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Review of The Emancipation of Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1590-1670, by Dirk van Miert

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The period of the seventeenth century was of fundamental importance for the history of modern biblical interpretation. It was primarily in that century when the philological and other tools of earlier biblical exegesis and study were utilized in a way that was becoming recognizable as modern biblical criticism, even when it remained theological. In The Emancipation of Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1590–1670, Dirk van Miert makes an important contribution to the scholarship of seventeenth-century biblical interpretation. Scholars interested in the exegesis of this time period ignore Van Miert’s work at their own peril. His account is as careful as it is highly nuanced and sheds important light on the role of philology in the biblical exegetical work of key figures from within the seventeenth century. The focus of the volume is on the Dutch Republic, which proved to be such an important region for “free thinkers” and radical philosophical inquiry, thus standard intellectuals from that region such as Hugo Grotius and Joseph Scaliger, who, although French, taught at the University of Leiden. Figures outside of the Dutch Republic, such as Isaac La Peyrère, who visited the Dutch Republic, are also included, principally because of their influence in Dutch exegetical and philological circles and debates.