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Anderson, D W, Hill, P G & Martinson, R D 2006 – *Coming of age: Exploring the identity and spirituality of younger men*

Publisher: Augsburg Fortress. Pages: 213. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Dr W J Smith (Benoni)

Coming of age (214 pages) is an impressive publication from the pen of three authors who have a sound knowledge of children, youth and family ministry. It is highly recommended to assist pastors and ministry leaders in their efforts to understand and help young men in their relationship with Jesus Christ. *Coming of age* is of high academic value and shows a solid theological understanding of the Word of God, but it is still a creative, engaging and interesting work for every reader.

The authors took a daring journey into the lives of younger men and departed from the point of view that in the work and life of many congregations, pastors and youth workers often fail to recognize their needs and to minister to them. They begin the journey by asking: "Where have all the young men gone?" (p 7) and then offer to reach out to this select group. They undertook an intensive journey through the life and whereabouts of the Christian community and looked at its shortcomings as far as these young men are concerned. At the same time, they present new challenges, suggestions and ideas for change in non-traditional ways. Their work emphasizes that congregations and Christian communities should address the need to develop ministries for younger men.

Coming of age provides a guide to pastors, youth leaders, educators and congregation leaders to renew men's ministries and to transform the Christian church that has become feminized. This is, however, not a critique of the place women have taken up in Christian communities. The authors want to make room for those who have become marginalized and who find themselves on the outside of Christian communities. Christian communities should embrace this opportunity to change, renew and increase their commitment to be a transforming community, in which equality between men and women is a daily way of living *coram Deo*.

The authors offer a new baseline from which Christian communities can disciple young men to once again explore their identity and spirituality in the face of God. If you too want to know where all the young men of your congregation have gone, then this book is for you. In reply to this question, the authors themselves offer the following remark: "Working with this question that gave birth to this project would be a contribution to the church as it readies itself for ministry in the twenty-first-century. The young men that we met have led us to believe this is so" (p 200).



Bell, R H 2007 – *Deliver us from evil: Interpreting the redemption from the power of Satan in New Testament theology*

Publisher: Mohr Siebeck (WUNT 216). Pages: XXIII, 439. Price: € 99.00

Reviewer: Prof Dr P H R van Houwelingen (Theologische Universiteit Kampen – the Netherlands)

The New Testament idea of deliverance from evil or from the power of Satan has posed particular problems for interpreters since the time of the Enlightenment. Often the Gospel exorcisms were rationalized or a demythologizing agenda was pursued, divorcing the Biblical concept of redemption from the world in which we live.

Richard H Bell (born in 1954; 1979 PhD in Theoretical Atomic Physics; 1991 DrTheol in Protestant Theology), reader in Theology at the University of Nottingham (UK), is the author of three well-known monographs on the exegesis and theology of Romans. In his latest book, *Deliver us from evil*, he stresses that if the deliverance from Satan is understood within an appropriate understanding of myth, then it does not only lead to an enrichment of New Testament theology, but also to a deeper understanding of the world in which we find ourselves.

Bell, thus wants to develop a theory of myth which has to do justice to both the world of “narrative” and to the mysteries of the “physical world”. This is accomplished by building on a distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal world as introduced by Kant and further developed by Schopenhauer. The resultant theory of myth is subsequently applied to two different examples of redemption from Satan found in the New Testament: first, Jesus’ exorcisms and second, the redemption of human beings from the power of satanic power through the cross and resurrection of Christ as found in both what he calls the Pauline tradition (I would prefer the term Pauline corpus) and in the epistle to the Hebrews.

What is significant about Jesus’ exorcisms, according to Bell, is that through Jesus the afflicted persons undergo an existential change. Apart from being healed, they are taken into the reality of God. This means that their soul is brought into the reality of his Kingdom. Put in Kantian terminology, it means that any change in the noumenal world (Jesus rebuking a demon), implies a corresponding change in the phenomenal world (Jesus healing a patient).

