

Erickson challenges one's thinking, especially in the sense that he provides so many factors important to sound theological reflection and clarity. Thankfully, he not only brings a great deal of eminence and fairness, evidenced by a thorough acquaintance with the writings of all of the major participants, to his analysis and critiques, but he has also invoked a wealth of experience with not only theology, but also philosophy, historical theology, biblical exegesis, and applied theology. This readable volume is not only must reading for those who are interested in Trinity and feminist issues from an evangelical perspective, but is also an outstanding exhibit of sound theological methodology.

While one may disagree with Erickson's conclusions (on every central issue in the debate he has concluded that the prevailing evidence supports the "Equivalent-Authority View"), any attentive reader should come away from reading this work with two important senses: they will know that they have been exposed to an enriching theological tutorial, and been empowered to be more ably analytical and theologically critical.

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Fladerer, Ludwig. *Augustinus als Exeget: Zu seinen Kommentaren des Galaterbriefes und der Genesis*. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010. 261 pp. Paper, \$80.00.

Augustine scholarship has at its disposal a multitude of volumes written from the perspective of historical theology and church history, typically addressing a specific theological concern. Ludwig Fladerer in *Augustinus als Exeget: Zu seinen Kommentaren des Galaterbriefes und der Genesis* presents a different approach. He endeavors to better understand the role of Augustine as biblical exegete, and does this from the perspective of a philologist with interest in semiotics. He is, therefore, interested in how Augustine uses words as signs, and in the meanings that can be mined from understanding the structures comprising his Bible commentaries.

The thrust of Fladerer's work is that the rhetorical and linguistic strategies used by Augustine to address practical concerns in his Bible commentaries indicate a Neoplatonic-friendly "semiotic step-model" (233), which would later come to fruition in his renowned discussion of things and signs in *De doctrina christiana*. He finds he can best demonstrate this by using Augustine's three Genesis commentaries (*De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*, and *De Genesi ad litteram*), in which the early church theologian discusses both the verbal layer of the text and the layer of meaning it is meant to signify. Thus it is only peripherally that Fladerer's concern is with Augustine's theology of creation. This becomes clear when he explains what Augustine's commentary on Galatians has to do with his commentary on Genesis: in terms of content, nothing; in terms of form and method, much.

Indeed, Fladerer feels that a comparative study is the best means to achieve his aim. The problem is that Augustine's contemporaries were generally

not interested in producing works of exegesis on the creation narrative. Resourcefully, the philologist first turns to Augustine's commentary on Galatians, for which a comparison presents itself in Gaius Marius Victorinus, Ambrose, and Jerome; thus Fladerer's curious first sixty pages on Augustine's commentary on Galatians. The remainder and bulk of the work examines Augustine's three Genesis commentaries in turn, evaluating them based on the conclusions derived from the Galatians comparative study.

Being a work in the area of semiotics, *Augustinus als Exeget* is not what a historical or systematic theologian might be accustomed. There are, however, some aspects of the volume that are of value to those not enamored by the call of semiotics. For example, discussion of each commentary is preceded by an overview of the critical literature for that commentary and some of the issues each is concerned. Further, what the philological study enables one to see are words, phrases, and patterns that indicate where Augustine's emphases lay, as well as his method in crafting exegetical arguments.

The largest criticism a theologian uninterested in semiotics might be able to make of the work is one of methodology. That is to say, the extreme atomization that results from concentrating on individual words, phrases, and microstructures seems ineffective in the long term. Sometimes the forest is lost, and even the trees themselves, for such intense interest in the leaves and branches. Augustine as an exegete can only be truly understood when one takes stock of the entire stream of his argument. What views is he battling? What are his hermeneutical presuppositions that emerge amid discussion of specific issues? What *is* the content of Augustine's creation theology, and what is it attempting to achieve? How did this view develop and change over time? A point of fatality in Fladerer's argument is his attempt to analyze structures in Augustine's commentaries in order to ascertain his semiotic model, outlining the relationship between the verbal and the signified without letting Augustine speak for himself in the broad "literal" sense; but that is perhaps because Fladerer is not too keen on the literal.

A case in point: one of Fladerer's conclusions is the irrelevance of the literal for Augustine as an exegete (e.g., 175-176). He claims that the "goal of exegesis is not primarily information, but conversion. Even in his commentaries, Augustine does not wish to delve into historical criticism, because the *historia* of the Bible only presents transitory value" (234). Thus Augustine is concerned not merely with the words of the biblical text but with deeper meanings, especially as they serve to convert the reader's heart and mind. Fladerer's assertion is overly simplistic, however, ignoring the historical development of the *content* of Augustine's creation theology, and what Augustine himself wrote about this development.

It is true that the first sentence of *De Genensis ad litteram* proposes that all Scripture has a figurative meaning. Nevertheless, it also proposes that Scripture has a definite literal meaning as well, despite an apparent "polyvalence" as

the philologist suggests (234). In Book I, Augustine explicitly discusses the fact that his earlier *anti-Manichean* Genesis commentary was an avoidance tactic, used because he did not, at that time, have an adequate understanding of the “literal” meaning. With the passing of time, Augustine claims, the importance and attainability of the task of understanding the literal meaning became evident to him. Augustine makes it clear through painful repetition (a structural feature that Fladerer should have picked up on) that the figurative meaning must be grounded in the historical reality presented by the literal meaning of the text (e.g., *De Gen. ad lit.* VIII; IX.12.20).

While he sometimes claims that his interpretation of the literal meaning is tentative, Augustine is a long way from saying that the literal meaning is irrelevant. In his later commentary, in addition to suggesting what the literal meaning is, he is very clear in saying what the literal meaning definitely is *not* because he knows that it can have destructive consequences. If the literal were irrelevant, he would have had no problem with the literal meanings proposed by the Manicheans with whom he formerly shared company—meanings which the commentary is clearly meant to counter. It is not an issue of the importance of either one or the other for Augustine, but an issue of both/and. The real issue to explore is the question, What does “literal” mean for Augustine? More useful than scrutinizing words, phrases, and minute structures would be an examination of the exegete’s broad hermeneutical presuppositions. It is essential to understand that for Augustine “literal” might not mean “verbally equivalent” or “univocal,” but it does mean “historically real.”

As a work in philology, *Augustinus als Exeget* seems rather impressive to a theologian not well acquainted with the theories and debates of the field of semiotics. Within its own field, it may well be an innovative and useful work worth acquiring. But for those interested in historical-theological matters, who seek a work with clear-cut summaries and theological implications, *Augustinus als Exeget* is a volume that one might be content merely to peruse, as it seems to obfuscate more than enlighten.

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Halpern, Baruch, and André Lemaire, eds. Matthew J. Adams, assoc. ed. *The Books of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 129. Leiden: Brill, 2010. xvi + 710 pp. Cloth, \$262.00.

The book under review, *The Books of Kings*, edited by Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire, appears as volume 129 in the Supplements to the Vetus Testamentum series and, following the usual practice of this esteemed publication by Brill, presents a collection of studies focusing on a particular biblical theme or book. The volume reviewed here addresses historical issues surrounding the books