

Blackwell Bible Commentary Series Authors' Meeting, SBL New Orleans 2009

Mary Callaway, Mark Elliott, David Gunn, Christopher Heard, Jin Hee Han, Heidi Hornik, Andrew Mein, John Sawyer, Mikael Larsson, Robert Foster, Harry Maier, Alan Hauser, Jos Verheyden. Apologies from Rebecca Harkin, Dennis Tucker, Scott Langston and Mikeal Parsons who had to leave SBL early.

1. *Price of volumes.* John reported that Wiley Blackwell will normally publish a paperback edition costing less than \$40 within two years of the hardback edition and that a much cheaper electronic edition of the whole series is to be published eventually. Heidi pointed out that copyright costs for illustrations would be less if permission for the electronic edition was applied for at the same time as for the hardback edition. Rebecca had pointed out that the bigger the volume, the higher the price, and urged authors to keep within their word-limits.

2. *Advertising.* Could the series be more effectively advertised, particularly in the Churches? Several journals were mentioned where advertisements are modestly priced: e.g. *Currents in Research* (Alan Hauser), *Expository Times* (John Riches), *The Christian Century* and the new *Journal of Theological Interpretation*. Where are review copies sent to and how many?

3. *Access to published volumes.* In reply to a suggestion that authors would benefit greatly from having copies of other volumes in the series, Rebecca had agreed to make PDF-copies of all published volumes available to us all.

4. *Website.* It was agreed that the website is a valuable resource both for authors working on their commentaries and as a means of publicizing the series and promoting reception history in general. Suggestions for the modification and improvement of the site: (a) include at least references to recent reception history conferences, publications, etc., as well as a regular calendar of relevant forthcoming events on the *News* pages (such as those mentioned by Joe); (b) explore ways of co-operating more fully with the Oxford Centre for Reception History of the Bible (www.crhb.org), bloggers with reception history interests (Chris www.heardworld.com/higgaion/) or the like. (c) It is hoped the website will very shortly be updated under new management. **In the meantime any ideas or requests for updating – bibliography, websites, forthcoming conferences, etc. - should go to John.**

5. *Help for authors.* In addition to points 3. and 4. above, John initiated this part of the discussion by urging authors to begin writing the narrative of the commentary as soon as possible, focusing on the “story line” and drawing in examples from reception history where appropriate, rather than attempting to write up a history of reception. Andrew pointed out that John was speaking as someone who had spent 50 years working on the reception history of Isaiah and what he recommended might not apply to everyone. Mary suggested that criteria for selecting material should include historical importance as well as academic interest. The value of an occasional extended excursus on a special topic to avoid interrupting the story line was pointed out. Mention was made of three new reference tools: John’s *Dictionary of the Bible and its Reception* (WJK 2009: \$29), Alan’s 2-volume *History of Biblical Interpretation* (Eerdmans 2003, 2009), Claudia Jullien, *Dictionnaire de la Bible dans la Littérature française* (2003: 45 euros), and de Gruyter’s *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (2 vols published so far); also to Bernhard Lang’s *Joseph in Egypt. A Cultural Icon from Grotius to Goethe* (Yale 2009).

6. *SBL.* Mark suggested we might offer to fill a session of Ken Newport’s *Use, Influence and Impact of the Bible* section at the 2010 Meeting of SBL in Atlanta, with papers both on general or methodological topics (e.g. “Writing a reception history commentary on Isaiah”) and more specific

(“Isaiah 50:6 in late mediaeval Passion Iconography”) . **Mark asked for offers of papers for such a session but stressed he would need to receive them more or less immediately.**

7. *SBL*. Another proposal was to have a pre-conference half-day working group for writers to bring, present, and/or otherwise discuss work in progress. The idea would be, in Harry’s words, to develop collegiality, help to make the series more cohesive as a whole and encourage joint ownership of an exciting project. John and David would confer with Chris and Judith as to whether this was a good idea, and if agreed, send a group email to everyone to see if there is enough interest to make such a gathering worthwhile.

8. *The role of the academic editors*. David and John, in the absence of their two NT colleagues, explained that they would be happy to read an author’s draft at any stage in the process, not just in the closing stages, and try to offer helpful feedback. David added that it is important for authors and editors to feel free to share their experiences: e.g. what websites and reference works they have found especially useful, where to go and who to consult with particular questions, and the like.

JFAS

3 December 2009