As far as the second case, redemption from the satanic power through the death and resurrection of Christ, is concerned, the idea of participation is central to Bell’s view. He speaks of “existential displacement of the believer” in the Pauline tradition. The outer person refers to the earthly life as opposed to the heavenly life for the inner man (2 Cor 4:16). Believers find themselves in the heavenly realms with Christ and their life is hidden in heaven with Christ (Eph 2:6; Col 3:3). Although the author of the epistle to the Hebrews does not support the idea of existential displacement, he is considering the redemption of Christ as the result of his exaltation in heaven.

For Bell, 2 Corinthians 4:16 is a key text in the whole argument. His interpretation of this complex Pauline phrase about the difference between our outer nature and our inner nature will, however, be controversial. He wants to follow Calvin, who not only rejected the notion that the outer person is the old person (in this instance Calvin undoubtedly was right), but also that the outer person is the physical person. According to Bell, the outer person rather refers to our earthly life (phenomenal), as opposed to our heavenly life (noumenal). Yet, most contemporary commentators agree that in this text Paul is contemplating the human existence on earth from two opposing angles (e.g. Martin, Thrall, Harris). The “outer self” is the physical aspect, the whole person from the viewpoint of the person’s mortality (2 Cor 4:10-11; cf Phlp 3:21). The “inner self” is the spiritual aspect, the whole person as a renewed being in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; cf Col 3:9-10). Everything takes place during our earthly life, but of course in eager expectation of the resurrection. Incidentally, this reviewer is not

convinced that Bell interprets 2 Corinthians 4:16 in exactly the same way as Calvin did, because he (Calvin) wrote that God calls us back to meditate on a better life (*meditatio vitae melioris*), and by this Calvin could very well have referred to our life in the future world. This is exactly how he interpreted verse 18: we have to carry our thoughts forward to the eternal kingdom; there is nothing for us to rest upon but to have confidence in a future life.

After having distinguished between these two forms of redemption, namely redemption through the exorcisms of Jesus and redemption from satanic power through the death and resurrection of Christ, Bell makes an attempt to relate them to each other. Is there such a thing as a “truth of myth”? Bell answers in the affirmative. The next question is how the truth of myth can be discovered. Despite the differences in the New Testament pertaining to redemption from Satan’s power, Bell states that in all cases their truth can be discerned only through faith. For Paul, faith is related to the existential displacement the believer undergoes. For Hebrews and the synoptic gospels, faith is related to our embedding ourselves (or being embedded!) in the myth.

Towards the end of his book, Bell makes some interesting concluding comments. First, it can be said that the devil and his demons do exist. They have an ontological status which can be compared to that of Adam, but not to the existence of God. Second, the devil and his demons can be disembodied, as some texts in the New Testament seem to indicate (Eph 2:2; 6:12; 2 Cor 4:4). The disembodied spirit is a combination of some entity in the noumenal realm together with a subject on the boundary of the phenomenal world. Third, the devil and his demons have a personality of some kind. They are definitely not to be considered as mere invented mythical figures, for the world of the demonic is nothing else but the real world in which we live. In his “concluding pastoral postscript”, Bell highlights the extraordinary nature of our world. The world is truly mysterious and demonic activity is part of that mystery.

This is surely a thought-provoking book, even when it has not convinced this reviewer as far as some of the author’s exegetical decisions are concerned. Furthermore, the structure of the book is not as logical as it could have been (e.g. why is a philosophical framework constructed in ch 3-4, between the two main examples of redemption?) and the author does tend to occasionally repeat himself (e.g. the discussion of 2 Cor 4:16 on pp 223-226, repeated on pp 286-291). Nevertheless, Bell’s contribution deserves serious consideration, in particular his concluding comments on the reality of evil and the power of Satan in our present world. Is it not time to abandon the rather closed worldview that we have inherited from the age of Enlightenment?



Brownson, J V 2007 – *The promise of baptism: An introduction to baptism in Scripture and the Reformed tradition*

Publisher: Eerdmans. Pages 223. Price \$16.00.

Reviewer: Rev N J S Steenekamp (Middelburg)

In this well researched book, Prof Brownson clearly outlines the meaning of baptism from a Reformed perspective. He uses the questions and opinions about baptism from the church and the community at large to form the framework within which he discusses this sacrament.

