

COLLABORATIVE WORK: THE NEWS SECTION OF THE
JOURNAL *HENOCH*

ERIC F. MASON, *News Editor*

When the first issue of the 'new' Henoah debuted in 2005, its recently appointed editor-in-chief Gabriele Boccaccini reflected in his inaugural editorial on the journal's heritage since its beginnings in 1979. He declared the journal a "unique experiment of calling together specialists from a variety of disciplines, breaking down the rigid, obsolete boundaries which had prevailed in and between Judaic and early Christian Studies." As editor, Boccaccini has continued to reaffirm this legacy and strives to keep Henoah at the forefront of addressing the new developments and trends of the disciplines.

Ours are fields of intense specialization, and rightfully so – intellectual progress and discoveries come through careful, detailed study by persons highly skilled and disciplined to engage such work. We must always have specialists in particular texts and eras; without such specialization the study of the individual topics and fields will suffer neglect and not be accorded the careful study they demand. Boccaccini's comment on the legacy of Henoah reminds us that the journal has from its inception been a forum for specialists, for members of the scholarly community.

Too often, however, in the history of our disciplines, specialization has been confused with isolation and segmentation. Boccaccini lamented those "obsolete boundaries," as would many others. For far too long scholars in such fields had been studying in their own worlds of Hebrew Bible, Dead Sea Scrolls, Pseudepigrapha, New Testament, rabbinics, patristics, archaeology, etc. – and naturally each of these fields could be further subdivided – with much too little contact and dialogue between persons whose subjects cry out to be addressed in integration rather than in isolation. The journal Henoah was an early voice against such intellectual apartheid, and though most scholars agree today on the importance of interdisciplinary conversation, still the siren calls of isolation need repeatedly to be rejected.

Thus the leitmotif of the journal Henoah is collaboration between specialists, not segmentation or isolation. To borrow language from colleagues in other disciplines, collaboration among specialists is in the DNA of Henoah. Just as Boccaccini noted in that same inaugural editorial that the ancient figure Enoch "is in fact an intercanonical, interdisciplinary character par excellence," so his eponymous journal is committed to fostering a commensurate dialogue and collaboration among

scholars in numerous fields and disciplines. This is evident in numerous ways. The subtitle of the journal – Studies in Judaism and Christianity from Second Temple to Late Antiquity – provides an obvious testament, as does a perusal of the articles published in various issues. The present issue has a thematic focus, yet even here the studies on Jubilees include papers from a wide variety of methodologies and comparative approaches.

Certainly the News section of Henoch also testifies to this commitment to collaboration. In this section we seek to present a selective record of what is happening in important academic contexts relating to ancient Judaism and early Christianity around the world. While we cannot report on every conference or seminar (nor do we attempt to do so), we seek to publish informed accounts on events of significance to a readership that values scholarly collaboration and interdisciplinary study. Sometimes these will be reports on conferences or seminars on a very specific subject, but that subject will be one of great interest and importance to scholars of ancient Judaism and early Christianity. More often our reports are on conferences that themselves feature wide-ranging studies and approaches that illustrate the diversity of our fields yet the importance of conversation across these disciplines. Occasionally we have an opportunity, such as we have in this issue with the focus on Qumran studies at the 2007 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, to report on multiple sessions that each deal with significant interdisciplinary study, but united by a common element.

Invitations to contribute a News article to Henoch always include the following instructions: “The article we desire would go beyond a mere chronicle of events. Instead, it would address key aspects of the presentations, major issues of discussion, and connections between these events and trends in the field.” These things are very important to us, as we wish to do much more than simply republish the conference program in paragraph format. We want articles that make clear what important words were spoken or ideas were suggested, articles that convey the vigor and mood of the conferences and seminars themselves. Admittedly these are lofty goals for our News articles, but we are convinced they are worthy ones.

A successful conference or seminar, after all, is itself a model of collaboration. Its true purpose and value is not to provide a forum for intellectual preening. Rather, it best fulfills its purpose when scholars of various interests, experiences, and levels of expertise gather to share their current work and engage in constructive critiques, suggestions, and conversations. Comments about presentations are not made to defend one’s own scholarly turf but rather to sharpen and enhance the thinking or argumentation, to the benefit of one’s colleague and the progress of the discipline. Junior scholars and graduate students interact with and learn from the wisdom of the luminaries of the field; they in turn embrace their responsibility to mentor the new generation of scholars while also

themselves remaining receptive to new perspectives and approaches. Admittedly this is an ideal archetype of what a conference or seminar should be, but it too is a worthy goal.

So also do we seek to exemplify this collaboration in the News section of Henoch.

Our articles are written sometimes by senior scholars, sometimes by junior scholars, and sometimes by outstanding graduate students recommended to us by their mentors. Sometimes our author is the conference organizer, at other times someone presenting a paper at the seminar, and occasionally someone who has no official role on the program; always, though, our author is someone who has participated in the dialogue and interchange of the event. Our articles sometimes are co-authored and thus explicitly are projects of collaboration; more commonly they are written by a single person who nevertheless receives input from others before the completed article is submitted. Though most News articles are written in English, the authors, the fellow scholars whose work they discuss, and the locale of the events themselves are truly international, as befits the collaborative impulse of Henoch.

We trust you value the News section of Henoch as a venue for stimulating accounts of recent scholarly presentations and discussion. The ideas that eventually find their articulation in journal articles and monographs literally are voiced first in the kinds of conference and seminar presentations that we chronicle on these pages. Senior scholars offer perspectives of new ideas tempered by years of experience in the field, alongside articles in which emerging scholars first find their voice, whether through their own reports on our pages or as their presentations are described. I and the News editors for the various Henoch boards (Carsten Claussen, German board; Thierry Legrand, French board; Piero Capelli, Italian board) strive to keep the readership of Henoch abreast of what is going on in important international gatherings. We appreciate your suggestions (e-mailed to HenochNews@gmail.com) on ways to make this section of even greater service to you. In such ways our collaborative work is advanced even further.

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