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Book Reviews

PAPERS FROM THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

A feature of Old Testament scholarship in the Netherlands in recent years has been the emergence of the ‘Amsterdam School’, a group of scholars who wish to work with the biblical text itself rather than, as is so often the case, what is assumed to lie behind the text: sources, particular historical events, and so on. A periodical, *Amsterdamse Cahiers* is devoted to their work, and now the first volume of a Supplement Series has appeared: *The Rediscovery of the Hebrew Bible* (Shaker Publishing, Maastricht, 1999, Fl 29.95, pp. xvii + 158, ISBN 90-423-0104-X), edited by J. W. Dyk, P. J. van Middelaar, W. van der Slot, and E. J. Venema. Most of the essays in this collection are concerned with the implication of the translation process, the translation into German by Babers and Rozenweig, and the English form of the Pentateuch by Everett Fox are particularly commended. It is interesting to note that those intending to preach on a particular passage are urged to begin by making their own translation from the Hebrew, preferably in colonic form, and then read it aloud, rather than rely on the second-hand ‘inspiration’ of commentators. Several of the ten essays in the present collection attempt just that process (apart from the reading aloud), with Genesis 22, the ‘golden calf’ story and the account of Gideon.

Included also are some essays which seem not to be especially indebted to the Amsterdam method; in particular, an interesting piece by K. A. D. Smelik on the use and misuse of the Hebrew Bible as a historical source, and some reflections by E. Talstra on the place of theology within reader-response exegesis. The whole collection emerges from a month-long conference, and it is not surprising that the end-product is quite varied. All the essays have been translated into English, and it seems rash to be critical in the light of this courtesy, but users of the book should be warned that its English is often very idiosyncratic. Overall I found much interesting matter for reflection among these essays, but rather doubt whether either my preaching or my academic engagement with the text will be greatly changed by them.

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THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

In this lengthy study, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2/112, Mohr Siebeck, 2000, DM 128.00, pp. 528, ISBN 3-16-147243-8), James A. Kelsocher gives the most thorough investigation to date of Mark 16:9–20, the well-known ‘long ending’ to Mark. After a critical review of previous scholarship, Kelsocher analyses the dependence of the passage upon Christian traditions and sources, concluding that there is no clear evidence of Mark, Matthew, John, Luke and Acts, and no evidence of the use of other Christian texts and, contra Hug, no evidence of oral traditions used either. Contra Mirecki, these verses are not part of some now lost work but were written specifically as an ending for Mark.

Based on citations in second-century texts, the verses must have been composed shortly after 120 AD, and this in turn indicates that already at that point the four Gospels were circulating as a collection (which tallies with T. J. Heeckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum vorgestaltigen Evangelium* (WUNT 2/120, Mohr Siebeck, 1999). Yet, clearly, the text of these writings was not immune from the sort of ‘improvement’ represented in this addition to Mark.

In several further chapters Kelsocher investigates the genre of these verses, and the theme of miracles and mission, concluding that Mark 16:9–20 most closely relates to themes and viewpoints in the second-century apologists. There follow lengthy investigations of handling serpents and drinking deadly poisons, showing that (1) these were meaningful claims in the ancient world, and (2) that there is, however, scant basis for thinking that such actions really formed part of the missionary efforts of Christians of these early centuries.

At all points, the investigation is impressively thorough and the reasoning cogent. This is now surely the most intensive and persuasive analysis of the Markan long ending, and a valuable contribution to our understanding of how and why these verses were composed.

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LUKE-ACTS AS EPIC

Identifying the genre of a writing is widely agreed to be fundamental to its interpretation – hence the interest in this question in biblical studies. But it has been hard to reach agreement about the Gospels or Acts, and the issue is complicated by the question whether ‘Luke-Acts’ (to retain H. J. Cadbury’s coinage) should be considered a single work. In her stimulating Harvard dissertation, *The Past as Legacy* (Fortress Press, 2000, £11.99, pp. x + 230, ISBN 0-8006-3225-7), Marianne Palmer Bozzi proposes, instead of the consensus view of Luke-Acts as historiography, that it is a historical epic analogous to Virgil’s *Aeneid*. The differences are obvious, but Bozzi finds suggestive parallels. Whether or not one is persuaded, her account of epic is instructive and the interpretation of Acts (if not the Gospel) is illuminating. Virgil gives the destiny of Rime a religious flavour. This can be compared with Luke’s salvation history as read through more secular spectacles. The death of the hero and continuation of his mission by his followers is divinely guided and fulfils the divine plan. The historicity