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Review of The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Earlier Middle Ages, by G.R. Evans

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he ignores the theological, as opposed to the ecclesiological, development of Hussitism. No attempt is made to analyze the particular theological positions being developed within Hussitism during the era; rather he is content to confine the differences primarily to ecclesiological conceptions, in particular, the attitudes of the two major Utraquist parties towards Rome. Yet late medieval theology was quite diverse and this diversity was likewise represented in the development of Hussitism. Moreover confessionalism, a term most frequently employed by scholars of the Reformation, describes both the attempts by the reformers of the sixteenth century to gain legal recognition for adherents to their particular theological position and their attempts to identify who properly could be considered faithful to that particular theological stance and formulation. Eberhard has masterfully analyzed the process of confessionalization only in the former sense. He has examined the dynamics of confessionalization as a socio-political phenomenon. What he has left undone is the equally necessary investigation of the confessionalization of late medieval Utraquism as a theological phenomenon.

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G. R. EVANS, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Earlier Middle Ages*. Cambridge, Eng.; London; and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. xix, 199. \$34.50.

THIS BRIEF STUDY concentrates on the shift in medieval exegesis from the methods of the Fathers to those of the Scholastics, with special attention given to language and logic. The book's organization is primarily thematic, which it must be, because Evans treats authors from Augustine (b. 354) to Thomas of Chobham (early thirteenth century). Given this chronological range, the subtitle is misleading and should have been "The Pre-Scholastic Period" or "To the Early Scholastics."

Evans begins with "The Fathers on the Bible's Language" (pp. 1-8), and she concentrates on Augustine and Gregory. These opening pages reveal one of the book's strengths and weaknesses. The succinct descriptions are clear and well done, especially for Augustine, but the reader feels uneasy — do these two adequately represent "the Fathers"? Augustine certainly knew his grammar and applied it to the biblical text, but the Antiochenes, whom Evans does not mention, insisted on knowing the historical background of a text, surely a *sine qua non* for understanding its language. Evans has presumably concentrated on the Latin *patres* most important for medieval exegesis, although even that can be debated; note, for example, Jean Leclercq's contention that *Origenes Latinus* was often as important as Augustine and Gregory.

Similarly short shrift is given to the pre-Carolingians, of whom only Boethius and Bede merit more than passing notice; except for Alcuin, the Carolingians fare little better.

But when Evans gets to the eleventh century the book truly comes to life. What earlier writers had hinted at, these writers made the center of their method. Abelard, Alan of Lille, Anselm of Bec and Canterbury, Anselm of Laon, Peter the Chanter, and the Victorines occupy the stage, although always in the shadow of a unifying theme.

Much patristic exegesis was controversial in orientation; from Tertullian and Origen down to Augustine the Fathers defended the Bible against misuse and misinterpretation by heretics or, more accurately, those deviating from patristic orthodoxy. This

caused them to stress the theological understanding of the Bible. To cite an obvious example, Augustine may have made sound observations on the grammar of the biblical text, but these absolutely pale in significance beside his theological interpretations of sin, evil, grace, and providence, interpretations which dominated the history of theology and which made possible the work of Luther, Calvin, and Barth inter alios. Furthermore, the Fathers were usually bishops who emphasized the pastoral and homiletic value of biblical study; one thinks — inevitably — of Augustine but also of John Chrysostom and Caesarius of Arles.

In the postpatristic period, with the exception of Boethius, most of the authors were monks, whose lives centered about the *auctoritas abbatis* and who gave corresponding respect to the *auctoritas patrum* in their exegesis. (Evans devotes only five pages [13–17] to the monks before Anselm.)

The early Scholastics, on the other hand, were not primarily engaged in polemics or pastoral writings, and the new tool of dialectic made them, unlike the monks, willing to reconsider patristic methods and interpretations. They picked up hints from Augustine, Boethius, and Bede, but the spirit of their exegesis was different.

The first practitioner of the new method was Anselm of Bec and Canterbury, who wrote no biblical commentaries but who investigated theological problems by applying the rules of grammar and dialectic to the biblical text. He concentrated on particular texts relevant to his purpose. "This extreme economy in the use of texts is the first and most striking thing which distinguishes Anselm's approach to the study of the Bible from that of the commentator . . ." (p. 20); ". . . [he was] looking not for images and correspondences but for the exact relation at a literal level between the word or expression and what it designates" (p. 22). He raised the question of signification — the many meanings of one word and its meaning in a particular context (supposition), a common point of later exegesis. Hugh of Saint Victor, for example, observed on 1 Peter 5.8, "the Devil prowls like a roaring lion," that the word "lion" signifies the animal itself, which in its turn signifies the Devil (pp. 53–54).

