

Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams. *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea*. Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0674023145. Pp. xvi + 367. \$29.95 USD, cloth.

1. This is a lavishly produced book about the written material that Christian scholars took over from others or created themselves, focusing specifically on how Christianity shaped the production of books and at the same time produced the basis of new intellectual authority. By doing so, the two authors, Anthony Grafton (Henry Putnam University Professor of History and Chair of the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University) and Megan Williams (Assistant Professor in the Program in Liberal Studies at the University of Montana in Missoula) especially concentrate on Origen and Eusebius, both inseparably linked with late Roman Caesarea. Both of them dedicate their work to comparisons between texts not previously taken into account, whether biblical or not. Thus, they developed new tools for scholarly work on the Bible and other innovative approaches. Although for specific questions and an in-depth treatment of individual issues addressed in this volume readers may want to refer to specialist studies, this book is without doubt and despite its limits, and some weaknesses, a valuable work on the issue of book production and the library of Caesarea, exemplified by the prominent characters Origen and Eusebius.

2. The publishers must be praised for having produced a quality hardback volume, which comprises four main chapters preceded by a general introduction and a *coda*. In addition, the book comes with seventeen black-and-white illustrations (scattered among the running text), a preface (xi-xiii), a cast of characters together with some basic information (xiv-xvi), a list of abbreviations (246), a bibliography (primary and secondary sources; 247-290), endnotes (291-353), acknowledgments (354-356), and finally a cumulative index of names, terms, and subjects (357-367).

3. The introduction ('Scholars, Books, and Libraries in the Christian Tradition', 1-21 and 291-293) starts off with Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), who utilized manuscripts in monasteries at Spondheim and Würzburg to collect information for the chronological histories he wrote. Among others, he particularly relied on the Caesareans Origen, Pamphilus, and Eusebius, and he noted some cultural change going on in his and in those days. Grafton and Williams [GW] understand Trithemius and the three Caesareans as people who took interest in structuring the details they accumulated and "the visual presentation of their work" (6), so that the first helps to shed light on the three other prominent Christian writers: they "drew upon classical precedents, but they also developed these in new directions", and they employed in the "production of complex books the basis of new kinds of intellectual authority, which in turn shaped new modes of scholarly inquiry" (7). The second part of the introduction focuses on a report of research and the description of GW's own approach that is restricted to the library of Caesarea and two of its protagonists, Origen and Eusebius.

4. In chapter one ('Origen at Caesarea: A Christian Philosopher among His Books', 22-85 and 293-315) the authors deal with Origen. Eusebius "applied to him the sobriquet Adamantius" ('man of steel'; *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.10) and "portrayed Origen as a kind of superhero of Christian piety and scholarship". After some basic and scattered details about Origen's life and work GW paint the picture of Origen's philosophical background (especially, against the Neo-Platonist

Plotinus). Here they offer necessary aspects for a good comprehension of the varied works of this extraordinarily influential Christian writer. Here and there GW cite ancient writers when they deal with composing, ordering, and handling books. In this context the *Villa dei Papiri* of Herculaneum is a significant archaeological site with the help of which we may sense which philosophers were actually read and what the books looked like in those days (46-53). In some rolls in Philodemus' library, for instance, there are elaborate annotations in the margins, in other copies corrections. This indicates that a staff of scribes may have been at work for Philodemus. Origen's library does not make any difference, as wherever he went, he collected books; and the Jewish and Christian books he possessed set him apart from others who were not interested in those writings (57). Without doubt, Origen owned a collection of classical philosophical works as well and even kept texts by scholars who did not share his views. So it is no surprise that Porphyry praised Origen and his broad philosophical background. GW identify the "cultural milieu of a fully Hellenized Jewish Palestine"¹ as being responsible for Origen's learning and writing.

5. Chapter two deals with 'Origen's Hexapla: Scholarship, Culture, and Power' (86-132 and 315-329). Basically, GW describe the background of Origen's landmark work, the Hexapla, and how it came into being in an attractive narrative. More interesting is the encounter they have with the layout, the technical production of the Hexapla, and its column arrangement. Here the illustrations (a photograph of a fragment of the Hexapla from the Cairo Genizah and a graphic drawing of its layout; *P. Chester Beatty VI*, folios 11v-12) really serve as helps to portray what manuscripts looked like and how they were arranged. Again GW end a chapter by allowing "Greek and Hellenized Jewish traditions of learning" to flow together, to intermingle, and to become "path-breaking innovations" of the Christians (132), a conclusion that is both too narrow and too exclusive.