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Brownson argues that baptism should be seen as a Christian practice that declares God's promises to man. This perspective is used to answer all the questions about faith and people's perspectives on baptism in our times. Issues discussed include rebaptism, infant baptism, the meaning baptism has for people who no longer believe; the place where baptism should take place et cetera. All discussions are pastorally orientated.

The book consists of thirty short chapters (seldom more than eight pages apiece) which each masterly answers one specific question on the meaning or practice of baptism. References to historical works and Biblical passages abound and are well integrated into the discussion. The book can be read from beginning to end, but also offers the possibility of being used as a reference work, reading the chapters in a random fashion in order to answer specific questions.

Every chapter is concluded with a summary of three to six bulleted phrases. This serves as a very useful search facility of the contents of the chapter or as a study-aid for students. In addition, a few questions and statements *for further reflection and discussion* are included, as well as a very short reference for further study on the contents of the specific chapter. The thirty chapters are grouped in six sections namely:

- Basic questions;
- The core meanings of baptism;
- Baptism, faith and salvation;
- The case for infant baptism;
- Disputes and questions surrounding infant baptism;
- Pastoral decisions surrounding baptism.

An index of Scripture references and a select annotated bibliography on baptism are included. Apart from the book's value for the scholar or student, it would be very useful for any church member in deepening their understanding of baptism.



Brueggemann, W 2006 – *The word that redescribes the world: The Bible and discipleship*

Publisher: Fortress. Pages 235. Price: Unknown.

Reviewer: Rev André Ungerer (Klerksdorp)

The title of the book already indicates that Brueggemann – as always – begins with the text of the Scripture. Throughout the book both the danger and the power of Scripture are emphasized and a mode of looking that is confrontational, especially between text and the world we live in, is encountered. Brueggemann, as an Old Testament scholar, uses a rich variety of texts, also from the New Testament, to confront the world we live in. The text of the world is described in various ways throughout the book: It is the text of the Enlightenment, of modernism, autonomous freedom, technical solutions to every problem, sexual emancipation, systematic violence, to name but a few. The book is about the redescription (by means of the Word) that protests against the initial description and presentation of reality (the World) which is not an adequate or trustworthy account.

The subtitle *The Bible and discipleship* does not imply a ten point plan as a *modus operandi* on how to encourage discipleship in a congregation, for in Brueggemann's own

words: “*Discipleship is no easy church program*”. Brueggemann dwells on the fundamental issues of the God who calls and the God who sends. In short God calls to discipleship, that is, to follow his presence and purpose and promise, with disciplines being needed for the project. God sends because (a) this God has compelling authority to issue imperatives that anticipate ready acceptance and (b) this God has a compelling passion for what is to be affected and enacted in the world over which this God is governor.

This book consists of a collection of essays written and published in a variety of contexts and in response to a number of different questions and invitations. The book follows a threefold arrangement organizing the contents into three sections, with a total of 11 chapters (essays), edited by Patrick D Miller.

The first section, *The Word redescribing the world*, occupies itself with the Biblical text and the way in which Biblical redescription may be practiced with authority in a cultural context in which old patterns of authority have become outdated. In *Proclamatory confrontations* Brueggemann describes the preacher’s difficult task in his/her confrontation with truth and power. He characterizes preaching as truth speaking to power – “*in our postmodern world it is a power that is endlessly subtle, complex and elusive*”.

The second section, *The Word redefining the possible*, begins with Jerusalem as a general metaphor that can be applied to all our cities and Brueggemann links it to the urgent issues facing our cities today. The chapter about evangelism and discipleship provides an excellent and critical reflection on these disciplines. As Brueggemann states: “The talk makes the walk possible, and the walk is to heal, to break all vicious cycles of diminishment that violate the intention of the creator”. In the next chapter the dangers of consumerism as a life of self-preoccupation are cast in the light of Biblical citizenship which is one of being truly blessed givers. The section ends with a chapter on ecumenism as the shared practice of a peculiar identity.

In the last section Brueggemann presents a vision of a community of disciples that is shaped by the Word, firstly by commissioning the disciples to fight against scarcity and then by describing how holiness becomes generosity. The book is concluded with a chapter on patriotism for the citizens of the penultimate superpower. It is perhaps apt to end this review by quoting Brueggemann’s own reference to preaching as *truth speaking to power*. This book is indeed about truth speaking to power in such a way that it mobilizes the Christian community to participate in being the truth in such a manner that it can no longer be ignored.



