
The book contains short contributions of twenty-six authors, nearly half of them of Dutch-Flemish provenance. The volume is somewhat unequally divided into two parts. After a five-page “Portrait in Words” by Bart Koet (a former PhD candidate of Menken), part 1 is on “Interpretation of Scripture and the New Testament” and comprises twenty essays by such eminent scholars as Adelbert Denaux, Jos Verheyden, Gilbert van Belle, Martinus de Boer, John Court, and many more; part 2 is on “Interpretation of
Scripture after the New Testament” and contains only six essays, by Huub van de Sandt, Pieter van der Horst, Henk Jan de Jonge, and others. In hindsight, some essays could perhaps have been classified under “Interpretation of Scripture before the New Testament,” thereby redressing the imbalance somewhat. All contributions are in English except those by Ulrich Busse (“Reinigung und Heiligung im Johannesevangelium”) and Michael Labahn (“Das Buch dieser Prophetie—Die Schriften Israels und die Schrift des Sehers: Überlegungen zur Schrifthermeneutik der Johannesoffenbarung”).

Of course, a contribution by Joost Smit Sibinga, the honoree’s Doktorvater, ought not lack in this book. Smit Sibinga was well-known for his numerical theory, counting words and syllables and studying literary structures. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the publication of his former doctoral student’s Festschrift, but he did manage to turn in a paper on Isaiah’s Song of the Vineyard and its influence in the New Testament (25–40). He argues that, in this particular case (Isa 5:1–7), his numerical theory works not only for the Hebrew Bible (MT) but also for its reception in the LXX and even for the New Testament, Mark 12:1–12. Readers unfamiliar with Smit Sibinga’s lifelong passion for numerical values will no doubt be a little surprised if not skeptical to learn about his detailed arithmetic observations, but fascinating they are.

Other contributions in this section include, to mention only a few, an essay by Adelbert Denaux on Luke 9:51–56, which is an apt refutation of David Flusser’s speculative reconstruction of a Hebrew Vorlage of Luke 9:51; Wendy S. North on “‘Bethany beyond the Jordan’ (John 1:28) in Retrospect: The View from John 10:40 and Related Texts,” (129–140), suggesting that “a place east of the Jordan called Bethany, or Bethabar, or Batanea … was not a feature on John’s mental map of Palestine” (140); and Martinus C. de Boer on “Observations on the Significance of the Old Testament in Galatians” (211–26), claiming that, for Paul, the gospel has priority over the (words of) Scripture.

In the second part of the volume, Henk Jan de Jonge’s “The Use of the Old Testament in Scripture Readings in Early Christian Assemblies” (376–92) challenges the assumed continuity of early Christian readings of Scripture with the public reading of Scripture in the synagogue. He concludes: “If in their gatherings Jews read the Law, which Christians did not read until the third century, and if the Christians read the prophets, which Jews did not read until 200, there is little or no ground to assume that the Christian Scripture reading was the continuation of the synagogue Scripture reading.” They had clearly different functions: Jews assembled as study groups to read and interpret the law; Christians came together to celebrate communal meals and to enjoy fellowship in the tradition of Greco–Roman symposiastic tradition, where scriptures (from the prophets in particular) were being read, but “Christians at first did not even think of reading the Law” (392).
As to the title of the book, I am not sure whether the title “The Scriptures of Israel in Jewish and Christian Tradition” accurately captures its content and scope, since the Jewish element (apart from the Hebrew Bible, the LXX, and a few pseudepigrapha) seems to be quite underrepresented, Eric Ottenheijm’s contribution on Jewish and Christian discourse on Lev 18:5 being a notable exception.


For this type of publications indexes are indispensable. The book contains a nine-page (two-columns) index of names (433–41) and a thirty-four-page index of references (442–75), and these surely enhance its user-friendliness and make this volume a convenient reference tool for students of intertextuality and Old Testament–New Testament relationships.

The Festschrift genre usually gives us fairly revealing insights into current “work in progress” and the present state of scholarship. If this means anything in this case, it is interesting to note that—apart from the sad observation that only three female authors were involved (!) (Susan Docherty, Wendy North, and Margaret Daly-Denton)—the overwhelming majority of essays are on intertextuality in practice; there is hardly any material on criteria or theoretical issues. Surprisingly, there is not a single reference to R. B. Hays’s seminal work Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, let alone to his seven criteria for weighing intertextual connections (the two single references to Hays are to minor works). Nor is there any reference to theoretical work done by such pioneering authors as Julia Kristeva and Umberto Eco. This may be a matter of sheer coincidence, but to me it is further evidence of the great divide that still separates the world of biblical scholars from adjacent disciplines.

All in all, however, Professor Menken is to be congratulated on this fine collection of essays presented to him as a token of gratitude. Hopefully, he will be able to contribute to the study of scripture for many years to come.

One of the front pages of the book contains a painted portrait of Menken by his wife, the pastoral counselor and artist Corja Menken-Bekius.