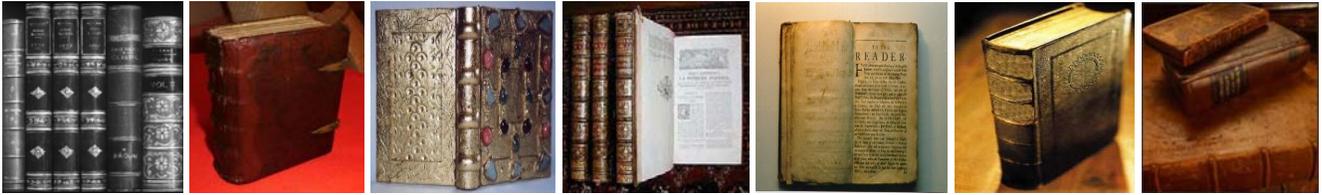
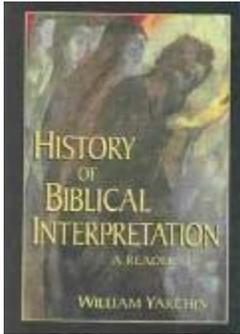


# RESEARCH REPORTER



September 2006

APU Office of Faculty Research



Yarchin, William. *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004. 444 pages.

**Dr. William Yarchin** chronicles the broad range of approaches to biblical interpretation that occurred in the period from pre-rabbinic to

modern times. Through reproduction of primary texts, several of which are translated into English for the first time, Yarchin enables a direct engagement with the interpreters themselves. In addition, Yarchin provides context and background with a comprehensive introduction and overview along with brief biographical prefaces to each text selection.

Yarchin shows that allegorical readings appear as the most ancient way of understanding sacred texts. However, historicized readings emerge as the Qumran community applied the Hebrew Scriptures to its contemporary situation. Such historicized readings exerted influence upon both early Christian and rabbinic interpreters of the Hebrew Scriptures. Christian themes of prophetic expectation and contemporary fulfillment became expressed in typological approaches to the Scripture which viewed Old Testament persons and events as prefigurations (or types) of New Testament persons and events. Meanwhile, rabbinic exegesis recognized the influence of the Oral Torah alongside the Written Torah in its applications to contemporary life.

In the second through the fourth centuries, orthodox Christian readings adhered to the rule of faith expressed in the creeds and liturgy of the church. Such readings of the Hebrew Scriptures were literal when the text plainly agreed with apostolic teaching, and figurative when apostolic agreement was hidden. In Medieval exegesis it was not only the words of Scripture but physical objects mentioned in the Scriptures that became visible symbols of invisible truth; biblical interpretation became increasingly anchored in the literal sense of the text. By the end of

the thirteenth century, the literal sense of the text dominated biblical interpretation.

A more radical push for recovering the original meaning of the text in its original setting occurred in the fifteenth century Renaissance. Reformation scholars later held the Renaissance agenda for historical meaning in tension with the quest for contemporary Scriptural relevance. Midrashic approaches to the Hebrew Bible--- allegorical readings of the Bible practiced by Jewish scholars---had in the meantime already dominated the first nine centuries of the common era in Jewish exegesis, but we see a resurgence of literal, historical (or “plain sense”) readings in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Demystification of the biblical text among Jews and Christians led to the rise of historical criticism and the related methodologies of source and form criticism in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries. In the present day, however, text-oriented and reader-oriented approaches to the Bible represent a significant challenge to the legacy of historical criticism, particularly when these approaches reject the idea that the subjectivity and social location of the reader can be suspended in biblical interpretation.

We hear several diverse voices in Yarchin’s hermeneutical exploration-- -Jew and Christian, female and male, conservative and liberal, Eastern and Western. His book is an outstanding achievement, displaying oceanic breadth and depth, and a publishing event receiving applause in respected journals. Dedicated readers of this book will come away with an enlightened appreciation for the complex history of biblical interpretation and with several historical referents for their own approaches to the biblical text. ---Kenneth L. Waters, Sr.