Burridge, R A & Gould, G 2004 – *Jesus now and then*

Publisher: Eerdmans. Pages Xii + 215. Price: \$16.00

Reviewer: Prof Ernest van Eck (University of Pretoria)

Jesus now and then must be read in terms of what it is: a reworking of nine lectures on the effect Jesus had on people *then* (the New Testament and the early church) and *now*, presented to King’s College students coming from different religious backgrounds and who were not necessarily studying theology. Because of this particular setting and the original aim, expect a book that presents the issues at an introductory level. Therefore, do not expect in-depth discussions on, for example, the question of the historical Jesus or Paul’s relationship to Jesus. Moreover, since the authors are who they are (Burridge, who was responsible for the part on the New Testament and Gould, who focused on the early church), expect the

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genre of the gospels being described as Lives (see Burridge's *What are the Gospels? A comparison with Graeco-Roman biography*, 1992), Mark as the roaring lion, Matthew as the human face, Luke as the burden-bearing ox and John as the high-flying eagle (see Burridge's *Four Gospels, one Jesus?* 1994), and expect an emphasis on the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers when Jesus' humanity and divinity is discussed (Gould).

Contents-wise, the book consists of an introduction (ch 1, co-authored by the two authors) and two parts, the New Testament (Part I, written by Burridge) and the early church (Part II, written by Gould). In a certain sense the first chapter can be seen as a summary of what is to follow, focusing on the Christological debates in the early and modern church on who Jesus was (then) and is (now). In Part I Burridge discuss the historical Jesus-question (ch 2), Jesus as the different gospel writers presented him (ch 3), Paul's understanding of Jesus (ch 4) and the views of Jesus in the New Testament (ch 5). Part II, written by Gould, has as its focus what the early church taught about Jesus (ch 6), the way in which the early Christians had worshipped Jesus (ch 7), the confession of Jesus as being wholly human and divine (ch 8), and modern day understandings of Jesus (ch 9).

Taking its purpose into consideration, Burridge and Gould must be congratulated on a book that is well written. The historical and theological questions surrounding Jesus are presented in a non-technical and understandable manner. Many undergraduate students in my classes over the past two years can vouch for this. The box inserts, explaining some of the "difficult" terms used, are useful and are welcomed. The suggested reading list at the end, however, could have been expanded to have been more representative of the scholarly debate *Jesus now and then* wants to introduce.



Cromhout, M 2007 – *Jesus and identity: Reconstructing Judean ethnicity in Q (Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean context, 2)*

Publisher: Wipf & Stock, Pages xiv-390. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof Joseph Verheyden (Leuven – The Netherlands)

This book, the revised version of a doctoral dissertation supervised by A van Aarde and submitted to the University of Pretoria in 2006, proposes to study the complex and crucial issue of understanding how early Christianity (or "Messianism" as the author prefers to call it) saw itself within its original "Jewish" (Cromhout: "Judean") context, how this perception functioned, and how it eventually may have influenced its emancipation from its roots to adopt (an)other identity/-ies. For this is above all a book about identity, how it is created, and how religion and ethnicity have interplayed in the particular situation of earliest Judaeo-Christianity.

In the first (pp 9-66) of his five chapters, Cromhout offers a detailed analysis of two major books on the historical Jesus (J P Meier's *Marginal Jew* and J D Crossan's *Mediterranean Jewish peasant*) and deals with how they have given a place to the question of Jesus' ethnic identity. Building on "ethnicity theory" Cromhout discusses the topic from several perspectives (creation of identity by means of the group's name, the role of myths related to its ancestry, collective memory, the group's geographical, linguistic, and religious traditions, its social construct, and the particular practices and customs it shared). Meier's Jesus appears to be both in line with and to deviate from its Judean ethnicity. The latter is especially clear in the way in which Jesus' demands had forced his followers to largely give

