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the same methods of philological Bible criticism it cannot be described as anti-orthodox by any means (94, 99).

Chapters 4-6 are detailed studies of the works of Heinsius, Grotius and Saumaise. Heinsius is presented as the scholar who put philological Bible criticism on “the agenda” of orthodoxy (129) precisely by emphasising the independence of philological methods from theology. Grotius went further by attempting to use philological Bible criticism to reconcile the confessions (142). He, too, took Scaliger’s approach of contextualising biblical narratives, which led him “to explain the entire Bible against its historical, pagan background” (154). In Chapter 6, which is dedicated to historical Bible criticism during the “Hairy War” (1640-1650), Van Miert steers clear of an overly simplistic narrative of modernisation. The new fashion for men to let their hair grow long had provoked vociferous objection from the ranks of reformed orthodoxy (170), which ultimately led to a debate about the question if – and how – the Bible might serve as a “guide book for modern public conduct” (182).

While chapters 4-6 support Van Miert’s hypothesis of the unintended consequences of historical Bible criticism, chapters 8-9 (discussing La Peyrère and Spinoza) as well as the concluding chapter seem contradictory to some extent because they emphasise philosophical presuppositions for the development of orthodox or radical interpretations of the Bible. Thus, Van Miert leaves his own question whether philological Bible criticism was “a neutral instrument or an intrinsic force of change” (231) unanswered. It would have helped, perhaps, to discuss existing scholarship more explicitly. Only the last chapter makes it clear that Van Miert’s book was written against the background of the works of Henk Jan de Jonge and Jonathan Israel (who is mentioned only on 229 and 233). The strength of the book therefore lies especially in the thorough source-based case studies. They are warmly recommended to every specialist in the field.

Renate Dürr, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Ronald Charles, *The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Early Christian Texts*. Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), xvi + 272 pp., £ 40,49 (eBook).

With *The Silencing of Slaves* Ronald Charles wrote an ambitious, but at times disappointing study. Charles’ aim with his book is to read a large corpus of early Christian texts and pseudepigraphic material “from below”, or “against the grain”. With the help of methodologies from postcolonial and

subaltern studies, he tries to “see and hear” the slaves that are present in those texts, but are often silenced – a silencing that is, according to Charles, maintained by modern scholarship “which continues to render them invisible by refusing to acknowledge them” (226).

After a brief theoretical chapter Charles offers his readership six rather concise chapters on his source material. His second chapter pertains to the slaves in the pseudepigrapha and is the only chapter in which some early Jewish texts occur. In the course of the approximately 25 pages of this chapter he discusses ten texts from the pseudepigraphic literature, ranging from the Sibylline Oracles to the novella of Joseph and Aseneth. While it is very commendable that Charles has attempted this first (systematic) study of the pseudepigraphic literature with special attention to slaves, his sources would have deserved a more extensive treatment. Too often Charles’ post-colonial reading of the texts results in simply pointing out where slaves are present in these texts. In the other five chapters of his book Charles does limit his investigation to two or three case studies per chapter, and that approach proves to be more fruitful, which results in valuable insights about the different accounts of Peter’s interaction with the female slave of a high priest (chapter 4) and about female slaves in Acts (chapter 5).

In chapter 6 Charles recounts the gruesome martyr narratives of Felicitas and Blandina. His analysis of Blandina’s destiny is in my opinion not convincing. While the presentation of her martyrdom makes her a “mirror image of the crucified Christ” (179), according to Charles this is not a hopeful or emancipating thought for those in a subaltern position, since Blandina “only finds significance in the theological example that she is made to become” (180). Here, as in other instances in the book, I feel that Charles seeks to deny any possibility for positive messages these ancient texts might have had for the poor and the slaves: if slaves are not mentioned at all, they are silenced; if they are mentioned but do not speak, they are silenced; if they are mentioned and do speak – and even function as role model, the story is “only” about the fact that Christ even can find glory “through the dejected and possessed body of a slave woman” (183). This makes me wonder: would a free character have been treated the same way by Charles? And is not every character in these ancient tales a construction, employed to convey certain virtues and ideals? Some of these questions might have been answered if Charles would have been more precise about what a reading “from below” or “against the grain” concretely entails.

Nevertheless, that ancient slaves were often silenced, or worse (exploited, wounded, raped and killed), is absolutely clear from Charles’ book, and well-illustrated by his last chapter. In this chapter on the Acts of Andrew

Charles discusses the sad fate of the slave woman Euclia, who had to serve as a surrogate body for her mistress, Maximilla, who became a Christian and henceforth wanted to abstain from sexual intercourse. After Euclia repeatedly had sex with Maximilla's husband in her stead, her husband found out, cut out the tongue of Euclia, mutilated her and finally threw her out of his household, where she starved for three days, before being devoured by dogs. Every attempt to unearth the destinies of slaves like Euclia, is an important, meaningful endeavor. Hence, despite its flaws, I applaud Ronald Charles' aspiration to enlarge our knowledge of slavery in early Jewish and early Christian literature.

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Philosophy of Religions and Ethics

Kick Bras, *Het bezielde landschap: Spiritualiteit in de schilderkunst* (Vught: Skandalon, 2019), ISBN 9789492183842; 271 pp., € 29,95.

De auteur beschrijft én toont het bezielde landschap in de westerse schilderkunst. Deel 1 betreft een overzicht vanaf de middeleeuwen tot en met het expressionisme van "schilders, stromingen en stijlen" (7). In deel 2 wordt de lezer uitgenodigd "om stil te staan in het landschap, te genieten, maar ook te reflecteren op een negental thema's" (10): aarde; vitaliteit en afbraak; bomen; bloemen, planten en dieren; lucht en water; licht en donker; wildernis; bergen en kosmisch besef. Het werk geeft de spirituele landschapskunst van meer dan 100 kunstenaars. Zowel werken van kunstenaars uit de Verenigde Staten en Canada alsook uit Europa worden kort genoemd waarbij ook aandacht is voor kunstenaars uit Scandinavië en uit Oost-Europese landen. Het betreft werken van kunstenaars die geïnspireerd zijn door het christendom, door de theosofie of het transcendentalisme van Ralph Waldo Emerson. Het boek heeft daardoor het karakter van een encyclopedie.

Spiritualiteit in kunst roept de vraag op hoe kunst ten dienste kan zijn van de spiritualiteit van de toeschouwer. Het betreft hier geen kerkelijke of liturgische kunst. Het is landschapskunst die spiritueel of religieus kan functioneren. Soms kan een schilderij de grootsheid van de natuur laten zien die bij de toeschouwer dankbaarheid jegens God kan oproepen. Of zij toont een weg met reizigers die verwijst naar de levensweg van de mens met God. Soms ook – en dat is wat anders – wil een schilderij Gods