***You are cordially invited to a presentation to be given by Dr. Bill Yarchin on the history of biblical interpretation on Thursday, October 19 at 3:30 in the VIP Room of the Felix Event Center (West Campus).***

## Dear Friends,

The Office of Research's Grants Services Specialist, Kevin Walker, resigned from APU in order to teach at Vanguard University this fall. Kevin conceived of the idea of the Research Reporter last September, wrote numerous reviews for it monthly, and even desk top published and delivered it! We shall miss Kevin, but I am pleased to introduce to you my very capable new reviewer, Beth Jones, Part-time Instructor from the Department of English. Beth is currently writing her dissertation to complete her Ph.D. in British Literature from Claremont Graduate University. She earned an Advanced Master's (Th.M.) in Theology and Culture and a Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary plus a Master of Arts in English from Claremont Graduate University. Her B.A. in English is from Biola. She has taught at APU since 2001 in the English Department, and I am grateful to Chair David Esselstrom for loaning her to us to help review your articles! Beth also holds a California Adult Education Credential in English and ESL. I am most fortunate to work with this versatile and accomplished scholar—recipient of numerous fellowships for her graduate work at both Claremont and Fuller. Beth and I look forward to continuing the Research Reporter with monthly editions which highlight some of the books and articles published by our colleagues.

---Carole Lambert

**Associate Professor of Communication Dr. Paul A. Creasman** has recently published an informative article on the inherent complexity of college radio in *Feedback*, one of the journals of the Broadcast Education Association. While college radio employs a diversity of signal strengths, program formats, and staffing, Creasman focuses his attention on student-run stations that broadcast to largely student audiences. He aptly titles his article, "The Paradox of College Radio," since the staffing, programming, and equipment at such traditional campus radio stations paradoxically complicates the preparation of communication majors for a career in mainstream radio broadcasting. Many volunteer student DJs, not intending to enter the radio broadcasting workforce, prefer to play entire albums of their favorite artists rather than follow a prescribed music format with regularly scheduled breaks. Such a free-form approach to programming may win favor with the station's campus audience, but does not prepare communications students for the highly programmed nature of professional radio, and may be detrimental to students' prospects for employment in the broadcasting industry. Student-run college radio stations also tend to play lesser-known artists: some

recording labels actually market their newer artists to campus stations in a kind of "farm system" that tests out new talent on college radio before marketing it to mainstream stations. Paradoxically, this tendency to broadcast unfamiliar artists creates a further separation between college radio and mainstream broadcasting, since commercial stations rely heavily on the repetition of well-known songs and groups. Finally, recent developments in copyright laws and broadcasting technology may also hamper students' ability to hone their skills on up-to-date systems that mirror those used by professional stations. Despite such challenges faced by traditional college radio stations, Creasman believes that college radio remains eminently worthwhile for its ability to bring together a campus community, in particular the college radio station staff. The rewards of college radio are not necessarily in huge listening audiences, but in the efforts of students working together to overcome the challenges of student-run radio. Paul Creasman's article is published in the May 2006 issue of *Feedback* (Vol. 47, No. 3), pages 17-24.

---Beth Jones

**Church Historian Dr. Dennis Okholm** (known affectionately to students and colleagues at Azusa Pacific as "Doc Ok") opens his articulate and provocative article on the necessity of studying church history and historical theology with a quote from Presbyterian pastor John Fry, an influential figure on the campus of McCormick Theological Seminary during the 1960s: "If you can't tell me where the church has been, you have no business telling me where it ought to go." Okholm compares the history of the church to the history of an extended family, observing that the "Christian family album [contains] snapshots of generations past that have communicated to the present generation certain Christian traits, behaviors, and beliefs. [. . .] Knowing how the tree has grown helps us to understand why Christians act or see things differently" (85). Okholm illustrates this observation through several examples of conflicts within church history that are present on or just below the surface of contemporary theology. For example, he outlines the late Medieval debate between the Nominalists, who believed that names and titles are arbitrarily assigned by human agency, and the Realists, who held that the ultimate authority of kings and priests is divinely ordained. While most contemporary Protestant evangelicals would not hesitate to side with the Nominalists over the Realists in this debate, Okholm complicates our understanding of historical theology by observing that this late Medieval argument resurfaces in the current theological debate regarding marriage. Is

marriage a divinely ordained institution limited to a man and a woman, as the Realists would have it, or is it an arbitrarily defined human relationship that may involve “various kinds of sexual relationships,” as the Nominalists might assert?

