BOOK REVIEWS / BOEK RESENSIES


Like previous volumes, the present eighth volume of the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (EBR)* combines what one would expect of a classical Bible dictionary (including occurrences in the ANE) with a broad survey of the reception of biblical material in the NT, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, literature, visual arts, music and film. The introduction to volume one (Aaron – Aniconism, 2009) provides an introduction to the scope and approach of the Encyclopedia:

EBR pursues the twofold task of (1) comprehensively recording – and, indeed, advancing – the current knowledge of the origins and development of the Bible in its Jewish and Christian canonical forms and (2) documenting the history of the Bible’s reception in Judaism and Christianity as evident in exegetical literature, theological and philosophical writings of various genres, literature, liturgy, music, the visual arts, dance, and film, as well as in Islam and other religious traditions and contemporary movements. With this broad program of reception history, EBR moves into new terrain in recognition of the fact that biblical texts not only have their own particular backgrounds and settings but have also been received and interpreted, and have exerted influence or otherwise have had impact in countless religious, theological, and aesthetic settings (ix).


Not only because four OT books are included between the lemmata “Essenes” and “Fideism” (Esther, Exodus, Ezekiel, Ezra) is this an important volume in the EBR. A flaw also evident in previous volumes also appears in the eighth volume. The sub-entries on Christian reception usually well document the reception of biblical material in the Ancient Church, the era of the Reformation and in modern Europe and North America (so explicitly in the entries “Faith IV. Christianity A. Greek and Latin Patristics and Orthodox Churches,” 711-714 by Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Faith IV. Christianity B. Medieval Times and Reformation Era,” 714-717 by Miriam Rose, “Faith IV. Christianity C. Modern Europe and America,” 717-721 by Johann A. Steiger and Heinrich Assel). The same applies to the sub-entries on literature, visual arts, music and film. The rich reception of the Bible in other contexts, be it in Africa, Asia and Latin America, appears only rarely. One instance should be mentioned. While the major entry “Exodus, Book of” (428-464) surprisingly contains no sub-entry on its reception in Christianity, the entry “Exodus, The” addresses the Christian reception of the exodus in “Christianity IV” in Greek and Latin Patristics through Medieval times (484-486) and in the Reformation era to modern times (486-488 by Scott Langston) notes:

Diverse groups envisioned themselves as modern Israelites; these include black South Africans struggling against apartheid, Zimbabweans striving to free themselves from British colonial rule, and African Americans seeking freedom and equality. Liberation theologians have found the exodus particularly helpful in developing a theology for resisting and overcoming social and economic oppression, especially in Latin America and Africa (e.g., George V. Pixley’s, On Exodus). The exodus has provided hope for deliverance, Inspiration to act, and a way to bring legitimacy to particular causes (487).
Other than this brief mention (no reference whatsoever to liberation hermeneutics in Latin America, Africa or Asia!), the remainder of the sub-entry focuses on the reception of the exodus in North America (mainly by African Americans) and in European history. In view of 6,5 columns on the book of Exodus in films (457-464 by Robert Torry and Susan L. Aronstein, a detailed survey of three North American films!) this brief reference to African reception is hardly sufficient!

Despite the obvious problems involved in the study of the reception of the Bible in these contexts (what is extant, available, representative?), a lot of work still needs to be done in order to produce – perhaps in the second edition of the EBR – an encyclopedia that is truly representative of the world-wide reception of the Bible.


Recently the publisher has started three projects supplementary to the Encyclopedia:

(i) The series Handbooks of the Bible and Its Reception (HBR) which offers broad and in-depth analyses of selected issues found in EBR, focusing on particular themes, regions, figures, and historical contexts,

(ii) The series Studies of the Bible and Its Reception (SBR) which comprises monographs and collected volumes that explore the reception history of the Bible in a wide variety of academic and cultural contexts.

(iii) *The Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* (JBR) promotes the study of the reception of the Bible in terms of both methodology and content.

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This study is a revision of Jeffrey Audirsch’s dissertation, submitted in 2010 at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The “legislative themes of centralization” are five themes related to the cult centralization in Deuteronomy: idolatry, tithing, festivals, judiciary officials and priesthood. These themes are investigated throughout the Enneateuch.