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Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark, by Brenda Deen Schildgen

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direction of the patient; to M., "it seems unfair that people who manage their own affairs successfully in life should be required to turn over so much of their death and dying to others" (2). Catholic moralists might find it worthwhile to consider how an updated version of the *ars moriendi* would respond to these claims.

A second crucial issue pertains to the appropriate moral language to describe the acts in question. M. contends that it is misleading to use the morally loaded terms "suicide" and "killing" to describe the act of hastening the deaths of persons already caught up in the dying process; he prefers the term "assisted dying." The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals also made this argument about terminology in its opinion conferring constitutional protection on assisted suicide, which the Supreme Court sidestepped in its opinion overruling the Ninth Circuit. As the American debate continues, those opposed to assisted suicide and euthanasia will likely be called upon to make a fuller response to this terminological challenge and the moral claims embedded within it.

University of Notre Dame

M. CATHLEEN KAVENY

SHORTER NOTICES

WOMAN AT THE WINDOW: BIBLICAL TALES OF OPPRESSION AND ESCAPE. By Nehama Aschkenasy. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1998. Pp. 181. \$39.95; \$18.95.

Aschkenasy's thesis is that "man is history and woman is geography" (18). She believes the women of the Bible were excluded from the essence of Israel's historical journey with its redemptive future; instead, they were caught in a natural cycle of changeless recurrences with a closed future. The image of the woman at the window is linked in ancient art to cult fertility and the practice of temple prostitution, but for A. it depicts the confinement of a person hemmed or locked in, such as Sisera's mother, Michal, Yael at her doorstep, or Deborah under the palm tree.

That image is complemented by accounts of the hazards women met when they violated enclosures, such as Dinah and the unnamed concubine in Judges 19. When a woman ventured out, her mobility was sometimes a benefit, as in the cases of Tamar and Abigail. Other women worked behind the scenes, like Rebecca and Bathsheba, who were involved in eavesdropping and manipulation. Viewing biblical women through a

geographic lens, A. unlocks extraordinary insights. But she is not convincing when she concludes that these women did not participate significantly in history. Michal saved David from Saul, Deborah decided that Israel should go to war, and the rape of Dinah also led to war. One cannot deny the historical nature of those events.

A.'s last chapter is her finest. The majority of women in the Bible are nameless and voiceless. But the few who speak lift themselves above their designated procreative role by the language of vision which opens up broad vistas of destiny. The powerful language of Eve, of the daughters of Zelofhad, of Hanna, of Ruth and Naomi shows that language can endow women's experience with distinction and grandeur, challenge and modify patriarchal rules, and create a seemingly unattainable reality.

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POWER AND PREJUDICE: THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK. By Brenda Deen Schildgen. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1999. Pp. 201. \$34.95.

Schildgen's main title refers to the

ideological and cultural convictions which have governed the way the canonical gospel texts have been read over two millennia. In describing the paradigm shifts in biblical interpretation in distinctively different eras—from the patronage of the authoritative Church Fathers to the patronage of the university and its literary critics today—the “reception” or attitude towards the Gospel of Mark is ever in focus. The history of that reception was largely one of neglect, until the modern period when Mark has received unprecedented attention and prominence. Mark’s canonical status preserved for it an assured place within the ongoing tradition of translations, liturgical citations, commentaries, and interpretations so carefully reviewed by S., until the new cultural realities of this century led to new attitudes in reading Mark, which disclosed in turn features of that document that particularly intrigue us today.

A medievalist and professor of comparative literature, S. has written an encyclopedic survey important to biblical scholarship in general. Although the book’s interest is to trace the “reception” of Mark’s Gospel in eras when different authoritative voices and “prejudices” ruled, it comes at a time when biblical studies are undergoing another paradigm shift. S.’s history discloses that the prejudice in power at the moment, however confident and assured and authoritative, remains inevitably subject to insights brought by ever new cultural realities. Mark’s Gospel with its enigmatic scene in 16:1–8 provides that openness to the future which the history of its own reception has demonstrated is necessary.

For those who are unfamiliar with this history, S.’s work is a “must read”; for those who are familiar with it, S. provides a valuable review and an important caution.

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GLORY NOT DISHONOR: READING JOHN 13–21. By Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998. Pp. xvii + 217. \$25.

With the publication of this volume, Moloney completes his narrative commentary on the Fourth Gospel. This particular approach to biblical studies attempts to return to the original context from which the work arose and includes the analysis of the intended author and reader. Narrative, reader-response hermeneutics seeks out the implied reader and the implied author, recognizing that both implied author and implied reader can be other than the ones proposed by the contemporary commentator. For some, this is an unending search. For others, it allows a fresh approach to an ancient text.

In each of the three volumes in this series M. offers his insights into the original readers of the Gospel. But he does not limit his ideas to the past. He attempts to bring contemporary readers the context from which the text arose, making sense in the time of its composition but also giving some guidance in reading, interpreting, and living the text today. As the narrative shaped the role of the implied reader, so the “real reader” today becomes the object that the text actually affects. One advantage M. offers to the reader-response hermeneutic is his close attention to the more traditional historical-critical approach to the New Testament. While presenting a narrative hermeneutic of the Fourth Gospel, he also includes the principal findings coming from other approaches. This in itself is valuable to the “real reader” of M.’s work as well as the “real reader” of the Gospel.

Reader-response enthusiasts will welcome this final volume. Reader-response critics will ignore it. Some neutral critics will read the work and be grateful to M. for including more than just a reader-response approach. But for whom was this book written? Scholars of John, whether reader-response enthusiasts or not, will want more. Ordinary readers of John will wonder why M. uses so much Greek. Since John 13–21 is so filled with Johannine theology, I almost have the feeling that M. wanted to get the project finished too quickly. Perhaps dividing the total project into four volumes and John 13–21 into two volumes would have enabled M. to pay more attention to some of the great