

The reception and appropriation of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in selected Ethiopic texts

[La recepción y apropiación de 1 Corintios 7,1-9 en textos
etiópicos escogidos]

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Resumen: Este estudio analiza la recepción y uso de 1 Corintios 7,1-9 en el comentario paulino *Andämta*, el *Fäṭḥa Nägäšt* y *Mare Yishaq*, a la luz de las interpretaciones patrísticas seleccionadas. La recepción de 1 Corintios 7,1-9 en estos textos revela que la interpretación etiópica del texto tiene mucho en común con la trayectoria ‘ascética moderada’ (Orígenes, Juan Crisóstomo) identificada en los siglos II-IV, al tiempo que sugiere una reinterpretación única del texto sobre la base de un entendimiento “cristianizado” de las restricciones levíticas.

Abstract: This study looks at the reception and appropriation of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in the Pauline *Andämta* commentary, the *Fäṭḥa Nägäšt* and *Mare Yishaq*, in light of selected Patristic interpretations. The reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in these texts reveals that the Ethiopic interpretation of the text has much in common with the ‘moderate ascetic’ trajectory (Origen, John Chrysostom) identified in the 2nd–4th centuries as well as suggesting a unique reinterpretation of the text on the basis of a ‘Christianized’ understanding of Levitical restrictions.

Palabras clave: Etiópico. Recepción. Ascetismo. Biblia

Key words: Ethiopic. Reception. Asceticism. Bible.



Introduction

The historical influence of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in relation to the development of a Christian understanding of marriage warrants a thorough study of the interpretive history of the text.¹ This brief study will look at the reception history of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, in selected Ethiopic texts, in light of influential instances of Patristic interpretation. I will attempt to demonstrate that Ethiopic interpretations of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 reflect continuity with specific trends exhibited in the Patristic reception of the text, as well as introducing discontinuous elements which suggest an indigenous shift in interpretation.

This study will begin with a very brief reflection on the theoretical framework undergirding a reception-historical analysis before moving on to look at selected Patristic interpretations of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. I will then look at the reception of this text in the Pauline *Andämta* Commentary, the *Fäṭha Nägäst* and *Mäshafä Mar Yéshaq*. In conclusion I will attempt to identify any potential Patristic influences as well unique contextual reinterpretations in the Ethiopic interpretive traditions.

1. Reception History: A Framework

Reception history proposes a model which allows us to bring historical interpretations into the contemporary dialogue between reader and text resulting in a three-way interaction.² This approach allows us to study the influence of different interpretations on subsequent generations of

¹ David G. HUNTER, "The Reception and Interpretation of Paul in Late Antiquity: 1 Corinthians and the Ascetic Debates," in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lorenzo DiTOMMASO and Lucian TURCESU; vol. I-II; presented at the Montreal Colloquium in Honor of Charles Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 164.

² David PARRIS, *Reading the Bible with Giants: How 2000 Years of Biblical Interpretation Can Shed New Light on Old Texts* (London: Paternoster, 2006), p. xii.

interpreters. Reception history is based in the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the literary hermeneutics of Hans Robert Jauss. Gadamer's critique of the historicist quest served to reintroduce the significance of tradition in the act of interpretation.³ He determined that each reader is a historically located, finite being and thus part of a process in which past and present are in constant dialogue. Accordingly "two regulative norms determine the validity of any interpretation: the subject matter of the text and those interpretations which are recognized by tradition (consciously and/or part of our pre-understanding) as authoritative."⁴

The literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss built up on Gadamer's critique to argue that literary history which was founded on the ideal of objective historiography enforces a 'closed past' which ignores both the 'otherness of the past' and the 'lived praxis' of the reader's experience.⁵ Jauss proposes instead a theoretical model which combines "Marxism's historical mediation and Formalism's advances in the realm of aesthetic perception with his concept of the horizon of expectation of the reader" to analyze the dialogical relationship between the text and successive readers.⁶ Jauss's model offers a corrective to both Marxism and Formalism by recognizing the reader as a formative agent. Thus the dialogue between work and audience is not only reproductive but also productive of meaning.⁷ Jauss allows for a reciprocal relationship between text and reader whereby a literary work is understood both in terms of its influence on its readers and

³ Mueller VOLMER, *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), p. 261.

