

BOOK REVIEW

Issues of Interpretation: Texts, Images, Rites. Edited by CARLO ALTINI, PHILIPPE HOFFMANN, and JÖRG RÜPKE. Stuttgart, DE: Steiner, 2018. Pp. 276. Paperback, \$66.64. ISBN 978-3-515-11621-3.

This is an engaging book both for its focus on hermeneutics and for its interesting contributions. The editors in the introduction encourage a deep reflection on hermeneutics as useful for the renovation of the humanities, with contributions from philosophy, philology, religious studies and anthropology. I myself tried to highlight the relevance of patristic exegesis in contemporary hermeneutics in *Religion and Theology*, 22 (2015) 100–132, received by Oda Wischmeyer's *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016. Given the tight word limit, I focus on the chapters that deal with antiquity.

Harry Maier investigates visual cues in Paul's letters. He uses the categories of imagery as critical to persuasion in ancient rhetoric, as well as much gnoseological theories in ancient philosophy. Indeed, rhetoric and philosophy were known to Paul, as Hans-Dieter Betz, Margaret Mitchell, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Ilaria Ramelli, George van Kooten, Runar Thorsteinsson and others have indicated. Maier considers the marks of Christ's suffering on Paul (Gal 6:17) and the portrayal of Christ as crucified (Gal 3:1). In Philippians 2:10, on knees bowing and tongues confessing the lordship of Jesus, Paul invokes memories of imperial imagery. The image of Christ's triumph and Paul as a sacrifice are aptly pointed out in 2Corinthians 2:14 and 1Corinthians 4:9, along with the apostles' humiliation as "refuse" and "filth" of the world (1Cor 4:8–13). Maier forcefully argues his conclusion, that Paul "has carefully represented himself and his sufferings for the highest emotional effect" (37).

Jörg Rüpke deals with the first Christian commentary on a Biblical book in ancient Rome: Hippolytus' commentary on Daniel. Warning against the hermeneutical circle at work in the interpretation of Hippolytus and his works, Rüpke sides with Allen Brent (misspelled "Allan," 44) and others that one author, Hippolytus, wrote books, among which are exegetical treatises, in the early 3rd centu-

ry in Rome.¹ I highlighted strong affinities between Hippolytus' Christology and that of his contemporary, the Christian Middle Platonist Bardaisan.² Remarkably, like Bardaisan, Clement and Origen, Hippolytus conceptualized Christ-Logos-Nous as God's noetic form.³ Rüpke identifies the target of the commentary with a religious minority in a relatively peaceful time, during a process of institutionalization of Christianity. He plausibly individuates in 4.8.7 a reference to Caracalla's granting of citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire (54). The definition of *ekklēsia* as "the ensemble of holy persons who are citizens / behave [*politeuomenōn*] in the truth" (1.18) reminds me of Paul's use of *politeuma* (Phil 3:20).⁴ Hippolytus may have remembered Paul and perhaps also the use of *politeuma* as "minority" in his day, used for the Jews but, in Hippolytus, for the Christians (*khrōnōn* should read *khrōnōn*: 46; in other words, the smooth breathing on the first omicron should be replaced by an acute accent).

Adrian Lecerf deals with physical allegory in Arnobius and Maternus, and their allusions to Porphyry as allegorist. The history of philosophical allegoresis is briefly summarized (I argued for its philosophical character in Stoicism and Platonism in *Allegoria: L'età classica*, Milan: Vita&Pensiero 2004; "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception," *IJCT* 18 [2011] 335–371). Physical allegoresis, used by Porphyry (61) and criticized by Arnobius (63), derives, I add, from Stoic allegoresis, which, lacking a transcendental plane, reduced

¹ On this and the statue of Hippolytus with his works: my "La Chiesa di Roma in età severiana," *RSCI* 54 (2000) 13–29.

² "The Body of Christ as Imperishable Wood: Hippolytus and Bardaisan's Complex Christology," forthcoming in the Proceedings of the *12th Symposium Syriacum 2016*, ed. Emidio Vergani, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 2019. Bardaisan's Middle Platonism is argued for in my *Bardaisan*, Piscataway, 2009; on Hippolytus' controversial testimony on Bardaisan, here 62.

³ See Jackson Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," *VigChr* 66 (2012), 341–361; Dragos Giulea, "The Logos as the Noetic Form of God," *ETL* 92 (2016) 407–437; Bogdan Bucur, "Scholarly Frameworks for Reading Irenaeus," *VigChr* 72 (2018) 255–282: 258–262; my "The Logos/Nous One-Many between 'Pagan' and Christian Platonism: Bardaisan, Clement, Origen, and Plotinus," *Studia Patristica*, ed. Josef Lössl, forthcoming.

