Kathy L. Gaca & L.L. Welborn (eds.), *Early Patristic Readings of Romans* (Romans Through History and Cultures Series), New York-London: T&T Clark 2005, ISBN 978 0567 02931 7, vi + 237 pp., US$ 44.95/£ 22.99.

This volume consists of the papers and responses presented and debated in the seminar "Romans through History and Culture" of the Society of Biblical Literature that lasted from 2000 to 2002. The first essay (previously published in *Harvard Theological Review*) by Kathy L. Gaca argues that in Romans 1:18-32 Paul is innovative in supposing that the Gentiles had originally known the Biblical God, and in assessing their polytheism in terms of religious apostasy, for according to contemporaneous Jewish authors Gentiles had never known this God and thus could not be blamed for their idolatry. Professor Gaca demonstrates that Paul's standpoint was not accepted until Tatian, who identified these Gentiles as the Greeks, or even as the Greek philosophers, and that Paul's view was elaborated by Athanasius and John Chrysostom. However, Clement of Alexandria and Origen evaluate the Greeks' knowledge of God both negatively and positively. These findings are affirmed and elaborated upon in Halvor Moxnes's response. Next, Michael Joseph Brown investigates the position of Jews in Alexandria and Clement's view on the salvation of the Jews in his *Stromateis* II. He concludes that according to Clement at least a portion of them will be saved, and that Christianity has not displaced Judaism. However, in her response Kathy Gaca rightly criticizes this conclusion, for if—as Clement assumes—only those Jews will be saved who believe in Christ, this implies that in his view Christians have displaced Jews as God's people. L.L. Welborn gives an interesting analysis of the structure of Clement's *Stromateis* II, and demonstrates that Paul's epistle to the Romans was the organizational basis of this book. In her response Kathy Gaca shows that she is convinced by this conclusion, although she does not agree with Professor Welborn's contention that *Stromateis* II is a protreptic book. The book then turns from Clement of Alexandria to Irenaeus of Lyons. Susan L. Graham corroborates the hypothesis that Paul's line of thought in Romans 9-11 structured Irenaeus' interpretation of Noah's three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japhet, in his *Epideixis*. Although Irenaeus does not explicitly refer to Paul's image of the olive tree in Romans 11:17-21, Professor Graham argues that it must have been in his mind. D. Jeffrey Bingham describes how Irenaeus read Romans 8 with regard to the resurrection of the human body, and how this chapter provided him with the key to his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the

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kingdom of God", a text that was a favourite among the "heretics". These two papers on Irenaeus are answered by Jouette M. Bassler and Christoph Markschies, who both agree with, and expand on, the main lines of the arguments. The following contributions are devoted to Origen. Ruth Clements investigates Origen's *Peri Archon* IV and shows how his distinction between "literal" and "spiritual" exegesis was inspired by Pauline texts. Therefore, she also pays attention to Origen's relationship with Jews and his view of their interpretation of Scripture. Her paper is positively commented on by Peter Gorday. Sze-kar Wan deals with the theme of Jews and Gentiles in Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, and particularly examines his interpretation of Romans 2:9b-10 (To the Jew first, then to the Greek), 2:17-24 (Who is a true Jew?), 2:29 (What is true circumcision? [3:29 is a printing error]), and 11:25 (The mystery of salvation of the Jews). Charles H. Cosgrove appreciatively responds to Professors Clements and Wan in a lucid and even humorous essay on the differences between premodern and modern hermeneutics and their mutual correspondences. He keenly highlights how difficult it is for modern interpreters to know the "real Paul". The final contribution to this volume is authored by Dieter Georgi. He pretends to evaluate the seminar as a whole, but in fact he only deals with Irenaeus and Origen ("The two persons that are in the center of this seminar's discussion"), as if Clement was not discussed at all. Moreover, he hardly evaluates the preceding contributions on Irenaeus and Origen. Taking up Professor Bassler's references to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Georgi posits the similarity of the adulation of martyrdom in the early church and in the Muslim world. He supposes that the purpose of the anti-heretical literature of the early church was in part to inform the Romans authorities, allowing them to more easily persecute the heretics. He puts that martyrologies refer to torture, but do not say anything about the authorities' questions regarding names, locations, practices, and rites. Surprisingly, Professor Georgi deduces from this that ("catholic") Christians did not mind betraying the names of their fellow-believers (he probably includes the "heretics" here) and other data of interest to the police. Thus he suggests that the early Christian view of martyrdom was not too different from the urges of Muslim terrorists today. In his essay of hardly seven pages Georgi presents several other sweeping statements of this kind, some of them plainly contradicting the well-argued conclusions of preceding papers. May it suffice to remark that his contribution in this volume rather stands alone in its style and assertions.

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Another critical observation would be that, with the exception of Peter Gorday, all authors who refer to Origen's *Commentary on Romans* make use of Theresia Heither's edition with German translation, published in the *Fontes Christiani* series. One should note, however, that the Latin text of these volumes is taken from J.P. Migne's edition, which has now been superseded by Caroline Hammond Bammel's magnificent critical edition (*Aus der Geschichte der Lateinischen Bibel* 16, 33, and 34), a fine English translation of which was published by Thomas Scheck (*Fathers of the Church* 103, 104). Similarly, Professor Welborn could have benefited from Anneweis van der Hoek's book on Clement's use of Philo in the *Stromateis* (mentioned by Professor Graham), but it seems that he was not aware of its existence. Apparently, the present reviewer's published doctoral thesis on Origen's *Commentary on Romans* was not considered helpful to any of the authors who investigated this work, or it was unknown to them.

However, this is a valuable volume overall. It testifies to the increasing interest in patristic interpretation of the Bible, and shows that, notwithstanding their premodern starting point, the Church Fathers may be considered as exegetes who are to be taken seriously. The book is concluded by indices of Scriptural references, of Patristic and other ancient sources, of names, and of modern authors.

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