⁴ David PARRIS, "Reception Theory: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Literary Theory, and Biblical Interpretation" (PhD, Nottingham, 1999), p. 104.

⁵ Anthony C. THISELTON, "Reception Theory, H. R. Jauss and the Formative Power of Scripture", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65:3 (2012), p. 290.

⁶ Hans Robert JAUSS, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, translated from the German by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1982), p. 137.

⁷ H. R. JAUSS, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, pp. 28–32.

in relation to how encountering successive generations of interpreters with new horizons of expectation leads to new production.⁸ The model proposed by Jauss will serve as the framework for my study of the Ethiopic reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 below.

2. A cursory look at Patristic Interpretations of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

The 2nd century reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 is defined primarily within the context of the highly polemical debate between ‘heretic’ (especially Gnostic) and ‘orthodox’ interpretations.⁹ Clement of Alexandria in *Stromateis III* (CE 175-202) provides us with a good example of an Orthodox response to heretic interpretations of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9.¹⁰ He supports his claims in this treatise through a canonical reading of 1 Corinthians 7:1-12; 27-40 alongside, Matthew 19, 1 Timothy 4:1-3; and Rom 14:2-21. In this context Clement argues against the followers of Basilides, who allegedly understood 1 Corinthians 7:9 (‘it is better to marry than to burn’) as counsel against sexual renunciation. The Apostle Paul’s preference for abstinence, he notes, is clearly stated in 7:1b which affirms the option of sexual renunciation [1.4]. Clement, also opposes the Syrian Gnostic Tatian who claimed that if abstinence makes prayer possible (1 Cor. 7:5) than sexual intercourse – even in marriage – is fornication which destroys it. Paul, according to Clement permitted marriage as an appropriate precaution against immorality (1 Cor. 7:2) thus affirming monogamy although not licensing incontinent behavior in marriage (1 Cor. 7:5).

⁸ H. R. JAUSS, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, pp. 19.

⁹ Charles KANNENGISSER, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* vol.1 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 379-380.

¹⁰ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromateis III*, Translated and Edited by Henry CHADWICK *Alexandrian Christianity «The Library of Christian Classics» 2* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 40-92.

A more ascetic reception of these verses can be discovered in the third century interpreter Tertullian (CE 155/160 -225). Three treatises written by Tertullian on marriage (*To His Wife, of Exhortation to Chastity and On Monogamy*)¹¹ seem to portray different levels of rigor on the issue of sexual renunciation.¹² Like Clement, Tertullian interprets 7:1b as describing the apostle's preference for sexual renunciation. Unlike Clement however Tertullian does not understand 7:2 to be an approval of marriage but rather an indulgence. He argues the 'good' of marriage is undermined because it is preferable only in comparison to burning (7:9). While his severe stance against re-marriage is the central element in Tertullian's ascetic thought it is nonetheless clear from these texts that his views on celibacy in general are closer to that of the gnostic Taitan than to the ideal of continence promoted by Clement.

In light of the harsher ascetic views adopted by Tertullian, the moderation found in another writer of the same period - Origen of Alexandria (CE 185 - 254) in his Homily on 1 Corinthians - is particularly striking.¹³ Origen, unlike Clement and Tertullian, understands 7:1b as referring to discord in Corinth caused by one partner in a marriage seeking to live a celibate life. Paul, he notes, is more concerned with encouraging the Corinthians to live a pure life and is thus careful not to denigrate either marriage or virginity. Moreover according to Origen the principle of love (1 Cor. 13:5) necessitates that a husband or a wife protect the weaker partner from temptation even when seeking to pursue the more pure course of celibacy (vv. 3-5). He develops his interpretation of 7:5 by picking up

¹¹ TERTULLIAN OF CARTHAGE, "Of Exhortation to Chastity", Translated and Edited by Alexander ROBERTS, James DONALDSON, and A. Cleveland COXE, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* vol. IV (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997) electronic edition.