6. In chapter three ('Eusebius's Chronicle: History Made Visible', 133-177 and 329-337) GW shift their focus to Eusebius of Caesarea, probably Origen's most important successor. After some introductory passages they deal with Eusebius's *Canon* or *Tables* (in his *Chronicles*; 137-177, illustrated on pp. 138-139 and 201), which are used to systematize data and rulers chronologically. With this he simultaneously highlighted the surviving Roman Empire as the culmination of world history. Of course, he associated the latter with Christianity.

7. Once more chapter four champions a specific approach to the topic of the book, as is already demonstrated by the triumphant phrasing of the headline: 'Eusebius at Caesarea: A Christian Impresario of the Codex' (178-232). GW agree with René Amacker and Éric Junod "that the library at Caesarea probably did not have a continuous institutional history" and that Eusebius's mentor, Pamphilus, "began to accumulate a library of sacred works" (179).² The reflections on Pamphilus's and Eusebius's work with and on the manuscripts in Caesarea end up in almost

¹ But see Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, SNTSMS 134 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

² See the more detailed discussion of this issue by Marco Frenschkowski, 'Studien zur Geschichte der Bibliothek von Cäsarea', in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, 53-104, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, Texts and Editions for New Testament Study, no. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), especially 76-86.

nothing.³ However, it seems to be evident that Pamphilus definitely collected manuscripts and worked on them in a specific way that was continued by his disciple Eusebius thereafter. Further, he developed a new system of organizing the ‘sacred’ texts so that they could easily be collated. This system of canon tables allowed readers to study a text easily together with each of its parallels. Today we know that his canon tables (the *Chronicle*, the *Canon*, and the *Psalm Table*) have become a standard system to find parallel sections and passages in Biblical texts. As far as the library itself is concerned, Eusebius “left subscriptions that attest to his work as a redactor of the Scripture” (208) and “constructed a remarkably full apparatus of sources” (209). Near the end of the chapter GW address the issue of Constantine’s promotion of the production of Bibles for Constantinople (216-221). All in all, Eusebius’s own work demonstrates how scholars worked in preparing manuscripts for practical usages or, in other words, in working on those texts that they regarded (or which were regarded) as ‘sacred’ and significant. GW end the chapter by pointing at the conditions of the late 3rd and early 4th centuries that were beneficial for scholars in Caesarea, so that the work on books (i.e., manuscripts) could flourish.

8. The final chapter has the headline ‘Coda: Caesarea in History and Tradition’ (233-243) and in general consists of a basic summary of the conclusions taken in the previous chapters. The title suggests that GW primarily focus on history and tradition—but they have already done so previously. Basically, what they have to state here remains on the surface and scholars who want to know more about individual features are advised to refer to specialist studies in the field.

9. It is hard to tell precisely whether this book is a major step forward for those really interested in the production and development of books in general and the library of Caesarea and their main protagonists in particular. On the one hand, GW’s narrative style is very attractive, and their story of the library, the work performed by Origen, Eusebius, and others really compelling; on the other hand, their study as a whole piece of work often remains on the surface of the problems touched or named. In addition, they tend to focus too sharply on the developments initiated by Christians as landmark innovations and do not always point out clearly and convincingly enough why these were so extraordinary. Maybe the interesting illustrations could have been utilized more concisely and more explicitly to demonstrate what they actually want to show. Without that some of the pictures seem to be more decoration than necessary illustration of the matters explained. For a fresh approach readers interested in this and similar topics may be interested in Marco Frenschkowski’s detailed study of the library of Caesarea and its background published in the same year as the book under review.⁴ Be that as it may, and leaving these points of criticism aside, the book is a good and enlightening read. It highlights a very interesting and at the same time crucial topic and helps to understand the world of late antique Christianity in a more appropriate and better way. Above all, students of the history of early Christianity and theologians interested in topics like those tackled in the present volume will certainly benefit from GW’s work.

³ See page 189: “But we may never know what precise impact the activities of Pamphilus and Eusebius had on this third family of manuscripts.”

⁴ See Frenschkowski, 53-104.

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