

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious  
Studies Department

Classics and Religious Studies

---

1-2015

**Review of Ian Levy, Philip Krey, and Thomas Ryan, *The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Letter to the Romans*.**

Stephen E. Lahey

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/classicsfacpub>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Medieval Studies Commons](#)

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Classics and Religious Studies at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

IAN LEVY, PHILIP KREY, and THOMAS RYAN, *The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Letter to the Romans*. (The Bible in Medieval Tradition 2.) Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. 339. \$34. ISBN: 978-0-8028-0976-6.  
doi:10.1017/S003871341400267X

Paul's Letter to the Romans is the fullest account of Paul's overall theology, and hence is the primary document for understanding the earliest Christian thought. Commentaries on the Letter to the Romans generally provide theologians the perfect venue with which to depict their understanding of the basic elements of Christianity, and it would follow that students and proponents of medieval scripture exegesis and theology should have ready access to Roman commentaries in translation. Thomas Aquinas's commentary has recently become more widely available, and a translation of William of St. Thierry was published by Cistercian Publications in 1980, but until this volume, relatively little else has been available in English. The late H. Lawrence Bond, one of the founders of this series, decided that the time was ripe to provide a collection of the medieval commentators who were the most influential in the development of the theology of the age, and began this task but did not live to complete it. His coeditors worked to bring his translations into their final form and provided translations of other works; this volume serves as a worthy memorial to Larry's scholarship and spirit. The structure is simple: each chapter of the

Letter is given to a particular commentator, and some especially important figures cover more than one chapter. The order is generally chronological, with the early chapters representing the important commentators from the twelfth century. Peter Lombard's prologue contextualizes the letter in its historical and literary milieu and discusses its main points and its structure. The Cambridge Commentator, apparently a student of Abelard, demonstrates a willingness to engage in the kind of rigorous intellectual analysis of the text, which tendency raised the ire of figures like Bernard and William of St. Thierry. William is given the second chapter, where he begins to develop the theme of the Christian reliance upon grace and the correspondent need to be suspicious of one's own abilities. His discussion of Paul's account of Jewish law ends his chapter, which is followed by Abelard's commentary. This juxtaposition nicely illustrates the kind of tension that characterized twelfth-century scholastic exegesis.

Peter John Olivi's commentary on Romans 4–6 follows, exploring the force of Paul's arguments on the relation of faith and grace. The *kenosis* characterizing Paul's description of the Christian life provides Olivi the opportunity to explore the tension between assisted and unassisted reason. Aquinas provides the commentary for Romans 7, 8, and 12, continuing in explicating the Pauline theology of grace with analysis of the sense in which it directs human action. Romans 8 also contains a section on fear, allowing Thomas to restate the position he formulated in *Summa theologica IIa-IIae*, Q. 19. The great commentator Nicholas of Lyra is given Romans 9–11, 13, and 15. This is especially useful because, despite his signal importance for understanding later medieval theology as a whole, only his commentaries on the Song of Songs and on the Apocalypse are available in translation. The final figure represented is the earliest—the anonymous, likely Irish, commentator of Mont-Saint-Michel from the first part of the eleventh century. His commentary on Romans 14 explores the arguments about dietary regulations Paul attempted to mediate and affords an excellent introduction to early medieval scripture commentary. This edition, and the earlier compendium of Galatians commentary edited and translated by Ian Levy, represent an important and useful contribution to the body of medieval theology in translation, and a worthy memorial to the late Larry Bond.

STEPHEN LAHEY, University of Nebraska, Lincoln