¹² Geoffrey D. DUNN, *Tertullian, «The Early Church Fathers»* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 11.

¹³ ORIGEN, "Homilies on 1 Corinthians", Translated and Edited by Judith KOVACS *1st Corinthians Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators «The Church's Bible»* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), pp. 104-115.

the theme of purity in two Old Testament texts (Ex. 19:5; 1 Samuel 21:4-6) thus endowing abstinence in marriage with cultic significance. He is however careful to distance himself from the interpretation of the 'followers of Marcion' who forbade marriage on the basis of 7:5. Harmony in a marriage, according to Origen, is a special gift given to Christian partners who live in moderation, just as the purer path of celibacy is a gift of God (7:7).

John Chrysostom (CE 344/354 - 407), in his 19th Homily on 1 Corinthians, offers a similarly moderate exposition of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9.¹⁴ He begins by reading 7:1-2 as a two part response to a Corinthian question about sexual renunciation. Chrysostom understands 7:1b to introduce the discourse which establishes virginity as the better and more superior course. Seemingly in response to questions current in his context, he makes the additional point of denying that these verses are intended for priests alone. Practicing continence without the agreement of the other spouse he argues is defrauding he/she who is the owner of the body and destroying concord (v.5).

Chrysostom further argues that the apostle's recommendation to practice abstinence for the purposes of prayer refers to instances when complete devotion to prayer is desired and does not suggest that prayer is prohibited otherwise (as argued by Tertullian and Origen). Like Clement before him Chrysostom employs the Pastoral Epistles to draw a more positive portrayal of marriage from the larger context of Pauline thought. Ultimately however, he concludes that although Paul refrains from imposing this lifestyle on all for fear they will burn (7:9) chastity is the higher ideal.

Thus a cursory look at selected instances of the Patristic reception history of our text, demonstrates at least three different trajectories of interpretation. The first strand is the severely ascetic trajectory discovered

¹⁴ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, 'Homilies on First Corinthians', Translated and Edited by Philip SCHAFF, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series I (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), p. 105.

primarily in Tatian and to a much more limited extent Tertullian. Clement, on the other hand, reveals an anti-ascetic trajectory of interpretation which sought to highlight Paul's affirmation of marriage. A third trajectory, represented in our study by Origen and Chrysostom, displays a moderately ascetic interpretation which, while promoting sexual renunciation as the higher ideal, nonetheless recognizes monogamous marriage as a lesser but legitimate alternative. This serves as the basis of an ascetic hierarchy which, while permitting marriage, also degraded it in comparison to celibacy.¹⁵

3. The Reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in Ethiopic Texts

1.1. The Reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in the Pauline *Andämta*

The introduction to the *Andämta* Commentary [AC] on 1 Corinthians begins by listing the diverse issues addressed in the epistle, including those of sexual renunciation and marriage. This is later taken up and dealt with in detail in the verse by verse discussion for chapter 7.¹⁶

The commentary for this chapter begins by offering two alternative interpretations for verses 1-4. *Andäm* - [Firstly] After Paul left Corinth the believers there disregarded his teaching on monogamy and became promiscuous leading to jealousy and discord. 7:1b ይኒይሶ ለብአሲ ኢቀሪስ አንስት (it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with) is thus an insincere slogan from Corinth designed to win the apostle's approval. Paul, however, is aware of their sinfulness and instructs each man to remain faithful to his wife and each woman to her husband (vv. 2-3) so as to avoid immorality. Within the context of the prevailing promiscuity in Corinth therefore 'do

¹⁵ Hunter, "The Reception and Interpretation", p. 191.

