Fisher has provided an extremely thorough study of exegetical and theological perspectives on Hebrews presented by the sixteenth-century Reformed scholar, Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531). Though highly regarded for his scholarship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Oecolampadius is often overlooked today. Fisher wants to “recapture the voice of Oecolampadius as an important contributor to the history of biblical interpretation and exegesis” (14). Oecolampadius became a close friend of Melanchthon. He moved to Basel in September 1515, mainly to help Erasmus with the first edition of his Novum Instrumentum. He earned his doctorate in theology at Basel and became a priest and Patristics scholar. But through his participation in humanism, Oecolampadius became involved in the Reform movement and became a friend of Zwingli in December 1522. He was appointed professor of theology in Basel, but when the city council decreed all preaching must be based on the Bible, Oecolampadius' preaching was sanctioned. He joined Zwingli at the Marburg Colloquy (1529) to debate Luther and others.

After Basel became Reformed, Oecolampadius had an influence on its theology, and “most of the city’s official theology derived from Oecolampadius, even after his death” (21). It was Oecolampadius who wrote the initial draft, which Oswald Myconius turned into the Basel Confession (1534). Luther, Beza, John à Lasco, and others praised Oecolampadius' scholarship with Bucer saying that “there was not a ‘greater theologian’” (22).

Fisher’s work analyzes Oecolampadius’ exegesis in his Hebrews commentary (1534) to locate his hermeneutical approach within the general history of biblical interpretation. Core chapters deal with the background of the letter to the Hebrews, the Superiority of Christ, the Priesthood of Christ, and Christ as the Better Covenant.

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In particular, Fisher goes beyond others who have described Oecolampadius’ approach as “Christocentric” or “Christological.” He demonstrates Oecolampadius’ “recovery and adaptation of the interpretive notion of scopus (skopos, Eng.: ‘aim’ or ‘goal’) from the Eastern fathers” and shows this was “a key step in the gradual shift away from the predominance of the fourfold sense of Scripture toward a strong emphasis on the literal and historical sense in later Reformed interpreters” (70). For Oecolampadius, Jesus Christ is the scopus of all Scripture. Thus Fisher labeled the reformer’s interpretative method a “Christoscopic approach to Scripture” (30). In his commentary on Isaiah (lectures, 1523; published, 1525), Oecolampadius maintained: “For every Scripture looks to Christ as its goal (scopum)” (54). In the Hebrews commentary, he wrote, in what Fisher calls Oecolampadius’ “most definitive statement that ‘every Scripture aims at Christ, as the unique pre-established goal (scopum)’” (192). These types of quotations could be multiplied throughout Oecolampadius’ extensive exegetical works. Oecolampadius read biblical texts with an eye toward their Christological and ecclesiological sense. However, this did not mean he glossed over the texts’ original meanings and contexts. As he wrote, it was “necessary to remember the histories of the times of the prophets.” They did not “disregard their own time.” Only after this was established could the interpreter look to how texts may “ PREFigure mysteries.” The “diligent interpreter” should not disregard either but rather “first to compose the history, then also to remove the covers of the mysteries referred to by the apostles” (56). Oecolampadius’ approach was more complex than simply “promise/fulfillment.” For, as Fisher notes, “it became increasingly clear that the true subject of every scripture is Christ and his kingdom—but each passage may look forward to Christ in different ways” (57).

Oecolampadius’ sustained exegetical work and detailed commentaries set a direction for Reformed interpreters. According to Fisher, Oecolampadius’ Christoscopic approach led “other later interpreters, including John Calvin” to pick up “some of his theology, exegesis, and especially his approach to Scripture” (234). Even as a “precritical” exegete, Oecolampadius’ approach can now be appreciated by those interested in the theological interpretation of Scripture.

The wealth of detail and insights in Fisher’s study shows the Basel exegete to have had similarities and differences with those who came before and came after him. Oecolampadius helped move away from the traditional fourfold sense of Scripture toward “a stronger emphasis on the literal and historical sense in later Reformed practices” (236). Though adopting the scopus emphasis from Cyril of Alexandria and others, Oecolampadius’ exposition of Scripture was “more characteristic of the Antiochene tradition, and particularly Chrysos-