

she fails to mention, around the end of the second century. Further, her arguments for a secondary *pronoia* in the *Apocryphon* are rather weak and she seems over-optimistic about the capacity of choice offered to those engulfed in ignorance and darkness according to the same text. In addition, I think that Jewish apocalyptic texts and ideas were as important an influence as the Pauline tradition on the development of 'cosmic pessimism'. I also think she misreads the *Gospel of Judas* as lacking a message of salvation: that text stresses the perfect generation of the Gnostics to which even Judas will never attain. There are some minor errors (Theodotus was based in the east, not in Rome) and typos, but overall this is an impressive contribution to the contemporary rethinking of Gnosticism.

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*As the Bandit Will I Confess You: Luke 23,39–43 in Early Christian Interpretation.* By MARK GLEN BILBY. Pp. 371. (Cahiers de Biblia Patristica, 13.) Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 2013. ISBN 978 290 680 512 5. Paper n.p.

THIS is a book remarkable for both its detail and its range. Covering the late first century to 450 CE, the author examines the relationships between the Gospel accounts of the two thieves, and the treatment of the passage by a vast array of early Christian writers, Greek, Latin, and Syriac, in a variety of genres and under a multiplicity of headings. Indeed, it is one of the author's principal contentions that what a thorough examination of the reception of the passage demonstrates is just how varied were the interpretations of the elements of the passage and how varied its applications. The author helpfully gives an account of the indexes and electronic means he employed to search for references to the passage; the text is replete with extensive quotations in the original languages with accompanying translations; and the book concludes with a number of tables laying out texts, authorship, chronology, and approaches to the harmonization of the Gospel accounts. A scriptural index is provided, as is, critically for a book as detailed as this, one of texts and ancient authors, but unfortunately a subject index is

not. The clarity of writing, again critical for such a dense and complex book, is exemplary, and the author provides frequent summaries of his conclusions. His stated approach is to give an analysis which is both diachronic and synchronic.

In the first section of the book, the author deals with what he terms the emergence of the passage, and with its first reception, that honour going to Tatian's *Diatessaron*, while Tertullian has the first securely dated reference to it, and Origen is the first to quote from it. In the second part, he deals with the issue of the harmonization of the Lukan version of the incident, in which the two thieves diverge in their responses to Christ, with the Markan and Matthean versions, in which both revile Christ. He demonstrates that, in contrast to many modern biblical scholars' assessments of the patristic interpretations, the early readings of the passage do not fit neatly into two well-defined categories, those of chronological and sylleptical harmonization. He concludes, however, that in fact it was not synoptic dissonance which was the main concern of the Fathers but rather the apparent eschatological dissonance occasioned by Luke 23:43. In the 30 pages he devotes to eschatology, he deals with Origen, the first to address the topic, Eustathius and his intellectual heirs, Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers, and Epiphanius in his negative and Titus and Didymus in their positive responses to Origen; and he brings the discussion to a climax with Augustine and his Origen-like Platonism.

In the third part, the longest, the author takes up the many themes found in the texts pertaining to the good thief, the Fathers having depicted him as 'one of the faithful', as 'convert, catechumen, confessor, martyr', and 'as penitent'. The pages are replete with pithy observations about vocabulary, ideas and their transmission, and how the interpretations and applications reflect the changing theological and social contexts of the period. While the figures that emerge in their different ways as the most important are the ones we might expect, Origen, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Ephrem, one of the particular strengths of the book is its highlighting of the importance of the genre of liturgy for reception history, and another is its tracing, through terms and tropes and motifs, of the often surprisingly specific influences of the several traditions upon each other, influences frequently to be seen within a few years of the writing of the original text. Any claim to be able to make a hard and fast distinction between the Alexandrian and the Antiochene approaches is rejected. The Greek influence on the Latin tradition particularly, above all the influence

of Chrysostom, and of Golden-Mouth notably on Augustine, is clearly delineated. But pride of place is given to the Syriac tradition. On the basis of the 'interpersonal correspondence and intertextual patterns across place and time', 'bilingual Syria', the author opines, 'is probably *the* [italic in original] most creative and influential center of biblical interpretation in the 4th- and 5th-centuries' (p. 319).

This book then is a model of thoroughness, and a rich resource for anyone interested both in the reception history of this most intriguing of Lukan passages and in reception history more generally.

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*The Beauty of God's Presence in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012.* Edited by JANET ELAINE RUTHERFORD. Pp. 288. Illustrated. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014. ISBN 978 1 84682 529 3. £50.

It is surely one of the hardest of briefs to make a readable book out of papers given at an academic conference. What the participants will remember is what is inaccessible to the reader: friendships reaffirmed, new alliances forged, the conversations over meals and round the bar. With the best will in the world the papers which follow will never have the consistency or comprehensiveness which makes for an attractive book of essays and the overall effect is likely to be something of an academic gallimaufry. And so it is here. Among the 15 essays there are interesting offcuts from ongoing scholarly research for which there has been no space in published work so far; tentative explorations which may or may not lead in a new direction; lighter pieces with a serious undertone. This is all to be expected, but what we are left with as readers is text without context.

Having said that, there are some real treasures to be found in this volume on the general theme of the beauty of God's presence. It is a good theme with a wide appeal for Eastern and Western scholars. The tone is well set by the first essay by Finbar G. Clancey on the pearl of great beauty as a metaphor for