¹⁶ *Andämta Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul [Ye Kidus Paulos Mäshaf Nibabbuna Tirguamew- የ ቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጻሕፍት ንባቡና ትርጓሜዎ]* (Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1996), pp. 144-146.

not deprive one another' also refers to defrauding a spouse of his or her rights by committing adultery.

Andām [secondly/alternatively] Paul had acknowledged the desire of a group in Corinth to live purely by renouncing sexual relations and had appointed presbyters and deacons to minister to them. (The AC suggests the possibility that all the believers in Corinth had renounced sexual relations but concludes that this is unlikely because Paul would not deprive a great city like Corinth the necessity of procreation. Therefore, it was most likely that it was only some within the Corinthian congregation who had decided to remain celibate.) These ministers had written to him with the troubling news that those committed to celibacy had fallen into promiscuity. Paul thus writes 7:1b to convey that it is better for a man to live according to the spiritual law (ሕገ ነፍስ) instead of the law of the flesh (ሕገ ሥጋ) or according to the law of angels (ሕገ መላእክት) and not that of animals (ሕገ እንስሳት). He, however, concedes that monogamous marriage is permissible for those unable to live according to this higher ideal (7:2). Accordingly, he prohibits sexual renunciation in marriage (vv. 3-4) except for appropriate abstinence on feast days, during fasts and at times of female impurity – i.e. during menstruation and after childbirth (*Fəṯha Nägäst* II.24).

The AC understands 7:5 to contain two levels of instruction. The first level (*Andām*) seemingly deals with ordinary prayer: for the purposes of which husband and wife are instructed to pray separately – he outside in the main room (አዳራሽ) her in the private sleeping quarters (አልፍኝ) or alternatively her behind the curtains of the bed and he on the other side. They are however not instructed to sleep separately.

On the second level (*Andām*), however, the AC identifies a strict prohibition against sleeping in the same bed during feast days, fasts and times of female impurity. This practice is designed to discipline the body and train it in purity. At the end of the proscribed period, however, a husband and wife should return to the marriage bed to avoid temptation by Satan leading her to fall into sin with her male servants and him with his

serving maids (እስዋን ከቋሚ ከለገሚ እሱን ከገረድ ከደንገጡር ይጥላቸዋልና). For, reads the AC, the body created from the four elements/attributes is weak.

The AC reads vv. 6-7 together to conclude that the commendation for marriage given in the previous verses is a concession and not a command. Paul’s obvious preference, explains the commentary, was that all would follow his example by renouncing sexual relations and living in purity (ንጽሕ ጡብቆ). This, however, is not a command for all to practice abstinence for the best option is that all live according to his or her calling from God. The AC supports this assertion by citing Matthew 19:12. (According to the AC for this verse, those “who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” are those who have renounced sexual relations to live according to the spiritual law [*Həgä Näfs*].) Interestingly the AC also understands v.8 to counsel abstinence to the unmarried and the divorced as opposed to the widowed.

The commentary on Corinthians 7:9, however, concedes that if one is not able to live according to *Həgä Näfs* it is better to marry than to burn (cf. AC for Mat. 19:12). The commentary goes on to corroborate this point by citing the Ethiopic translation of the writings of Isaac of Nineveh (*Mar Yéshaq*) እስመ ከመ እሳት ንብልብልት እስመ ደኩመ ሕሊና ኢይክል ተራክቦተ ነበልባል ዘግብራት. Loosely translated this reads “It [lust] is like a burning fire or flame. He who has a weak conscience cannot have a relationship with the fire which burns the flesh.”

As I have attempted to show in our discussion above the AC seems to generally presume that Paul had taught sexual renunciation while in Corinth. Nonetheless the interpretation of the text in the *Andəmta* reflects a type of moderate ascetic interpretation similar to that found in Origen and John Chrysostom. Like the earlier interpreters, the Ethiopic commentary assumes an ascetic hierarchy whereby sexual renunciation is the ideal but monogamous marriage is preferred to promiscuity. The commentary, however goes on to elaborate a system of abstinence in marriage for “feast days, fasts and times of female impurity” as well as for the purposes of prayer which seem to convey a unique reinterpretation of the text along the lines of Old Testament restrictions on sexual relations.