up the social matrix in which they had been living and how it affected how they, as Judeans, were supposed to behave towards non-Judeans ('Gentiles') and even how they were supposed to envisage the foundations of their sense of being privileged ('Abraham is our father'). What Cromhout wants to know from Meier is to what extent this change had turned Jesus into "a marginal Judean", taking into account the critical role he had assigned himself in realizing the hopes of Israel and what it meant as a challenge to the traditional "ethnically based" claims of his fellow Judeans. Crossan's Jesus seems to have already completely left the Judean fold: "his Judean background is stretched very thin over the ethos of the Roman-Hellenistic empire" (p 61). The obvious question here is what consequences this has for understanding Jesus in terms of Judean ethnicity. In other words, Crossan is questioning the measure of truth in the Third Quest's axiom that Jesus is a Jew/Judean, firmly rooted and at home in Judaism/Judeanism and had decided to remain within its realm. It leads Cromhout to the next step of asking whether there ever was such a thing as a "common Judeanism" in first-century Palestine, a question he (maybe all too) briefly touches upon in the final paragraphs of the first chapter and which he answers in the affirmative. This in turn leads to the second chapter.

This chapter deals with developing a socio-cultural model of ethnicity and in this regard Cromhout builds on a number of authors and concepts, the most important of which are E P Sanders' notion of "covenantal nomism" and what it means for creating national identity, P L Berger's and T Luckmann's famous notion of "symbolic universe" and how it relates to all aspects and domains of human life and J D G Dunn's "pillars" which, according to him, supported Second Temple Judaism. To these notions Cromhout adds Dunn's emphasis on praxis, further insights from ethnicity theory on primordialism versus constructionism, and finally also D C Duling's model for describing ethnicity. All of this results in a new proposal for a model to consider "Judean ethnicity" based on a set of commonly shared socio-religious practices (the 'Habitus/Israel') and on a theological framework or set of beliefs that describe in a normative manner this identity for those inside (the 'Sacred Canopy'). "So what kind of Judean was Jesus?" (p 107). Meier's Jesus appears to be working towards reconstructing the Judean ethnic identity he and the society he lived in, had known. "In all of this, to call Jesus a 'Marginal Jew' is being kind" (p 111). But Crossan's Jesus, on the other hand, "practically obliterates Judean ethnic particularity" (p 113); no longer is he to be found in the margin, he is "off the radar" (p 113). Jesus was for both, but to varying degrees, actively opposing mainstream positions and pushing the system beyond its own boundaries. And this is precisely how Jesus should be viewed.

Chapter Three offers a survey of more than a hundred pages (pp 117-231) of what Judean ethnicity looked like in the first century and in a time during which old isolationist theories or aspirations had continuously come under the threat of being broken down by reality, firstly that of the post-Alexandrian Hellenistic era, then that of the Roman Empire. Cromhout's survey covers the full range of linguistic and literary evidence and deals with religious praxis and with socio-religious organization (the synagogue, the Temple, and the religious authorities). Much is of course known from similar surveys and the reader could be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the topics listed (the fact that the evidence cited is a mix of a wide variety of Jewish and Graeco-Roman sources which occasionally require more critical or careful assessment, is of little help, but by having all of the evidence put together once more, one has to realize both the complexity and the encompassing nature of the phenomenon. Everything contributes towards building or strengthening identity, and nothing in the life of the average "Judean" seems to be "neutral" or irrelevant a propos the issue that is being studied.

In the short fourth chapter (pp 231-256) the attention is turned to the Galilee and its inhabitants, and particularly the question of how they related to the Judeans of the South. Cromhout criticizes attempts at turning the former into a distinct region or people and claims the evidence strongly supports these "Northerners" shared the same symbolic universe with

their southern neighbors, including their view on the role of the Temple and the importance of the Land, a view that had been working its way north from the time of the Hasmoneans on.

