

*Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. by PAUL FOSTER and SARA PARVIS. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. xv + 274 pp. \$39.00.

This volume is a collection of eighteen papers presented at a 2009 conference on Irenaeus held at the School of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh. The authors are scholars and doctoral students representing an international range of institutions and faith backgrounds. Part 1 consists of papers dealing with the life and historical context of Irenaeus, part 2 of papers dealing with his relationship to Scripture, and part 3 of papers dealing with his theological legacy. Space limitations do not permit a thorough evaluation of each paper, but several highlights are worth noting.

An important topic in discussions of Irenaeus is his understanding of apostolic succession. Although several of the authors come from traditions that emphasize the importance of apostolic succession, none of the articles defend the doctrine as it came to be understood in later Roman Catholicism, and those authors who do touch on it, distinguish Irenaeus's understanding of the concept from the later understanding. For example, Paul Parvis asserts, "While a later theology came to affirm that the bishops *are* what the apostles *were*, Irenaeus wants to say that the bishops *teach* what the apostles *taught*" (14). Allen Brent argues that "Irenaeus's view of succession is that of a teaching succession" (36), and he demonstrates that Irenaeus's succession list of Roman bishops cannot be a reliable witness to the tradition of monarchical episcopacy.

On the issue of Irenaeus and Scripture, three claims are worth noting. Denis Minns argues, on the basis of the form of the parable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28–32) used by Irenaeus, that he provides a witness to the form of text found in Codex Bezae. Jeffrey Bingham provides substantial indirect evidence that, even though Irenaeus did not quote it directly, he knew and used the Letter to Hebrews extensively in *Against Heresies* and that the Letter to Hebrews played an important role in informing Irenaeus's response to his opponents. (Bingham does slip up when, on p. 71, he assumes Irenaeus's use of Hebrews 3:14, though he does not provide evidence for that use until p. 77.) Also, in arguing that Irenaeus was "the first to provide a typological pattern according to which OT nuptial texts are read as a prophetic witness to" Christ (82), Karl Shuve seeks to demonstrate that Irenaeus helped establish the hermeneutical approach by which later interpreters handled the Song of Songs.

Two chapters of the book represent a debate between Charles E. Hill, who argues that the unnamed presbyter of *Against Heresies* IV.27–32 was Polycarp, and Sebastian Moll, who denies that this claim can be demonstrated. Although ultimately one must admit that the evidence is simply too limited to make a definite identification, Hill actually does the better job of making his case.

Turning to theological issues, Michael Slusser argues that the heart of Irenaeus's theology is not the generally accepted idea of recapitulation described in *Against Heresies* V.21.1, but that it is rather the interplay between the concepts of God's greatness (*magnitudo*) and his love (*dilectio*). In light of Slusser's claim, it is noteworthy that Peter Widdicombe suggests

that Irenaeus's concept of God as *Father* "has to do with love" (145). Sara Parvis argues that Irenaeus lays a theological foundation for high Orthodox and Roman Catholic Marian theology and for "the highest possible theological anthropology of women" (162). She overstates her case, however, when she speculates that Irenaeus had seen the decline of what Parvis describes as a "widespread practice" of women giving thanks in Christian assemblies, and that he knew there was unhappiness about this decline (162). She cites no evidence to substantiate this claim.

In addition to the articles themselves, the book also provides a helpful catalogue of the manuscripts and editions of Irenaeus's writings, a timeline of his life and contemporary events, and an index of passages of Irenaeus that are specially discussed in the book.

Occasionally, the reader will encounter incomplete sentences (e.g., 47, 191) or will question details of biblical exegesis (e.g., Brent's understanding that Timothy was ordained as a presbyter-bishop, 44), but these represent minor distractions in an otherwise valuable resource. This book will appeal primarily to graduate students, professors and specialists in the field. Readers who do not read French may be frustrated by the number of untranslated quotations sprinkled through several of the chapters.

In the final chapter the aptly named Irenaeus M. C. Steenberg states that the ancient Irenaeus is "a seducer" who "draws one into his vision of the Church, of God, of redemption" (200). I can testify that in reading this book one is likely to be "seduced" into going back and reading again (or for the first time) the words of Irenaeus himself.