

BOOK EXCERPT

A NOTE OF CONTEXT

Jerome's mode of biblical exegesis is "classical" in the following sense. The great founding figures of Latin literary culture did not endeavor to create new ideas out of whole cloth, but drew extensively on the Greek tradition for the substance and outline of their thought: Lucretius on Epicurus, Virgil on Homer, Cicero on lost Greek sources, and Terence on Menander. Moreover, Jerome's illustrious Latin Christian predecessors, such as Hilary of Poitiers and Ambrose of Milan, used their fluency in Greek to draw upon Origen of Alexandria's work and assimilate it into their own writings. Such an approach unites the minds of the East and the West; it shows respect for the inherited Christian exegetical tradition and avoids innovation. Thus Jerome is not ashamed of his close adherence to Origen's far older Christian exegesis of the prophets. Jerome thinks he should be applauded rather than condemned for this, since Origen surpasses everyone in his Christian interpretation of the prophets.

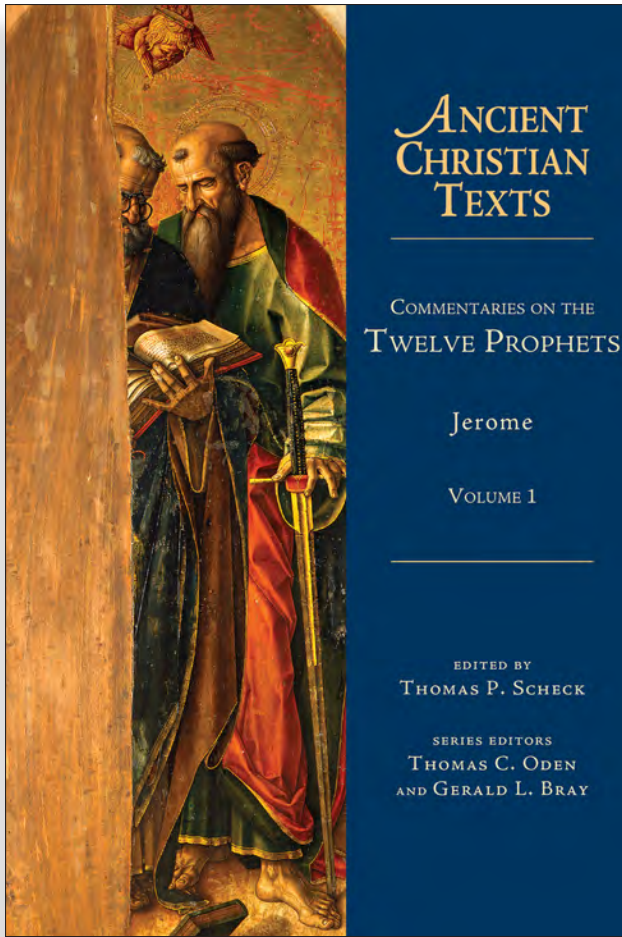
—THOMAS P. SCHECK, volume editor

EXCERPT TAKEN FROM THE PREFACE TO MICAH, BOOK TWO

The prefaces of our books silence the curses of the envious who assert publicly that I write nonsense, sterile and barren of speech, and that although I do not know how to speak I cannot be silent. . . .

For what they say, that I compile from the books of Origen and that it is not becoming for the writings of ancients to be blended (*contaminari*), which they think is a vehement curse, I regard this as a very great praise. For I wish to imitate one who, I do not doubt, pleases you and all experienced people. For if it is a crime to translate the things well spoken by the Greeks, let them accuse Ennius, and Maro [Virgil], Plautus, Caecilius [Stattius], and Terence, and also Tully [Cicero], and other eloquent men, who translated not only verses but many chapters and very long books and whole narratives. Moreover, our Hilary would be guilty of theft because he translated nearly a thousand verses according to the meaning of the above mentioned Origen on forty psalms. I earnestly desire to emulate the carelessness of all of these [Latin writers] rather than to keep in darkness the diligence of those [Greeks]. However, it is now time to hammer out another book on Micah and to crush the reborn heads of the hydra with the prophet's ῥοπαλφ.





The newest addition to the Ancient Christian Texts series offers the first complete English translation of Jerome's *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets*, giving readers access to what scholars consider to be Jerome's greatest achievement.

Jerome (c. 347–419/20), one of the West's four doctors of the church, was recognized early on as one of the church's foremost translators, commentators and advocates of Christian asceticism. Skilled in Hebrew and Greek in addition to his native Latin, he was thoroughly familiar with Jewish traditions and brought them to bear on his understanding of the Old Testament. Beginning in 379, Jerome used his considerable linguistic skills to translate Origen's commentaries and, eventually, to translate and comment on Scripture himself.

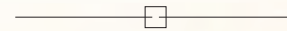
In 392, while preparing his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, Jerome wrote his commentary on Nahum, the first in a series of commentaries on five of the twelve minor prophets. Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai and Habakkuk soon followed. He was interrupted in 393 by the Origenist controversy, after which he became a vocal critic of Origen of Alexandria—a controversy he referred to in his commentaries on Jonah and Obadiah in 396.

This Ancient Christian Texts volume, edited and translated by Thomas Scheck in collaboration with classics students from Ave Maria University, includes these seven commentaries. The forthcoming second volume will contain Jerome's commentaries on Zechariah, Malachi, Hosea, Joel and Amos, all of which were written in 406, completing the group of twelve prophets.

ADVANCED >>>

JUNE 2016 | **REQUEST EXAM COPY**

368 pages, hardcover, 978-0-8308-2916-3, \$60.00



Currently Available: 14 volumes,
978-0-8308-2920-0, \$840.00

ADVANCED >>>

THOMAS P. SCHECK (PhD, University of Iowa) is associate professor of theology at Ave Maria University in Ave Maria, Florida. He is the author of *Origen and the History of Justification* and *Erasmus's Life of Origen*. He is also the translator in the Fathers of the Church series of *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (two volumes) and *St. Jerome: Commentary on Matthew*. Recently Scheck published new translations of St. Jerome's Commentaries on Isaiah and Ezekiel in the Ancient Christian Writers series.