

Book Reviews

Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts, editors. *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xv + 725 pp. Hardback. ISBN 9780199204540. N. p.

The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible is presented in form of 44 chapters in two parts. Part I includes 12 chapters on the reception history of the biblical material (contributors' names in parentheses): Genesis (Rachel Havrelock), Job (John F. A. Sawyer), Psalms (Katharine J. Dell), Isaiah (John F. A. Sawyer), Ezekiel (Paul M. Joyce), Daniel (John J. Collins), Judges (David M. Gunn), the Gospel of John (Catrin H. Williams), Romans (Guy J. Williams), 1 Corinthians (Judith L. Kovacs), Galatians (John Riches), and Revelation (Christopher Rowland, who also served as consultant editor of the volume). Part II features the remaining chapters on a variety of topics, such as: The Bible and Iconography (Albert C. Labriola), Linguistic and Cultural Influences on Interpretation in Translations of the Bible (David J. Clark), Memory, Imagination, and the Interpretation of Scripture in the Middle Ages (Mary Carruthers), The Bible and Anti-Semitism (Tobias Nicklas), Dante and the Bible (Piero Boitani), George Friedrich Handel and *The Messiah* (John Butt), Elisabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (Ann Loader), Bob Dylan's Bible (Michael J. Gilmour), and From John's Gospel to Dan Brown: The Magdalene Code (Robin Griffith-Jones).

In recent years, reception history has grown to be an increasingly popular topic. Rather than focusing on the interpretation of the biblical material by way of exegesis, reception history focuses on the history of interpretation of a given biblical book or passage. This new handbook helpfully introduces and illustrates this important discipline by discussing the reception history of 12 key biblical books (though one laments the non-inclusion of the remaining books in the biblical canon) and a series of specially commissioned representative case studies. On the whole, the essays are competently written and informative. Since a comprehensive review of the contents of this volume is beyond the scope of a short review, my brief remarks will focus on an area of special research interest of mine addressed in the volume: John's Gospel. Catrin Williams, who previously published a monograph on "I Am Sayings" in Jewish and early Christian literature, contributed the 12-page chapter on John's Gospel (plus works cited and further reading, from which references to standard evangelical commentators such as Carson, Keener, Morris, and this writer are conspicuously absent).

After a brief introduction, Williams discusses the shape of John's narrative (essentially a very concise content survey) and then treats the Gospel's

theology under four major headings: Jesus' Mission in the World: Contrasts and Conflict," "Symbols, Signs, and Jesus' Offer of Life," "Jesus, the Heavenly Emissary and Son of God," and "The Spirit and 'The Remembering Community.'" Little in Williams' treatment rises above what is widely known in Johannine studies. It does not appear that the vantage point of the present volume (i.e. reception history) has shaped Williams' presentation to any significant extent. Apart from an opening tipping of the hat to Clement of Alexandria's designation of John's Gospel as the "spiritual Gospel," there is no discussion of the patristic reception of John's Gospel, nor is there any treatment of the use of John's Gospel by the major church councils. The same glaring omission can be detected with regard to medieval and Reformation scholarship on John's Gospel. Tellingly, the oldest works cited by Williams are Raymond Brown's 1966 commentary, J. L. Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968), and P. Borgen's essay "God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel."

As a result, those interested in the history of interpretation of John's Gospel will need to turn to works such as A. Volfing, *John the Evangelist in Medieval German Writing* (2001), T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (1970), F.-M. Braun, *Jean le théologien* (1959), A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (1975), J. N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (1943), and Sean Kealy, *John's Gospel and the History of Biblical Interpretation* (2002), to name but a few. Nevertheless, while the various essays in the volume are somewhat uneven and at times rather brief, there is something for everyone in this volume, including those who are fascinated by the use of the Bible in contemporary culture, whether in Bob Dylan's music or Dan Brown's novels. Where else can you find a treatment of Post-Holocaust Jewish Interpretations of Job, or on Uchimura and the Bible in Japan? With all its flaws and generally critical-leaning tendencies, *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* shows why reception history is such an intriguing and fascinating field of study in our day.

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