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REVIEW

Piñero, Antonio and Jesús Peláez. 2003. *The Study of the New Testament: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Translated (with revisions) by David E. Orton and Paul Ellingworth from the Spanish, *El Nuevo Testamento. Introducción al estudio de los primeros escritos cristianos* (published by Ediciones el Almendro de Córdoba, S. L., 1995). Leiden: Deo. 552 pp. + 27 pp. indices (of biblical references and of names).

Note well the title of this publication; it is not an introduction to the New Testament, but to “the *study* of the New Testament.” It purports to be “a *reference manual* providing orientation through the different areas of New Testament study and providing knowledge of the tools needed for working in the chosen sphere” (xvi). If one wants to have a feel of the scope of NT scholarship, this is one of the very few books available.

In a way, it is easier to practice NT scholarship than to define it in these days. It is not difficult to imagine how differently scholars would perceive the field among themselves, and what materials to be included; largely, this has much to do with one’s orientation (training, interest, area of expertise, etc.) and expectation. Likewise, this review reflects those of mine, which may differ from that of the original authors.

Generally speaking, the approach undertaken by *The Study of the New Testament* represents a classical one, with a clear focus on the literary (and linguistic) milieu and interpretation of the NT text; this is clearly noted and somewhat defended apologetically in the short “Introduction” (only 3 pages)—indeed a bit short for a 500-page book. Such emphases are important in these days when more than ever, some practitioners are of the opinion that serious study on the NT may be pursued entirely on a contemporary setting with little attention to the historical dimension of the text.

Chapter one (“The History of New Testament Interpretation”) is an excellent exposition to the scholarship involved in the study of the NT, and would help readers who are already acquainted with bits and pieces of NT scholarship to have a panorama of the history of studies. The presentation would be smoother, however, if a more rigorous topical arrangement could be applied (e.g., “textual criticism” is repeated on p. 33 and p. 45). Chapter two (“The Study of the Text of the New Testament”) deals with two major topics: “Canon of the New Testament” and “Text Criticism and the History of the New Testament text,” but with disproportional attention. The less than 8-page discussion on “Canon” is embarrassingly precise, seeing that this is one of the key topics listed on the back

cover of the book, and that NT (and OT) canonicity has drawn so much attention in biblical scholarship in the last decade or so. Take as an example the dating of the canon list in the Muratorian Canon: nowadays, more scholars would prefer a later dating (fourth century) and an eastern origin, instead of western origin (Rome) and of second century (as by the authors of this book). The topic on textual criticism is well addressed, although a fair assessment of the importance of minuscule manuscripts (first advocated by Harry Sturz) would be more balanced to the readers. The (total) number of variants for the NT is always an enigma; this book mentions a rough figure of “approximately 250,000” (84), but elsewhere Elliott and Moir give “300,000” variants in *Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament!*

Likewise, the discussion on “The Language of the New Testament” (ch. 3) is exceptionally rich and elaborate, 80 pages in all (inevitably, Peláez being an expert in the field), which includes 40 pages on the “Distinctive features of koiné.” The discussion on the origin of Koine would be enriched if it could incorporate the excellent work on this subject by Vít Bubeník, *Hellenistic and Roman Greece as a Sociolinguistic Area* (John Benjamins, 1989). Chapter 4, “The Historical-Literary Context (Study of the Substratum of the New Testament),” is another challenge to the authors; the topics concerned are immense to cover in one chapter. Here, again, we see an emphasis on the literary milieu. Interestingly, while one would expect more current scholarly discussion on the historical (or social) milieu under the heading “The New Testament World” (and only 7 pages), the section turns out to be an extensive annotation of various (and very selected) works.

Chapter 5 provides a superb account on the “Methods and Approaches in New Testament Study: Diachronic and Synchronic,” actually constituting more than one third of the entire book. Given the constant new-birth of new theories and approaches, and especially those having arisen and been classified within the ambivalent term “post-modernism,” the two authors are highly selective in this chapter, and they opt for an exposition on the more classical approaches. Nonetheless, it would be helpful to students if other modern approaches could be briefly discussed and evaluated, rather than being subsumed under “Other Approaches,” one small section of less than a page.

