

Book Reviews – Recensions – Buchbesprechungen

* * * * *

L'Évangile selon Saint Luc (19,28-24,53), François Bovon (CNT IIIId; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2009); pb, 555 pp., ISBN 978-2-8309-1261-6

Luc le théologien, François Bovon (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2006); pb, 631 pp., ISBN 978-2-8309-1200-5

L'Évangile selon Saint Luc, François Bovon (CNT IIIA; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007 [1991]); pb, 514 pp., ISBN 978-2-8309-1235-7

RÉSUMÉ

Le dernier tome du commentaire de François Bovon sur l'Évangile de Luc vient achever un travail remarquable de haute teneur académique. Avec les trois tomes précédents du commentaire ainsi que la présentation des études sur la théologie de Luc, ce dernier volume constitue une étude spécialisée de grande valeur sur Luc. Les spécialistes, étudiants et prédicateurs consulteront ces ouvrages avec profit, même si les positions de l'auteur sur les questions ayant trait à l'historicité ne sont pas pleinement satisfaisantes.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der abschließende Band von François Bovons Kommentar zum Lukasevangelium bringt ein beachtliches Werk der Forschung zu einem Abschluss. Zusammen mit den vorangehenden drei Bänden des Kommentars und Bovons wissenschaftlicher Studie zu Lukas als Theologen stellt dieser Band einen Höhepunkt der Lukasforschung dar. Forscher, Studenten und Prediger werden ihn gleichermaßen zu Rate ziehen, selbst wenn er in historischen Fragen nicht zur vollen Zufriedenheit ausfällt. Dank der Fähigkeiten und Bemühungen von Bovon steht den Lesern der vollständige Kommentar bereits auf Französisch (CNT) und auf Deutsch (EKK) zur Verfügung und wird auch bald auf Englisch erscheinen (Hermeneia).

SUMMARY

The final volume of François Bovon's commentary on the Gospel of Luke brings a remarkable labour of scholarship to a conclusion. When taken together with the preceding three volumes of the commentary and Bovon's survey of scholarship on Luke as theologian, this volume marks a high point in scholarship on Luke which should be consulted by scholars, students and preachers alike, even if it is not fully satisfying on matters of historicity. Thanks to Bovon's skills and labours, readers can already access the complete commentary in French (CNT) and German (EKK) and will soon be able to read it in English (Hermeneia).

* * * * *

The final volume of François Bovon's four-volume commentary on Luke's Gospel in the *Commentaire du Nouveau Testament* series provides a fitting conclusion to an exceptional piece of scholarship. Bovon was Professor

of New Testament in Geneva for more than 25 years before moving to Harvard Divinity School, and he is now emeritus. His work on this commentary began in the 1970s and in the preface he gives thanks to God for having permitted him to bring the task to completion. This review focuses on the final volume of the commentary, but I will also make reference to two related volumes.

Labor et Fides graciously provided a review copy of the 'second edition' of the first volume of Bovon's commentary (*L'Évangile IIIA*). In fact, this appears to be a republication of the volume which was published in 1991. The dust jacket has been updated but I looked in vain for any sign of updating of bibliographies or any additional notes. Thus those who possess this volume in its original form have no need of buying this edition.

The third edition of Bovon's *Luc le théologien* was published both in French (by Labor et Fides) and in English (by Baylor University Press) in 2006. This volume might make us regard Bovon's work on Luke as a 'five-volume' commentary because it functions as the introduction to the commentary proper – and the formal introduction to the first volume of the commentary is very short. *Luc le théologien* is a superb feat of scholarship. It is primarily a review of scholarship on (as the title makes explicit) Luke as a theologian, but it not only surveys an extensive field of secondary literature (published between 1950 and 2005) but also engages with the literature in a creative manner, drawing out Luke's theological emphases such as 'the plan of God, history of salvation and eschatology', 'the interpretation of the Old Testament', 'the Holy Spirit' and 'the Church'.

The exegesis in the final volume of the commentary (*L'Évangile IIIId*) follows the standard format of this series. First, there is a French translation of the Greek text which includes footnotes with information on textual variants or a more literal rendering of the Greek where necessary. This is followed by a bibliography for the specific passage which generally includes works in French, English, German and Italian. It is pleasing that Bovon acknowledges evangelical scholarship both in his bibliographies and in his comments. In fact, he appears to have a very respectful attitude towards evangelical scholarship which, sadly, is not always found among continental European commentators and theologians. In the essay which surveys literature published between 1980 and 2005 for the third revised edition of *Luc le théologien* (461–517), evangelical contributions noted include works by Howard Marshall, Joel Green, Douglas McComiskey, Darrell Bock, Craig Evans, David Pao (whose Harvard doctoral thesis was supervised by Bovon, as he indicates with enthusiasm), David Crump, Mark Strauss, Max Turner and others. Having said this,

the reader should not assume that Bovon shares all standard evangelical convictions; for example, he comments on Darrell Bock's published thesis that an aspect which weakens Bock's thesis is his presupposition that the accounts and arguments reported by Luke are faithful to history (*Luc le théologien*, 482).

