

applied by the modern-day exegete. Far from being yet another book on hermeneutics, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers* is a refreshing approach toward identifying and applying the hermeneutic of Scripture.

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Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis, by Craig A. Carter. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018. xxiv + 279 pp. \$27.99.

In 1980 David Steinmetz wrote his famous essay “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” in which he argued that the classical and medieval theory of levels of meaning in the biblical text is better than the modern historical-critical theory of a single meaning because of the theological and philosophical foundations of both views. For four decades scholars have debated the validity of this argument and how it might look in practice. Craig Carter speaks to this debate in his book, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, and follows the path laid out previously by pre-modern advocates such as Hans Boersma, Matthew Levering, and especially John Webster. Craig Carter, who teaches at Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, argues that the academy, which has read the Bible according the historical-critical method, is a dead end and needs to be reformed according to the Tradition’s exegesis, dogma, and metaphysics.

Carter appreciates the various attempts at theological retrieval that have been attempted in the last several decades, but contends that the more helpful ones are those that seek to root retrieval in the Tradition’s metaphysics, exegesis, and dogma. The correct metaphysic (which Carter describes as Christian Platonism) provides the correct notions of God and Scripture by which one can properly understand inspiration and properly perform exegesis. The dogmas of Trinitarian Christianity as found in the early church creeds, and particularly those dogmas related to the person of Christ, provide the framework by which to understand metaphysics and hermeneutics. In short, Carter contends that because of the Trinitarian metaphysics of the Great Tradition and through the guidance of creedal orthodoxy classic interpretation has always allowed for a fuller meaning under the guidance of the Spirit without degenerating into interpretive anarchy. It is Carter’s purpose to first describe the theological hermeneutics behind this suggestion and then explain how this exegesis looks in practice.

When discussing the theology of Scripture, the main point is that Scripture is different from other books because it is inspired and thus has a unique character where God speaks in and through it. Beyond this, we need to shake free of modern metaphysical assumptions and return to classical notions of God and Scripture. Christian Platonism

understands that humans can participate in the divine except there is a gulf that can only be overcome by God's condescension and uniting to us through Christ by grace. Carter espouses Platonism because he sees it as the closest metaphysic to Christianity since it was a metaphysic of anti-materialism, anti-mechanism, anti-nominalism, anti-relativism, and anti-skepticism. In other words, Christians could agree with these teleological ideas, they just had to then add/correct them with biblical revelation. Christian Platonism, then, draws together a philosophical account of the truth of reality with a theological account of the revelation of God's saving work.

According to Carter, the standard historical-critical history that premodern exegesis was childish and needed modern exegesis in order to mature is full of historical problems and needs to be discarded. As one example, the old understanding that there were two widely divergent early Christian exegetical schools in Antioch (literal advocates) and Alexandria (allegorical advocates) is historically oversimplified. Recent scholarship has shown that both accepted literal and allegorical interpretation as mutually necessary. The issue was not literal versus allegorical. Simplistically put, Antioch was concerned that Alexandria was not sufficiently rooting their allegory in the literal meaning, and Alexandria was concerned that Antioch was not sufficiently moving beyond the literal to the spiritual meaning. This scholarship argues that premodern orthodoxy was actually much more unified. Carter suggests that with the Enlightenment, and especially after Kant, the old metaphysics had to be cast off, special revelation had to be rejected, and natural history became all there is. This is the context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theology. Modern theology is based on a false conception of reality which yields a new type of historical criticism and revisionist theologies. Carter argues that the history of biblical interpretation must regard modernity (and Enlightenment in particular) as a wrong turn.

What then should exegesis look like? Carter gives space to the assertion that the Bible needs to be read as a unity centered on Jesus Christ. He sees three parts to this idea. First, biblical interpretation is a spiritual discipline. Second, the apostles are our models. And third, the rule of faith is the guide. This assumes a unity of Scripture and that the rule of faith sets a boundary for what Scripture may say when spiritually interpreted. The literal sense controls meaning but not to the extent that it disallows a Christological, spiritual, or *sensus plenior* meaning. Carter argues that, at its best, the Great Tradition saw the spiritual sense located within the literal. Calvin, and various post-Reformation divines, called this the plain meaning.

Carter gives two important theses regarding the relation of the spiritual and literal and how these are rooted in a Christian metaphysic. First, "the spiritual meaning of the text often goes beyond the limits of what the literal sense says, but all spiritual meaning must be consistent with, and grow out of, the literal sense of the text (1 Pet 1:10–12)" (170). Second, "all meaning is found in the plain sense, which can be understood as a combination of the literal and spiritual senses, which are

unified by Jesus Christ as the great theme and center of the Old and New Testaments understood as one book (Luke 24:27)" (176). The Reformers, like the Antiochenes and even Aquinas, were refining the Tradition, not trying to create a new one. They were trying to rein in the excesses of spiritual interpretation insufficiently grounded in the literal.

Thus, for Carter, premodern exegesis was genius because "it produced classic orthodoxy, has a clear focus on God as the subject matter being studied, and employs the method of contemplating the self-revelation of God in Holy Scripture" (216). Biblical studies, like history, has tried to perform its skill from within a narrow understanding of that skill. They have forgotten that Christ is the *res* of all Scripture's *sigma*.

In the discussion of theological retrieval and theological hermeneutics, Carter's work is a boon. He helpfully lays out not just the fact that there is a difference between how exegesis is done in the modern academy and how it has been done in the historical church, but he lays out an explanation for why this is the case. This is why Carter can be considered apart from the "theological interpretation of Scripture" (TIS) movement, while at the same time appreciating much of it. Carter is well aware of the substantive arguments for and against TIS by authors such as Kevin Vanhoozer and D. A. Carson, and even engages directly with these two men. In fact, Carter considers Vanhoozer, Carson, John Stott, J. Alec Motyer, James Hamilton Jr. and many other present-day exegetes as advocates and exemplars of the kind of exegesis he is promoting.

In my opinion, there are three main strengths of the book. First, Carter helpfully engages, rejects, and modifies the various forms of retrieval rather than merely accepting or rejecting them out of hand. Second, Carter has given a constructive view of how the spiritual is rooted in the literal (via metaphysics and classic Trinitarianism). Third, the problem of bald literalism is not simply a rejection of Jesus's deity; it was a rejection of an entire metaphysic that could allow such a dogma or such an exegesis. The entire turn of biblical exegesis during the modern period was fundamentally wrong in its metaphysics, which led its exegesis and dogma off track. For any seeking to understand the debates over theological retrieval of Scripture, theological interpretation of Scripture, or if one is looking for a constructive approach to contemporary use of premodern exegesis, Carter's book is the first place to go.

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Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons, by Graham A. Cole. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 272 pp. \$40.00.

Against the Darkness is the latest volume in the Foundations of Evangelical Theology series edited by John S. Feinberg. The objective of