Being a *reference manual*, this book includes massive bibliographical information in the footnotes on the topics discussed. Although at times this may cause disproportional page layout between the body text and footnote, the bibliographical data (and occasional summary) is an indispensable treasury for further research. The translators of the English edition have truly made special efforts by translating most (if not all) quotations from Spanish sources into English. Some German titles are also bracketed with English translation, but this is by no means consistent.

There are two appendices in the book. Appendix II, “Resources for New Testament Study,” is essentially an annotated bibliography, introducing the “working tools” appropriate to the study of the NT—not only to the NT *per se* (part one) but also to “The Septuagint and Intertestamental Literature” (including the rabbinic; part two). Important series and journals are also mentioned in the Resources, but the “Word Bible Commentary” should be included under “Commentaries” (541-2) on the Bible. It would also be desirable to include some newly published works; for example, in “Introductions” to the Bible, a number of

new and scholarly introductions (such as McDonald and Porter's work *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature*, 2000) should be mentioned too. Under "Synopsis," a more up-to-date edition of Aland's *Synopsis* (13th/14th, 1985/1995) should be available than that which the Spanish edition has cited ("9th"), and by the time the English edition was released, it had reached the 15th edition (1996) with significant advancement on extrabiblical materials. Likewise, to mention in the bibliography a couple of standard introductions in the field of Septuagintal studies would be helpful to the average reader.

Appendix I is devoted to "The Translation of the Biblical Texts." Bible translation is perhaps one of the most neglected disciplines in the field of biblical studies, but on the other hand, no discipline in biblical studies has greater impact and significance to the faith community than Bible translation. The brevity of the discussion on Bible translation (8 pages) is surely insufficient, but the authors have shown their awareness of its importance. With regard to "Criteria for Translation," the authors have pointed out interestingly that, since the beginning of Bible translation of modern languages, say from the time of Luther (also citing from his contemporary E. Dolet [1509-1546]), a somewhat "dynamic equivalence" was preferred, but this trend was reversed in recent centuries. The French semiotician and linguistic theorist George Mounin (*Les belles infidèles*, 1955) was cited to describe this phenomenon as "the reign of the 'unfaithful beauties' (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) in which people tried to avoid anything that offended the tastes of the day; this was succeeded by the reaction of the early twentieth century with its reversion to the pedestrianism of word-for-word translation" (519). The authors have expressed their slight preference for dynamic translation so long as the transferring would not "degenerate into an unfaithfulness to the text in order to accommodate the tastes of the reader" (520); however, they also acknowledge the importance of literary characteristics when approaching literary texts. As a matter of terminology usage, equating the term "dynamic equivalence" with "literary translation" is not typical, and is sometimes confusing. Nida's early works are acknowledged in the footnotes, but his latest major work (with Jan de Waard) on Bible translation *From One Language to Another* (1986) is not mentioned.

The publisher should have paid more attention to proofreading work. Most obvious is the inconsistent numbering system in the subdivision of the chapters: subdivisions are given different numbering systems in different chapters (compare ch. 3 and ch. 5) while some do not even have any numbering (e.g., chs. 1-2). The pagination in the Table of Contents is not always correct (e.g., "Current Directions in New Testament Textual Criticism" should be p. 114, *not* p. 113.); it is "Indo-Iranian Religion," not "Region" (viii). The sign "aleph" is messed up on some pages (e.g., p. 33). The description of UBS Greek NT (529) is not quite accurate; strictly speaking, it is the "Third Corrected" edition (1983) rather than the "Third edition"—1975, *not* "31975"—which has the same basic text as the NA26. The two volumes of *New Testament Apocrypha* mentioned are the revised or second edition (552; the index gives 551). The absence of a Subject Index (there is an "Index of Names") for such an informative reference manual makes it very handicapped for referral.

I am not in any position to comment on the style and language level of the Spanish edition, but for this English edition, the style is very readable and

friendly. The two notable NT scholars have very successfully brought this scholarly publication to the English-speaking world in a very readable fashion.

By and large, the book is very rich and informative in content. Any area which may be regarded as inadequate only shows how vast the field is to be covered in one single volume; but for the purpose that the authors have aimed for themselves, they have made a noble and admirable contribution. Every serious student of the New Testament should become acquainted with this publication.

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