

Fall 2017

### Michael J. Gorman, Ed., Scripture and Its Interpretation. A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

James Chukwuma Okoye C.S.Sp.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-horizons>

 Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Okoye, J. C. (2017). Michael J. Gorman, Ed., Scripture and Its Interpretation. A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.. *Spiritan Horizons*, 12 (12). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-horizons/vol12/iss12/20>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritan Horizons by an authorized editor of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

MICHAEL J. GORMAN, ED., *SCRIPTURE AND ITS INTERPRETATION. A GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE*. GRAND RAPIDS: BAKER ACADEMIC, 2017. XXIII + 400 PAGES; GLOSSARY, SCRIPTURE INDEX, AND SUBJECT AND AUTHOR INDEX, PAGES 401-441. ISBN: 978-0801098390. \$34.99.

Twenty-three Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal specialists in the field participated in this ecumenical volume. The book has three Parts.

Part 1, *The Bible*, has seven chapters: “The Bible. A Book, a Library, a Story, an Invitation” (Paul Zilonka and Michael Gorman); “The Setting: Biblical Geography, History, and Archaeology” (Karen Wenell); “The Scriptures of Israel (The Christian Old Testament)” (Claire McGinnis); “The Writings of the New Covenant (The New Testament)” (Michael Gorman); “Significant Noncanonical Writings” (Christopher Skinner, who briefly treats the Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library; the Gospel of Thomas, NT Apocrypha, and the Apostolic Fathers); “From Books to Library: The Formation of the Biblical Canons (Michael Holmes; note the plural, “Canons”); “From There to Here: The Transmission and Translation of the Bible (Michael Barré).

Part 2, *The Interpretation of the Bible in Various Traditions and Cultures*, has twelve chapters: “The Reception of the Bible and its Significance” (Christine Joynes); “Premodern Interpretation of the Bible” (Carole Monica Burnett); “Modern and Postmodern Methods of Biblical Interpretation” (Joel B. Green); “Theological Interpretation of the Bible” (Stephen Fowl); “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” (Michael Gorman); “Roman Catholic Biblical Interpretation” (Ronald Witherup); “Orthodox Interpretation of Scripture” (Edith Humphrey); “Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation” (Craig Keener); “African Biblical Interpretation” (Bungishabaku Katho); “Latino/Latina Biblical Interpretation” (M. Daniel Carroll); “Asian and Asian-American Biblical Interpretation” (K. K. Yeo). Feminist and Marxist (Liberationist) Interpretation is merely recalled on pp. 210-211.

Part 3, *The Bible and Contemporary Christian Existence*, has five chapters: “The Bible and Spirituality” (Patricia Fosarelli and Michael Gorman); “Scripture and Christian Ethics: Embodying Pentecost” (Brent Laytham); “The Bible and Politics” (Christopher Rowland); “Scripture and Christian Community” (Jonathan Wilson-Hargrove); and “The Bible and Christian Mission” (N. T. Wright).

Each chapter is furnished with Questions for Reflection and Discussion and an up-to-date bibliography. Forty-seven illustrations call in the help of visual art, like the theatre at Ephesus (p. 88) and the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles (p. 271). Catholics will value Witherup’s Table of Key Catholic Documents on Interpretation, p. 242. Some of the chapters appeared in an earlier book also edited by Gorman, *Scripture: An Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation*, Baker Academic, 2005, but those essays have all been revised and updated in this volume.

The reader learns the difference between papyrus, parchment, and codex (p. 5) and the implications for the formation and interpretation of the Bible. The tables of the Scriptures of the various Christian denominations occur pages 12-15. Because this is a Christian perspective,

chapter 3 is titled, “The Scriptures of Israel (The Christian Old Testament),” but Claire McGinnis insists that “neither Testament is fully intelligible apart from the other” (p. 46), and Paul Zilonka and Michael Gorman suggest rewording Augustine’s formula to read: “in the Shared Testament, the rabbinic texts and the Christian Testament find their perpetual foundations; in the Christian Testament, the Shared Testament is intensely read anew in Christ” (p.11). There is a brief treatment of early Jewish exegesis and its influence on Christian interpretation, pp. 109-110.

The dominance of historical criticism has been broken in favor of giving priority to theological concerns and the Rule of Faith. A passage may have several meanings within its literal sense. For example, Isa 7:14 (behold a maiden is with child) had meaning in the eighth century BCE, but also a new literal sense when read by Matthew as “behold a virgin is with child” (already in LXX) and applied to the virgin birth of Jesus (p. 214). Pentecostal hermeneutics is Spirit hermeneutics. Keener gives four succinct typical features (p. 274): continuationist reading (God who acted in the world in the past still acts in the present); biblical narrative has theological import and is to be read missiologically; reading Scripture with emphasis on the Spirit and his action as in Acts 2; and Scripture as nourishing hope and courage, especially for the marginalized. Asian Christians find in Revelation a message of hope that is illuminating to those living in sociopolitical uncertainty and hardship. 1 and 2 Kings are read in South Korea to critique the prosperity gospel in that country. Asians love the wisdom literature (Proverbs, James) for practical teaching in moral, religious, and communal life. They prefer Isaiah’s vision of inclusive love for the world and find the Joshua and Judges narratives to be parochial and unhelpful (pp. 328, 329, 330).

Orthodoxy resists systematization; Orthodox interpretation is based on the fathers of the church and is responsive to the contemporary world. The icon is a visual Bible for the faithful. Of the eight Orthodox hermeneutical principles, pp. 261-62, three are emphases upon a shared Christian theme: “Word of God” refers in the first place to the Son, the personal Logos; Scripture is theandric, both human and divine; and Scripture is to be interpreted within a life of prayer in the church - the Scriptures lead up (*ana-goge*) to God, induce transformation. In the service of this, both allegory and typology may be used in inter-relation as was the practice of the fathers of the church (p. 264). The Orthodox profess a *prima Scriptura* (not *sola Scriptura*, as the Reformation) – Scripture has a symbiotic relationship to creed, but Scripture is primary and central. Mission is the story of Scripture focused on Jesus as seen from the point of view of those who hear Jesus’ call (N. T. Wright). It is not something added on to “biblical theology.” It consists not in rescuing people *from* the world, but in rescuing humans *for* the world; it means summoning people to Jesus himself, executing the charge of bringing creation to full flowering (p. 397).

Although each article is self-standing, there is a certain logic to the sequence of chapters. The pedagogical treatment makes the rich information accessible to all. There is no way such a rich fare can be summarized in a few pages, so I sought to alert readers to the inner flavor (*sfumatura*) of these articles. More than worth it for the average interested reader, this valued vademecum for the student and pastor easily doubles as a textbook that makes the work of professors teaching biblical interpretation that much easier.

*James Chukwuma Okoye, C.S.Sp.*