Okholm further illustrates the complicated necessity of the rigorous study of church history by observing that church historians are often deeply influenced in their pursuit of the discipline by personal factors such as geographical location and church background. A responsible study of church history thus embraces the diversity of perspectives on history and theology among historians of different backgrounds, locations, and generations. Okholm closes with a meditation on the vocation of the Christian, which, as church history demonstrates, goes beyond a “fire insurance” approach towards salvation to an active engagement in the work of Christ’s kingdom. Dennis Okholm’s perceptive article, “Church History: Surrounded by a Great Cloud of Witnesses” appears in *Christian College, Christian Calling: Higher Education in the Service of the Church*, edited by Steve Wilkens, Paul Shrier, and Ralph P. Martin, published in 2005 by AltaMira Press, pages 83-98.

---Beth Jones

**The editors of the Research Reporter welcome written reviews of your colleagues’ works! Please submit your reviews via campus mail or email to Carole Lambert in the Office of Faculty Research.**

**Lecturer Sarah Nova** clearly and succinctly portrays who, how, and why Bulgarians prevented the Nazis and their collaborators from deporting to Poland their Jewish population during World War II. She deftly reviews Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Fragility of Goodness*, filling in its lacunae with additional information drawn from David Cohen’s *The Survival*, Gabriele Nissim’s *L’uomo che fermo Hitler*, and Michael Bar-Zohar’s *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp*. She notes that the predominantly “non-Semitic Bulgarians” opted “to protect their Jewish compatriots” in a variety of ways. Key figures in this heroic stance against the Nazis’ prevailing “final solution” to “the Jewish question” were Dimitar Peshev, vice president of the Bulgarian National Assembly in 1943, and the Bulgarian King Boris III who yielded to local pressures and decided finally not to collaborate with Hitler and his officers on this point. Peshev believed that the destruction of Bulgarian Jews was morally wrong and would leave an indelible mark of shame on his small country if it were permitted. His strong stance lost him his position as vice president but did indeed contribute to saving fifty thousand Jews. Outcries and petitions against deporting the Jews also came from Bulgarian writers, lawyers, doctors, artists, and craftsmen plus the hierarchy of the Orthodox church and Evangelical Christians, along with Roman Catholic priests, including Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII. Reasons why the Bulgarians protected their Jews at this crucial time may be, according to Todorov, because of their integration both geographically and linguistically into the broader population and “the Bulgarians’ capacity for self-criticism that was used ‘against the temptation to make scapegoats of others.’” Professor Nova’s fine article “Bulgaria’s Response to the Holocaust as Portrayed in T. Todorov’s *La Fragilite du bien*” appears in the *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages*, Volume 7 (Spring 2006), pages 79-86.

---Carole Lambert

## **APU FACULTY RESEARCH**

*The Office of Faculty Research and the Office of Sponsored Research and Grants work to assist APU faculty with their research and dissemination endeavors, provide external research funding, and promote an academic climate that celebrates and strengthens the Azusa Pacific University community of Christian scholars and researchers.*

### **Office of Research Personnel:**

Director, Office of Research: Dr. Carole Lambert  
([CLambert@apu.edu](mailto:CLambert@apu.edu)); Consultant, Office of Research: Dr. Beverly Hardcastle Stanford ([BStanford@apu.edu](mailto:BStanford@apu.edu)); Director, Office of Sponsored Research and Grants: Dr. Luman Wing  
([LWing@apu.edu](mailto:LWing@apu.edu)); Administrative Assistant: Lydia Tracy  
([LTracy@apu.edu](mailto:LTracy@apu.edu))