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Review of Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor: An Investigation into the 'Questiones Ad Thalassium,' by P.M. Blowers

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cal and codicological aspects. The notes and bibliography are extensive and as complete as could be wished. The book concludes with a general index and one of biblical references. The 113 black and white illustrations taken from the three psalters and other manuscripts are clearly reproduced and form an essential part of the volume. A great deal of research and reflection has gone into the making of this book; the material has been thoroughly analyzed, and the results clearly and authoritatively presented. It is an exemplary and stimulating work of scholarship and should be of great interest to scholars in history, theology, and other disciplines.

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GEORGE T. DENNIS, S.J.

Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor: An Investigation into the "Questiones ad Thalassium." By PAUL M. BLOWERS. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991. xiv + 288 pp. \$29.95.

Maximus the Confessor (580–662) is best known to church historians as a spiritual writer and a hero of Chalcedonian orthodoxy who suffered mutilation at the hands of the Monothelite emperor Constans II. This book offers a different Maximus, an exegete, although, as the title indicates, Maximus was less interested in the meaning of the sacred text than in its spiritual pedagogy, although he probably would have equated the two.

As Blowers makes clear, Maximus was a reluctant exegete. His friend Thalassius requested the book, and Maximus obliged him. Although the book responded to a particular solicitation, Blowers argues that Maximus's approach, the *quaestiones*, fitted into two antecedent traditions, the patristic *aporia* and the monastic spiritual-pedagogical tradition. Blowers surveys the work of earlier exegetes, especially monks, upon whom Maximus drew, such as Basil of Caesarea and John Cassian; he then examines the two traditions in Maximus's own writings before the *Quaestiones*. He thus effectively demonstrates that although the Confessor undertook the work reluctantly, he did not strike out in an entirely new direction.

Blowers devotes the largest section of his book to Maximus's actual exegesis. He works methodically and thematically. He demonstrates that for Maximus the true exegete becomes a spiritual gnostic. The Confessor understood Scripture as part of God's created reality, that is, "the medium of sensible things," through which the mind must ascend to God. Maximus consistently brought his spiritual concerns to the text "to reflect the hierarchy and harmony, but also the dynamism and continuity, inherent in the created order and in holy scripture" (p. 99). This approach allowed Maximus to use the term "gnostic" in the Alexandrian sense, that is, there is "a more public and a more hidden and esoteric" access to the Logos (p. 109), but, for

Maximus, the “hidden knowledge represents advanced spiritual perception not available to spiritual laggards.

Although the Confessor opposed Origen and his theology, he made regular use of Origenist hermeneutics. For example, Maximus believed that every word of Scripture, no matter how vague or even apparently offensive, has meaning for us, and God deliberately placed difficult passages in the Bible to encourage the exegete to probe more deeply into the text.

The last section of the book deals with anagogical exegesis. Blowers contends that Maximus did not “segregate . . . the ‘allegorical,’ ‘tropological,’ and ‘anagogical’ senses of the non-literal meaning of the text, all of which he simply subsumes under anagogy.” Maximus believed that only exegesis which engaged “cosmology, salvation history, ecclesiology, anthropology (and) ethics” could be called anagogy (p. 191). Blowers’s detailed analysis of the Confessor’s anagogy includes such apparently unlikely topics as etymology and arithmology. As usual for Maximus, exegesis takes us through the created medium to the Logos.

This is a thorough technical study, an in-depth analysis of a book by a major figure. As such it will hold interest for students of Maximus, historians of spirituality, and, to a lesser extent, historians of exegesis.

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Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest. By GERD TELLENBACH. Translated by R. F. BENNETT. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 27. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. xxiv + 196 pp. \$14.95 paper.

There is every reason to applaud the decision of the editorial board of the Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching to include in the series a reprint of Gerd Tellenbach’s *Libertas: Kirche und Weltordnung im Zeitalter des Investiturstreites* in the English translation which R. F. Bennett published in 1940. While Bennett’s translation reproduced only six of the original seventeen appendixes and only a fraction of the illustrative material and body of references assembled by Tellenbach, it did make the full text of a remarkable book readily available to the English-speaking world, and did so only four years after the German original had appeared. I can well remember my excitement on reading it as an undergraduate in the early 1950s. And on rereading it now, some forty years later, I am struck once more by its freshness, penetration and power.

A work of *Ideengeschichte*, Tellenbach’s book brings the historiographic tools of that genre to bear on the great struggle between the German emperors and the reforming popes of the late-eleventh century and the even