives English readers the first opportunity to delve into Cyril's exegesis of the Pentateuch. Cyril is a representative biblical interpreter from the ancient church. He is an example of how Christians in the Alexandrian tradition read and understood the Pentateuch. He is also a pastor whose primary responsibility was interpreting the Bible for the church, not for scholarship. Readers discover both Cyril's methodology and the conclusions he garnered from reading the Law of Moses. These conclusions were, in his estimation, beneficial to the Christian congregation. Lunn's translation and Hillis's interpretation are rich contributions both to patristics scholarship and to the church. Pastors can discover the rich tradition of early Christian Christological interpretation of the Old Testament and perhaps understand more fully Jesus's statement, "Moses wrote of me."

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Darren Sarisky. *Reading the Bible Theologically*. Current Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xix + 407 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1108497480. \$120.00.

Drawing on the late John Webster's question posed to theological studies, one might interrogate recent approaches to Scripture and theology as follows: What makes theological exegesis "theological"? and What makes the theological interpretation of Scripture "theological"? *Reading the Bible Theologically* is Darren Sarisky's attempt to answer. Like Webster's own response, Sarisky believes that "theological reading" of Scripture, at its most basic level, must understand both the biblical text and the reader in relation to God (p. xi). Sarisky serves as Associate Fellow and Departmental Lecturer in Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford,

and he comes to this task well familiar with the field as a prominent contributor, represented principally by his *Scriptural Interpretation: A Theological Exploration* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

With *Reading the Bible Theologically*, Sarisky purposes “to ascertain what the text signifies about divine reality and how this reality enfolds readers themselves” (p. 2). To accomplish his goal, Sarisky divides the monograph into two parts: “The Model of Augustine” (Part 1) and “A Constructive Proposal” (Part 2). In chapter 1, “The Reader, Redemption, and Signs,” Sarisky gleans from Augustine the idea that biblical words are a “species of signs” that “allow something to be known” (pp. 96–97). In addition, Scripture envisions an “implied reader” who possesses a set of predispositions (e.g., faith) and human capacities (i.e., embodied-souls), which are uniquely designed for divine grace to work its proper ends in the reader, through the mediate access the Bible supplies (pp. 80–81). Chapter 2, “Between *Scientia* and the Trinity,” then draws upon Augustine’s case for the incarnation to serve as the transition from the *scientia* (sensory knowledge) of the biblical text that gives way to the *sapientia* (the direct contemplation of the eternal God and his truth), a movement Augustine identifies as the *telos* of humanity.

The transition to Part 2 flows from Augustine’s theological ontology of the text and the reader and his “substantive” account of the practice of Bible reading. This sets the parameters within which interpretive questions, answers, and strategies should be posed (p. 142). To demonstrate that method, Sarisky examines Spinoza’s impact upon contemporary biblical interpretation in chapter 3, “In Contradistinction to Naturalism.” Here he shows how Spinoza’s “procedural,” “naturalist” method relegates theology to what is *explained*, instead of that which *explains* (p. 157), whereby the Bible reader becomes simply “a self-determining, textual analyst” (p. 165). In contrast, Sarisky responds with chapter 4, “Faith and the Ecclesial Community,” to argue that faith renders the reader “receptive to the text’s claims because a theological reader has the capacity to exercise faith in the God who discloses himself through the text” (p. 189). Moreover, the practice of faith-filled reading should conduct itself in its God-given social location of ecclesial life (pp. 211–13).

In chapter 5, “The Bible and Theological Semiotics,” Sarisky carefully considers how to relate the text (“what is written”) and its subject matter (“what is written about,” p. 242). Then the final chapter, “Exegetical Ends and Means,” puts forward three stages of theological reading (*explicatio, meditatio, applicatio*) to serve Sarisky’s stated goal of interpretation, which is “the movement of attending to God via the text” (pp. 287, 294). Sarisky closes the monograph with an extended response to the charge of eisegesis, something he identifies as probably the strongest objection to his

proposal (p. 332). He addresses this issue in familiar ways already on display in the prior chapters, and then ends the book in a modest tone, hopeful that his work can carve out a healthier path for the ongoing discussions and practice of “reading the Bible theologically.”

Sarisky has made a valued contribution to the “Current Issues in Theology” series. His case is well-made, from his exhaustive engagement with the diverse abundance of secondary literature to his careful, methodical working through several of the central points of discussion. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Sarisky’s proposal emerges in his relentless devotion to his overarching claim: Theology does, indeed, make a difference to reading the Bible when the text and the reader are theologically understood. In this respect, the reward of Sarisky’s monograph is the clear, rigorous articulation and defense of the necessity of a “theological ontology” for the biblical text and the reader, due to Scripture’s own claims.

Anyone who embarks upon the challenge of *tolle, lege* will find this volume a deeply thought-out and instructive read that unashamedly desires to confess and advance the peculiar endeavor of Christian, theological reading of the Bible. This text would yield rich conversation for students and teachers in graduate and doctoral level settings, ranging from courses/seminars concerned with hermeneutics to bibliology to theological method. It is highly recommended for those with an interest in relating Scripture and theology and will likely become a new standard contribution to the field.

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Han-Luen Kantzer Komline. *Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. xv + 469 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-0190948801. \$125.00

Han-Luen Kantzer Komline’s *Augustine on the Will* is a valuable contribution to the broader discussion of the nature and freedom of the will. It highlights the fact that multiple major views of the will in the history of Western thought draw on significant ideas in Augustine. Kantzer Komline approaches Augustine’s thought chronologically and developmentally and analyzes the progression of his conception of the will. Though she recognizes that a *strict* chronology would excise too many significant works, she adopts a generally chronological approach that allows for a debatable dating of some primary texts (pp. 7–8).

Kantzer Komline’s work divides neatly into two sections. The first three chapters provide an extensive survey of the development of Augustine’s thought on the will from *Soliliquia* (386/87) and *De Libero Arbitrio*