

As a whole this is an outstanding and ground-breaking study. It illustrates a helpful application of the concept of memory in a manner that is freed from historical concerns and instead looks at reception and tradition. It also provides a deep analysis of the long recension by providing a helpful account of the forger's concerns, while also showing that there is continuity between this later author and Ignatius in their shared concern to shape the memory of Ignatius. As such, this volume is an important contribution to the study of Ignatian writings in their various forms and stages.

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Irenaeus, the Scriptures, and the apostolic writings. Reevaluating the status of the New Testament writings at the end of the second century. By Kenneth Laing. (Library of New Testament Studies, 659.) Pp. x + 213 incl. 1 fig. London–New York: T&T Clark, 2022. £85. 978 0 5677 0193 0

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This work is introduced with the assertion that its subject matter probes ‘the nature and basis of authority of the apostolic writings in the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons, and the ways in which these relate to his conception of divine revelation’ (p. 1). The ‘reevaluation’ alluded to in the title is a re-examination of the consensus view that Irenaeus ‘is held to consider the New Testament writings that he knows and uses to be “scripture”, understood to be equivalent to the status of the Old Testament scriptures’ (p. 2). Laing prefers to designate the Christian texts as the ‘apostolic writings’, rather than Scripture, arguing that

the unique revelatory authority of the apostolic writings in Irenaeus’ thought does not arise from (or lead to) a notion of their scriptural status. In positive terms, it is contended that the apostolic writings are conceived of instead as the written record of the *apostolic tradition*, acquiring their unique revelatory authority on this basis as a result of their perceived apostolic origin ... apostolicity, not inspiration, is the foundation of the unique authority of the apostolic writings (p. 5).

In support of the thesis, the study is divided into two sections. The first, ‘Assessing the Traditional Interpretation’, is a careful examination of the relevant Irenaean references to Scripture and to the authority of sacred texts in general. These are excellent chapters and fill a much-needed gap in Irenaeus and New Testament canon research. Laing’s cataloguing and analysis of the second-century bishop’s writings is exhaustive, yet not exhausting. Interacting with the key Latin, surviving Greek and, on occasion, even a few Armenian terms, the volume effectively demonstrates previously under-appreciated features of the texts. Among the most important contributions is the argument that Irenaeus – in the vast majority of instances – refers only to Jewish writings when using the term ‘scripture’ (*graphie*). Moreover, the study shows that the term is not regularly used for the early Christian texts. Concerning the handful of instances where the opposite seems to be true, Laing carefully examines the larger context of those pericopes and offers convincing, alternative readings (to the consensus view which argues that they do prove a scriptural status equal to the Jewish Scriptures). If there are a few instances where his interpretations may seem less certain, the cumulative

effect of the analyses is nevertheless convincing. The volume works through enough data that it is difficult not to see that his arguments have, in the very least, created reasonable doubt concerning the validity of the traditional interpretation.

The second half of the book is entitled 'Constructing an Alternative Interpretation'. Here, as the title suggests, Laing attempts to answer those issues and implications that emerged from his analyses in the first section. Among the most important questions was to ask how Irenaeus would have described the authority of the apostolic writings, if not as Scripture. The work attempts to answer the question in its typically roundabout strategy – asking the key questions early, but taking the reader on a winding journey before attempting definitive answers. This section is perhaps not as strong as the first, but the chapters on inspiration and authority stand out as particularly significant. With these, Laing is able to establish a convincing case for his thesis: not only that Irenaeus does not refer to Christian texts as Scripture, but that he views them as something quite different from the Jewish Scriptures.

There were two primary concerns with this volume. The first was the overall flow of the work and the manner in which the key arguments were revealed. It is not that the chapters are ineffectively organised or the book poorly written – indeed, the opposite is true. However, the issue, for this reader, was a frustration with the slow-reveal of important elements of supporting arguments. This was most evident as it related to the definitions provided for the key concept of Scripture, and it is this topic which constitutes my second concern with this volume.

As indicated above, the book begins with an analysis of Irenaeus' references to and the contexts of his use of the term 'Scripture' (*graphie*). Again, this section was effective in how it examined the term lexically, grammatically and contextually. What was not clearly provided, however, was a simple definition of what exactly Scripture 'is'. Laing goes to great lengths to show the differences between Jewish and apostolic writings, but in these early chapters no clear definition is given. The conclusion to chapter iii comes close, arguing that the authoritative Christian texts became 'the apostolic record of their [the Jewish scriptures] true interpretations' (p. 137). This definition, though problematic, was one of the first clear explanations for how Laing believes Irenaeus understood the apostolic texts. He provides a much clearer definition at the end of the volume, however, stating that 'the apostolic writings are understood by Irenaeus to be *the authoritative written record of the divinely sanctioned apostolic mediation of the consummate revelation of the Word to humanity*' (p. 183, italics original). The volume's arguments very effectively support this thesis, and it is a mystery to this reader why the definition is not provided earlier.

In all, Kenneth Laing's monograph is an important contribution to Irenaeus and New Testament canon research. Most significant is its detailed analysis of Irenaeus' references to and expressed relationship between the Jewish and Christian texts. Laing demonstrates well that most studies tend to isolate only a few sections from *Against heresies*, but he succeeds in offering a more detailed study than had been previously attempted. It is a volume that must be read cover to cover in order to understand its arguments, but it is well worth it.

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