3.2. The Reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in The *Fəṭḥa Nāgäst*

The *Fəṭḥa Nāgäst* (FN: Ethiopic canon law governing all aspects of life¹⁷) first employs 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in I.10 መከላከት ወመከላይይት - (monks and nuns) which legislates the different aspects of the monastic life.¹⁸ This section begins by asserting that monasticism is the wisdom of the law of Christ (የመሠረተዎት ህግ) and claiming that monks are earthly angels, heavenly people. It next utilizes 7:7 in relation to Matthew 22:30 to demonstrate the superiority of celibacy. Thus, according to the FN, Paul renounced marriage to emulate the resurrected life - when marriage will not exist and believers will live like the angels in heaven. Celibacy in the FN is a commitment to safeguard the purity of both spirit and flesh to ensure complete devotion to God. It goes on to identify two types of celibates: those who forsake marriage (virgins) and have become eunuchs for the Kingdom as in Matthew 19:12 (cf. AC for 7:9) and those who are no longer married (widows, divorced people) because they have renounced their wives in this world to receive the promise of reward as in Matthew 19:29.

The FN also refers to 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in II.24 ስለ ጋብቻ - (On Marriage). In this section vv. 8-9 are used to demonstrate that Paul allowed marriage although he preferred all to remain unmarried as he was (7:9). This is not given as a command (7:6) but as a concession, and a person who is able to triumph over lust has no need of marriage (7:1-2). The FN, however, balances this by reading 1 Corinthian 7 alongside Hebrews 13:4 to show that there is no condemnation in marriage when continence is not possible. Accordingly there is a distinction between choosing a life of abstinence for the sake of purity and claiming that the married are prohibited from entering the heavenly kingdom thus denigrating marriage. This argument suggests that the FN maybe aware of the larger debate

¹⁷ Roger COWLEY, "Patristic Introduction in the Ethiopian Andəmta Commentary Tradition," *Ostricken Stud.* 29:1 (1980), p. 44.

¹⁸ *Fəṭḥa Nāgäst Nibabbuna Tirguamew* -ፍትሐ ነገሥት ንባቡና ትርጓሜው - (Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1990).

between radical ascetics and more moderate interpreters of the text in the Patristic and later contexts.

The FN goes on to interpret 1 Corinthians 7:4-7 in terms of the love relationship amongst Christians. Husbands and wives are given authority over the body of their spouse, and conjugal rights are asserted because the principle of love demands that each be considerate of the other. Therefore, a married couple should only abstain for the purposes of prayer, during the holy periods of fasting, during times of female impurity (Lev. 20:18), during Passion Week and during pregnancy (cf. Geez version and AC on 7:5). This prohibition according to the FN assures purity in both the medical and spiritual sense. Accordingly, abstaining during times of female impurity ensures children are pure from skin diseases while continence for the purposes fasting and prayer limits the gratification of the base lust of the atavistic nature (እንስሳዊት ነፍስ ከፍትወት እንስሳዊት መከልከል). This according to the FN does honor to the spirit according to its profound characteristic (ነባቢት ነፍስ እንደ ክብር እንደ መንፈሳዊት [ረቂቅ] ጠባይዋ ሥራ).

Like Clement of Alexandria, the FN commends continence in marriage arguing that sexual relationship was allowed by those who followed the Lord (i.e. the Apostles) for the purposes of procreation and not to gratify lust. In other aspects, the FN exhibits the more ascetic, but still moderate perspective of Origen and Chrysostom. Like the AC the FN also reflects the seemingly indigenous reinterpretation of the text to include Levitical restrictions expanded to include Christian religious occasions such as Passion Week.

