

Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church. By Michael A. G. Haykin. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011, 176 pp., \$16.99 paper.

In recent years there seems to be a renewed interest in Patristic literature. Developing creeds, modeling astute theological thinking, dwelling in community, and more, the Patristic fathers offer the modern church insight into early Christian thought, piety, hermeneutics, and more. Michael Haykin, professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, successfully serves as an evangelist for the study of Patristics by calling the modern reader to take great interest in the early church fathers. In *Rediscovering the Church Fathers*, Haykin whets the appetite of Christian readers and demonstrates the courage, the intellectual abilities, and the faithful suffering of selected fathers with winsome prose and an ability to navigate the boundless waters of stimulating and complex ancient ideas.

Haykin sets out with a five reasons for taking interest in Patristic literature: (1) Reading the Church Fathers for Freedom and Wisdom (17–18), (2) Reading the Church Fathers So As to Understand the New Testament (19–20), (3) Reading the Church Fathers Because of Bad Press about the Fathers (20–22), (4) Reading the Church Fathers as an Aid in Defending the Faith (22–27), and (5) Reading the Church Fathers for Spiritual Nurture (27–28).

Haykin does not cover nor discuss the whole range of Patristic literature or of early church fathers. Rather, he provides a snapshot of various kinds of fathers within the Patristic tradition. He focuses on Ignatius, who is rich for understanding Christianity after the apostles; the Letter to Diognetus, which contains an early form of apologetics; Origen, who still shapes hermeneutical discussions today; Cyprian and Ambrose, who give us insight

into the Latin Fathers; Basil of Caesarea, who has more extant material than any other father during early Christendom besides Augustine and who has shaped pneumatological discussions; and finally, Patrick, who was a British Christian captured by Irishmen and served as a great missionary to Ireland.

One particularly helpful portion of this book is Haykin's interaction with Origen. Origen was a man of stature and was a "pioneer of biblical studies." The Hexapla, still valuable for linguistic studies, involved extraordinary learning and labor to produce. It places the Hebrew Old Testament, its Greek transliteration, and four Greek translations of the Hebrew in parallel columns. Furthermore, Origen wrote a plethora of commentaries on the Bible as well: thirteen volumes on Genesis, thirty-six on Isaiah, twenty-five on Ezekiel, twenty-five on the Minor Prophets, thirty-five on the Psalms, three on Proverbs, ten on Song of Songs, five on Lamentations, and close to three hundred volumes of commentaries in all (77).

Modern interpreters of Origen frequently dismiss his hermeneutics without careful analysis. Emphasis on single-meaning and negative reactions to allegory have created an environment prejudicial to Origen's ideas. Influenced by Alexandria's intellectual milieu, he employed allegorization when interpreting the scriptures in ways similar to Hellenistic Jews. However, that is not the only method he uses. Historical "passages which are historically true are far more numerous than those which are composed with purely spiritual meanings" (Origen, *On First Principles*, 4.3.4). Therefore, allegorical interpretation is not primary nor the majority of Origen's foci. For Origen, unlike pagan allegorists, saw real value in literal interpretation: (1) The Bible contains true and important history; (2) there are "simple" believers in the church edified by

literal interpretation; (3) it has apologetical value (84–85). Rabbinic interpretation, Origen thought, with its emphasis on “literalism,” would lead to unbelief (88).

Haykin helpfully explains Origen’s three-fold principles for interpretation. First, all scripture has a present meaning and application. Second, scripture should be interpreted within the “rule of faith.” There are other men interpreting the scriptures by means of an indwelling Spirit and he wants to live within the bounds of theological community. Lastly, any exegete must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit to understand the scriptures (85–86). Ultimately, Origen’s hermeneutics are shaped by three different types of interpreters: the simple, who interpret the text literally; the more advanced; and, the perfect (89). But all interpretation “had the goal of spiritual formation” (90).

Haykin accomplished what he set out to do—to captivate and interest of the reader in early Patristic thought. It is necessarily a limited sampling. His final chapter, “Walking with the Church Fathers: My First Steps on a Lifelong Journey,” is a powerful inducement to delve deeper into the writings of the early church fathers.

Whether you are a layperson, a student, or a pastor, if you are intrigued by Patristic literature, I heartily encourage you to read this book, follow the recommended reading list of early church literature, and begin exploring. Its readability, winsome prose, and erudite insights captivate the mind and heart of the reader to read more and to read profitably among the early church fathers.

Shawn Wilhite
Ph.D. candidate

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians.
By Thomas O’Loughlin. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010, xvii + 185 pp., \$24.99 paper.

The *Didache* is an early Christian document that is rich with ethical direction, affords ecclesiological insights into the early church, and provides continuity with primitive Christian apocalypticism. Thomas O’Loughlin, professor of historical theology at the University of Nottingham, presents a wonderful contribution to *Didache* literature after twenty-five years of academic teaching and study of its contents. This introduction provides a fresh discussion of important issues concerning the *Didache*, such as the history and discovery of the extant manuscripts, why the absence of evidence of the *Didache* throughout church history, types of ecclesiastical groups hostile to the *Didache* (both Catholic or Protestant), the importance of the *Didache*, in addition to the place, date, and theological issues. Though he is reluctant to suggest a geographical locale for the *Didache*’s origins (24–27), O’Loughlin dates the *Didache* between AD 50 and AD 80. He suggests however that the synoptic gospels antedated the *Didache* (47).

Chapters two through seven focus upon the theological message of the book. O’Loughlin masterfully provides a quaint backdrop of biblical imagery to set the stage of the *Didache*’s message. For example, a brief yet quite informative, retelling of Lukan table-meal theology directs the reader’s frame of reference to a communal, discipleship framework of Christian meals. By providing a cultural description of meals and the Eucharist, he creates a helpful history of interpretation, illustrates early church practice, and brings the *Didache* into a historical perspective congruent with early church orthodoxy. Each chapter is similar in form when describing the bifurcating “two-ways” ethic, prayer and fasting, communal gatherings and