



Reviews

Short Reviews

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**Introducing Medieval Biblical
Interpretation: The Senses of
Scripture in Premodern Exegesis**

by Ian Christopher Levy

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 320 pp.
\$29.99. ISBN 978-0-80-104880-7.

THIS VOLUME INTRODUCES the thought of key interpreters of Scripture from nearly a millennium of Western intellectual history. Though there is a brief opening overview of church fathers reaching back to Origen, Levy's real tale picks up with

Bede the Venerable in the seventh century and concludes with Jean Gerson in the fifteenth. The book does not attempt to be exhaustive either in its catalog of interpreters or in its account of their oeuvres, relying instead on a strategy of carefully selecting figures who are representative, influential, and acknowledged as masters of their arts, and then providing sample examinations of their key works. Levy says that “the continuity inherent in this sacred tradition proved to be an internal guide” (p. xi) to which authors and texts should be included. While the focus is on figures and texts, made present in generous quotations which allow readers to encounter the medieval voices directly, Levy’s historical narration also remains alert to the rise and fall of movements and schools of thought. He charts the *Glossa Ordinaria*’s rise to dominance, for example; consistently notes the distinction between monastic and scholastic settings; and traces the emergence of new interpretive techniques. There are notable themes that traverse the entire book (the senses of Scripture is prominent); but Levy does not press any grand narrative onto the material.

Levy is a clear and engaging writer, constantly aware of the needs of his readers. Writing for “an age dominated by the historical-critical method” (p. 1), Levy seeks to commend “the fecundity of meaning to be discovered through the techniques of medieval hermeneutics” (p. 3). He does not conceal the theological presuppositions of these pre-modern interpreters: they came to the sacred text expecting that the living God who authored it would use it to draw them into sanctifying communion. Paraphrasing Nicholas of Lyra, Levy suggests that this affective engagement with Scripture manifests a “hermeneutics of sanctity” (p. 233) in which the good reader consents to be transformed by God’s word. Intentionally heavy on exposition and light on hermeneutical theory (there is a smattering of Gadamer in the conclusion), the strength of *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation* is that it leads readers into an entire epoch of exegesis, delivering impressively on the promise of its title.

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