Following the bibliography, Bovon sets the pericope in its context in the narrative. The next main section is the analysis, which examines fundamental literary and historical matters relating to the passage such as structure and rhetorical strategy. For example, in the discussion of the denarius and the domain of Caesar (Lk 20:20-26), Bovon first discusses in detail the way Luke preserves (in his view) the structure of the material he has drawn from Mark's Gospel; then he considers relevant material from various non-canonical sources, including *Papyrus Egerton 2* and *the Gospel of Thomas* (the engagement with such non-canonical sources is Bovon's specialty) and the possibility of their dependence on oral traditions (77-81).

The analysis is followed by a verse-by-verse explanation. These sections are typically rich in literary sensitivity, socio-historical detail and reflection on the wider biblical context. Bovon writes well and there is a sense of literary quality in his comments rather than simply a collection of pieces of information.

The next section on history of reception is a distinctive of Bovon's commentary, similar to how Ulrich Luz's emphasis on *Wirkungsgeschichte* became characteristic of his EKK commentary on Matthew's Gospel. In fact, comparison with Bovon's first volume shows that this element was relatively understated at first (a point Bovon concedes in the preface to that volume, IIIa, 5). In most cases there is no section on history of reception and where there is such a section, a footnote indicates that it was prepared by a colleague rather than by Bovon himself. In the final volume (IIIId), by contrast, a history of interpretation is standard for every pericope and, while some of these sections are fairly short (1 or 2 pages), some are quite significant discussions. For example, Bovon devotes almost 8 pages to the history of reception of the ascension narrative (490-498). In my mind, there is still some lack of clarity regarding the significance of the history of reception sections. As they come last in the various sections, it seems that most exegetical decisions have already been made by the time we survey the historical material. Yet Bovon's willingness to hear voices from the past, combined with the fact that he has clearly devoted a great deal of time to considering them, is surely encouraging for those who desire that biblical interpretation should avoid the arrogance which values only interpretations from our own time.

Finally, a short conclusion highlights important theological issues and possible contemporary application. While this is generally very brief (just a few lines), it is often expressed effectively and memorably. For example, in his final 'conclusion' of the commentary on the ascension narrative, Bovon makes some typically thoughtful

theological comments: 'He who had suffered as servant of God was now rehabilitated [perhaps, 'reinstated to his former position', AIW] and glorified. He was from now on going to remain with the Father, not in order to be uninterested in the fate of human beings, of his Church in particular, but in order to give responsibility to each one and to await the missionary engagement of the witnesses' (498). However, he also says that he regards this account as 'the literary fixing of a tradition, of a legend in the etymological sense of the term'.

The final volume of the commentary concludes with indices covering all four volumes. When the volumes of the commentary are taken together, along with the engagement with scholarship found in *Luc le théologien*, the sum total is a quite exceptional volume of technical scholarship which is nonetheless carried out with a fairly light touch (although these volumes are certainly not 'light reading') and a sense of the importance of the task for the good of the Church. I warmly commend these books as valuable tools, even if I might have wished for a different judgement here and there, particularly on issues of historicity. The full commentary is scheduled for publication in the Hermeneia series by the early part of 2013 so then the benefit of Bovon's excellent scholarship will reach an even wider readership.

Alistair I. Wilson
South Africa

The Gospel of John

New International Commentary on the NT

J. Ramsey Michaels

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010; xxvii + 1094 pp;

€48,99; ISBN 9780802823021

SUMMARY

The commentary on the Gospel of John by J. Ramsey Michaels is the replacement for Leon Morris' volume in the same series and is the fruit of several decades of intensive study of the Fourth Gospel. While Michaels' treatment of introductory matters is comparatively brief, his synchronic approach is most helpful as it consistently focuses on the biblical text as it stands. The interpretation distinguishes itself by a fresh and careful exegesis, especially by the skilful inclusion of other Johannine passages in dealing with the Gospel's message. Michaels' work will take its place among the best commentaries on the Fourth Gospel and will be a much appreciated resource for both pastor and scholar for years to come.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Beim vorliegenden Kommentar zum Johannesevangelium in der NICNT-Reihe handelt es sich um die Ablösung des Bandes von Leon Morris. Das Werk von J. Ramsey Michaels ist die Frucht mehrerer Jahrzehnte intensiver Forschung am vierten Evangelium. Nach einer recht knappen Behandlung der Einleitungsfragen entfaltet