3.3. The Reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in the Commentary on *Māshafä Mar Yēshaq*

The Ethiopic *Māshafä Mar Yēshaq* (MMY)¹⁹ is primarily made up of diverse exhortations to guide the monastic life. Article IV of this work, structured in a question and answer form (ተዋስኦ - ተሰጥኦ – akin to Socratic dialogue), presents key aspects of the biblical and theological insight which governs the writings. My study will therefore focus on identifying the presentation of an ascetic hierarchy and any echo of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in the text of this Article and the indigenous commentary material attached to it.

The appropriation of an ascetic hierarchy in MMY is primarily founded on promoting Jesus and the Apostle Paul as model ascetics. While for John Chrysostom Paul is the monk *par excellence* for *Mar Yēshaq* Jesus is the ultimate ascetic who was led by the spirit to a monastery (i.e. the desert) and who succeeded - where Adam failed - in fulfilling the command to abstain thus triumphing over Satan and the passions (ፍትወታት). The all appropriate answer to ‘who is worthy to be called wise?’ according to MMY, is therefore he who follows in the footsteps of Jesus and renounces this world (ዎፍኔ). Similarly the highest level of human understanding is despising the world – i.e., rejecting sin - for this is only possible to a person who possesses spiritual wisdom.

The primary echo of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in this section is found in IV.5, also within the context of the ascetic exemplars, Jesus and Paul. In response to a question about the discipline needed to train the flesh to abstain from worldly practices, MMY argues that Paul affirms the monastic ideal modeled by Jesus and instructs those who wish to share in the sufferings of Christ to be as he was and renounce this world (7:7). Fleeing from the world, elaborates MMY, means avoiding all sources of temptation to the abstinent monk. Therefore a monk should not only avoid coming near a

¹⁹ *Māshafä Mar Yēshaq* [መጽሐፈ ማር ዮሴፍ] *Māshafä Mänkosät*. Book 1 (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebreselassie Printers, 1982).

woman (7:1b ይኔይሶ ለብአሲ ኢቀሪበ አንሰኝ) but should take care not to look at a female for it could cause him to entertain lewd thoughts.’

MMY thus holds monks to a higher degree of ‘purity’ than even that suggested by 1 Corinthians 7:1b. The AC commentary to MMY argues this is justified because ascetics who have renounced this world are able to attain the original innocence and sinless perfection of the first humans.²⁰

My brief look at one section of *Mar Yéshaq* has served to identify a highly ascetic reinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:7 and 7:1 serving to support the development of a higher standard for ascetics than suggested by the text. The notion of the ‘perfected Christian’ able to suppress earthly desires, also proposed by Origen, is identified by *Mar Yéshaq* as an ideal, which can only be attained by those who have renounced this world.

Conclusion

The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 in the AC reveals that the Ethiopic interpretation of the text has much in common with the ‘moderate ascetic’ trajectory (Origen, John Chrysostom) identified in the 2nd-4th centuries. As I have also attempted to show the discussion of marriage and celibacy in the FN reflects the appropriation of an ascetic hierarchy as an interpretive framework for understanding 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. This hierarchy is developed and articulated in the MMY. The Ethiopic reception of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, however, also introduces a system of abstinence in marriage for “feast days, fasts and times of female impurity” as well as for the purposes of prayer which seems to suggest a unique reinterpretation of the text, in the Ethiopic context on the basis of a ‘Christianized’ understanding of Levitical restrictions.

²⁰ The most striking story is that of Zacharias: the son of a monk who had, with the permission of his wife, left his family for the ascetic life Zacharias joined his father in the monastic community during a time of famine. His young beardless face, however, proved too effeminate for even the most senior of the monks and he was forced to disfigure himself to earn the right to continue living in the community.

On the basis of the study above, therefore, I conclude that Ethiopic traditions demonstrate continuity with trajectories of Patristic interpretation as well as exhibiting discontinuities in the form of indigenous reinterpretation. This in turn serves to indicate the significance of reception history as a tool in the study of Ethiopic commentary materials and suggests fertile ground for future study.

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