⁴ Discussed in my "Nostra autem conversatio in caelis est," *Sileno* 31 (2005) 139–158; for Greek: "From the City of Zeus to the City of God: Stoic to Christian 'Urban' Religious Philosophy," invited lecture, Erfurt University 29 June 2018; "Classical and Patristic Philosophical Ideas of Theopolis between Platonism and Stoicism," in *International Conference on Hellenic Political Philosophy*, Center for Hellenic Studies, 2019, forthcoming.

the gods to physical elements.⁵ Lecerf's hypothesis that Porphyry (69) compiled a doxography of the exegesis of the gods in Plato, known to Arnobius, Macrobius, Hermias and Sallustius, is sound; I suspect that Gregory Nyssen, a follower of Origen and philosophically minded, also knew it (see my "Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul (and the Restoration): From Plato to Origen," in *Exploring Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. Anna Marmodoro and Neil McLynn, Oxford: OUP, 2018, 110–141).

I agree that "certains arguments des Chrétiens deviennent partagés par les païens eux-mêmes" (71); I endeavored to demonstrate this in several cases, for example with Origen's innovative notion of hypostasis as individual substance, taken over by Porphyry and later Platonists;⁶ or with the theories of apokatastasis and the "first," eternal body in Proclus, which are likely influenced by Origen,⁷ and with the patristic doctrine of apokatastasis as universal salvation, which seems to have impacted later Platonic theories of apokatastasis (as I partially argued in "The Debate on Apokatastasis in 'Pagan' and Christian Platonists," *ICS* 33-4 [2008–9] 201–234 and "The Reception of Origen's Thought in Western Theological and Philosophical Traditions," in *Origeniana Undecima*, ed. Anders Jacobsen, Leuven: Peeters, 2016, 443–467, systematically in a future monograph on philosophical notions of apokatastasis from ancient to late antiquity). I also agree concerning the line traced by Lecerf from Porphyry to Iamblichus to Symmachus on the motto, *uno itinere non potent perveniri ad tam grande secretum* (72).⁸

Ghislain Casas addresses the interpretation of the concept of hierarchy in Dionysius' *Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, until Eriugena and Aquinas. He hypothesises it does not derive from "pagan" Neoplatonism (77). Indeed, I think Dionysius' idea of *ιεραρχία* depends on Origen's notion of *archai* in *Peri archôn*, identified with God, as I argued in "Origen, Greek Philosophy" and the monograph in preparation. Hence, "hierarchy" is the sacred principle of creation, God

⁵ As pointed out in my "The Philosophical Role of Allegoresis as a Mediator between *Physikē* and *Theologia*," *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 12 (2013) 9–26; "Allegorising and Philosophising," in *Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography*, forthcoming.

⁶ "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis," *HTR* 105.3 (2012) 302–350; further in the monograph on Origen in preparation.

⁷ "Proclus and Christian Neoplatonism," in *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. Mikonja Knežević, Alhambra, CA: Sebastian, 2015, 37–70; "Proclus and Apokatastasis," in *Proclus and His Legacy*, eds. David Butorac and Danielle Layne, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017, 95–122.

⁸ My analysis in "Vie diverse all'unico mistero", *RIL* 139 (2005) 455–483; cf. "L'inedito *Pros basilea* di Temistio," in collaboration with Eugenio Amato, *ByzZ* 99 (2006) 1–67.

and the sacred order (*taxis hiera*, CH 3.1) of creation, coming from God and returning to God.⁹

Elisabeth Boncour, the author of a 2014 dissertation on Eckhart as a reader of Origen,¹⁰ traces Origen's influence on Eckhart's exegetical principles. Eckhart devalues Scripture's literal sense and adopts Maimonides' guide as reference work, but the ontological-gnoseological parallel, the birth of Christ in the soul,¹¹ and the tripartition of ethics, physics and epoptics as found also in Scripture are common to both.¹² Boncour is right that, since Christ subsumes all human nature, he effects the divination of human nature (116). This is the physical assumption by Gregory Nyssen, as I showed in *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Also, hints at apokatastasis in Eckhart (highlighted in my *A Larger Hope? Universal Salvation in Christianity from the Origins to Julian of Norwich*, pref. Richard Bauckham, Cascade Books, 2019) seem to me to go back to Origen and his tradition and are linked to both theologians' exegetical principles.

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⁹ See my "Origen, Evagrius, and Dionysios," in *Oxford Handbook to Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. Mark Edwards, Oxford: OUP, 2019, Ch. 5.

¹⁰ See also Elisa Rubino, "Ein gröz meister: Eckhart e Origene," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart, II*, ed. Loris Sturlese, Fribourg: Academic, 2012, 141–165.

¹¹ Traced back to Origen in my "Mysticism and Mystic Apophaticism in Middle and Neoplatonism across Judaism, 'Paganism' and Christianity," in *Constructions of Mysticism as a Universal*, ed. Annette Wilke, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018.

¹² Examined in my *Origen*, Ch. 4.