

Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church, by Michael A. G. Haykin. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011. 172 pp. \$16.99.

It can hardly be doubted that most present-day evangelicals have at best a cursory knowledge of the church fathers. For many, what is known about the Fathers has led them to view the Fathers with considerable suspicion and even hostility. The lives of the Fathers are rarely studied. Their writings are rarely read. Their exegesis and theological method is often criticized. In *Rediscovering the Church Fathers*, Michael Haykin hopes to offset these tendencies by providing an introductory guide to patristic study. For Haykin, rediscovering the church fathers is “a vital need for Evangelicals.” Their rediscovery is vital for several reasons. First, studying the church fathers “liberates us from the present” (p. 17). Examining the past helps us recognize our own presuppositions and prejudices that may color our theological method. Second, the Fathers “can provide us with a map for the Christian life” (p. 18). Examining the spiritual journeys of past Christians can serve as a guide for our own spiritual quest. Third, the church fathers “may also, in some cases, help us to understand the New Testament” (p. 19). A reading of the Fathers may help modern interpreters avoid anachronistic interpretations and other exegetical errors since many of the Fathers wrote in a cultural context more akin to the NT authors themselves. Fourth, historical investigation of the Fathers is important in light of the “bad press” the Fathers have received from critics of Christianity like those presented in *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (p. 20). Brown portrays the Fathers as men who intentionally distorted the true facts about Jesus and Christianity in order to deceive and control their contemporaries. Knowledge of the Fathers would make attacks on Christianity such as these appear ludicrous. Fifth, the Fathers can act as a guide in defending the faith (p. 22). The early church had to deal with attacks on the faith from Gnostics, Arians, Pelagians, and others. Errors like these exist today in one form or another, and the Fathers can help us know how to address them. Finally, reading the church fathers can be spiritually nurturing (p. 27). In most cases, the Fathers were pastors and theologians, men committed to understanding and applying the Scriptures to their lives and congregations. Their insights in these areas may prove valuable to the cultivation of spiritual virtues in own lives today.

Having made the case for studying the Fathers, Haykin devotes six chapters to case studies in the Fathers and one chapter to his own journey into patristic study. In the case studies, Haykin treats issues such as martyrdom, eucharistic piety, exegesis, and missions through the lives of select church fathers. The case studies include examinations of Ignatius of Antioch, the *Letter to Diognetus*, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Basil of Caesarea, and Patrick. The selection of those treated is both a strength and a weakness in this book. It is a strength in that most people are probably not familiar with a work such as the *Letter to Diognetus*. Furthermore, many people know who St. Patrick is but know little about

his actual life and ministry. Exposure to these patristic sources is helpful for the furtherance of patristic knowledge. However, the selection is a weakness in that there are a few conspicuous omissions. Though at times mentioned in passing, it is hard to imagine a patristic introduction that does not include discussions of Tertullian, Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, Clement of Alexandria, or John Chrysostom. The reader who wishes to find out who these men were and how they shaped the church will have to look elsewhere. One wonders if Haykin's chapter on how he was introduced to the church fathers could have been moved to an appendix, making room for at least one more examination on one of the above mentioned Fathers.

It is beyond the scope of this review to provide detailed assessment of Haykin's case studies. In brief, the case studies are intriguing and thought-provoking. Haykin's favorable assessment of Origen's exegesis, for instance, is bound to promote further study of the infamous "heretic" (Haykin would not classify Origen as such). The chapter on Ignatius makes an important correction to many stereotypes of martyrdom in the early church. Haykin's chapters on *The Letter to Diognetus* and on the eucharistic piety of Cyprian and Ambrose show some of the theological weaknesses that can be found in the Fathers. These discussions are the great strength of the book in that they model how to ask questions of the Fathers on specific issues. As such, this book is more of an introduction to the study of patristics than an introduction to the church fathers. Nevertheless, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers* is a valuable guide for those interested in studying the church fathers for themselves.

Timothy Scott

The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation, by John H. Sailhamer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2009. 632 pp. \$40.00.

In *The Meaning of the Pentateuch (MP)*, OT scholar John H. Sailhamer has written a substantial work on the Pentateuch attempting to outline his understanding of the meaning and purpose of the first five books of the Bible. Weighing in at 632 pages, this book is clearly the result of years of study in the OT and particularly in the Pentateuch.

The major argument of *MP* is that the Pentateuch has a compositional approach or a compositional strategy by which the material in the Pentateuch has been chosen and arranged to make an overarching point. For Sailhamer, "the meaning is not merely *in* the biblical book; the meaning *is* the book" as seen in its compositional structure (p. 73). This ultimate meaning, according to Sailhamer, is about living a life of faith in God based on a Messianic hope (pp. 28–29, 39, 605, 608).

MP consists of eleven chapters in three parts. Following a lengthy introduction, part one (pp. 59–218) is titled "Approaching the Text as