The interest in biblical words quickly extended to numbers. Odo of Morimond followed Augustine — and ultimately Pythagoras — in seeing numbers as "an exemplar and pattern in the whole creation" (pp. 61–62), but, in the new terminology, he observed that numbers signify but are never signified. Like words numbers may signify more than one thing, so that their context must always be apprehended, and thus Odo took over Anselm's approach to signification. This approach preserved and transformed the patristic heritage.

One beneficiary of the new approach was historical study. "The literal sense had frequently been described as 'historical' throughout the earlier mediaeval centuries, because it is at this level that the text tells a story (*historia*)" (p. 68). The new demand for verbal precision split these two up, and Hugh of Saint Victor distinguished the *veritas rerum gestarum* and the *forma verborum* (p. 69). History deals with things done, the literal sense with words — another question of signification. This distinction led to a new appreciation of ancient historians and a new understanding of history.

The largest part of the book (twenty-nine pages) deals with exegesis and the theory of signification, covering such topics as imposition, consignification, and implicit propositions. The chapter provides a valuable survey of how the different facets of the theory of signification were applied to the text, but the reader must be concerned that for several topics Evans looks to only one writer, for example, Gerhoch of Reichersberg for implicitness in words or Ralph of Beauvais for grammar and practical criticism. Evans does not explain whether the authors chosen were the first to use this

mode of exegesis or at least the first to do so on a large scale or the most important or the most representative.

But Evans does demonstrate the effect of the new techniques. When Ralph of Beauvais used grammatical rules better to understand the Bible, he found that the biblical text stretched the rules, which in turn forced him to rethink his understanding of grammar (pp. 86–87). The theory of consignification demonstrated that “All verbs have joint significations” because of their tenses, which led to discussion of how tenses could be applied to God, the subject of many biblical verbs (p. 88). In a twist of the traditional *sensus plenior* the theory of implicit propositions demonstrated that some statements include more than their surface value because the words implied other terms (if God is good, he must of necessity be just and merciful), and this theory elucidated some biblical obscurities (pp. 91–92). Although this may not have been the author’s intention, Evans repeatedly demonstrates how later writers reworked patristic concepts. An implicit proposition may not be an allegory, but it serves the same purpose: to locate the meaning beneath the surface of the text.

Evans closes the book by examining the early *disputatio*, specifically the application of the *quaestio* and the often problematic use of contradictory authorities in answering the *quaestio*. Abelard, of course, figures prominently here.

In the spirit of the book I can categorize it as dissatisfyingly satisfying. It is a good book, clear and usually well argued, but without enough evidence. The reader comes away feeling that Evans is probably correct, but that the topic is too vast for her conclusions to be secure. One must hope that the author will return to the topic at greater length in a future volume.

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ANDRÉ GODDU, *The Physics of William of Ockham*. (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 16.) Leiden and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1984. Paper. Pp. x, 243. Hfl 84.

PERHAPS the single most provocative area of Ockham’s thought in his day and in succeeding generations was his physics: specifically his views on quantity, relation, place, motion, and time. It is surprising, therefore, that these issues have received as little attention as they have in the secondary literature on Ockham. They were addressed in part in Erich Hochstetter’s ground-breaking *Studien zur Metaphysik und Erkenntnislehre Wilhelms von Ockham* (1927) and made the subject of Herman Shapiro’s *Motion, Time and Place according to William Ockham* (1957). Only in the last few years have Ockham’s commentaries on Aristotle’s *Physics* appeared in critical editions (*Opera philosophica*, 4–6 [1984–85]), although his views on these subjects were expressed in his commentary on the *Sentences* as well as his *Quodlibeta* and *Summa logicae*. Goddu’s is the first recent study of Ockham’s physics, which will no doubt be addressed by others in the years ahead.

Goddu divides his study into two parts. After a brief biographical and historiographical introduction, the first section (composed of two chapters) sets forth the epistemological and logical foundation of Ockham’s natural philosophy. The second section (in four chapters) explores Ockham’s physics, specifically its general principles, Ockham’s theories of place and void, time and eternity, and finally infinity and motion.