In the fifth and final chapter (pp 257-380), Cromhout deals with the topic of his main concern, namely to establish the identity of the community that composed and read Q. The first part deals with some introductory questions regarding the date, provenance, and extent of Q, and especially with that of its composition. Mainly in dialogue with J S Kloppenborg whose stratification hypothesis is discussed at large (alternatives such as those put forward by D Jacobson or C M Tuckett only receive marginal attention), Cromhout comes to see Q as the result of two strata (not three, as Kloppenborg suggested), of which the second – the “polemical and judgmental” is – in Cromhout’s words (p 287) – the most important one for reconstructing the identity of the Q community. Cromhout then continues by reading Q² (the ‘main redaction’) according to his model, first dealing with the “Habitus/Israel” (i.e., the name of the group, its language, religious praxis, use of kinship imagery and the concept of the Land) and then dealing with its “theology” (i.e., Q’s Christology, the role of Torah, the Kingdom, collective memory, traces of ‘ancestry mythology’, eschatology, and ‘the others’ or the Gentiles). The same reading along the lines of this model is then applied to Q¹ (pp 344-366) and Q in its final form (pp 366-377). This triple reading of Q reveals that kinship and eschatology were the basic issues in Q¹, and that it was only in Q² that the wider range of topics was addressed. It also reveals that the Q group was becoming increasingly (re)constructionist, i.e., it was heading towards discontinuing traditional covenantal nomism, and was creating for itself an identity of its own, distinct from that of other groups. The fundamental difference between the Q group and some of the other Judean sects and renewal movements was that Q (as other Messianist groups) “participated in an eschatological renewal that (re)constructed covenantal nomism, while the other Judean movements of the time had an eschatological vision that aimed at the renewal of traditional understanding of covenantal nomism” (p 380).

Much in this book, in particular the attempt at offering a model for “reading” identity markers in a text, is worthy of attention and the reviewer certainly concurs with the author’s strong emphasis on “the discontinuity factor”. However, some of the more critical (or weaker) aspects of the approach and the conclusion should not be ignored, two of which I shall mention. (a) Cromhout rightly concludes that “the Q people were part of a reform movement *within* Judeanism that was *destined from the start* to become a movement *outside* of Judeanism” (p 380), but he introduces this clause with a modifier (“although this was never their intention”), seemingly unaware of the consequences it has. For example, what evidence is there that this movement was “not intended”; and if this had indeed been the case, what does it mean for the “real” identity of the Q group as it resulted from their move? (b) There is no need to point out the potential, but also the dangers, of the kind of approach used here, an approach in which a model is being applied to a text. Disregarding the often discussed issue of working with a hypothetical text, one possible danger is that one looks for evidence for each and every aspect of the model, at the risk even of misinterpreting the text. This is what may have happened with the first category, that of “the name” (pp 288-89). There is no reason to conclude with Cromhout that “evidently the Q people identified themselves with this symbolic usage [of the name ‘Israel’] and saw themselves as part of Israel, and as heirs of the ancestral land” (p 289). The Q Christians do not call themselves Jews/Judeans, neither do they identify with “Israel”, a term that only appears twice in Q and both times with a most critical connotation. Rather, Q is on the brink of leaving “Israel” behind. Again, this has considerable consequences for describing Q’s “Judean” identity. These two critical remarks do not, as such, invalidate Cromhout’s overall methodological approach or the general conclusion, but certain aspects thereof may require more systematic (and critical) reflection. The author has certainly shown the ability to undertake such.

Doedens, U 2005 – *In het teken van tegenspraak: Steekhoudende gedachten van Søren Kierkegaard*

Uitgewers: Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema. 120 Bladsye. Prys: €12,80.

Resensent: Dr Johann Beukes (Universiteit van Johannesburg)

Udo Doedens (1968-) is 'n predikant van die *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* in Suid-Beierland en 'n gevestigde Kierkegaard-navorsers. Hy het in 1999 in die filosofie gepromoveer aan die Universiteit van Leiden met 'n proefskrif getitel *Het eenvoudige leven volgens Søren Kierkegaard*. Sy behendigheid in terme van die hantering van sleutelgedagtes in die oeuvre van Kierkegaard kom hom baie goed te pas in hierdie pragtige publikasie, netjies en bekostigbaar uitgegee deur Meinema.

Hierdie boek is ten diepste 'n blootlegging van die problematiek wat daarop volg wanneer die kerk – en natuurlik gelowige enkelinge self – aan die eietydse verbruikerskultuur konformeer. Dit is ook die kultuurkritiese aspek in die boek waarop hierdie resensie die aksent laat val. Die boek wil ons naamlik deur die aanbod van enkele gedagtes van die 19^e eeuse Deense filosoof Søren Kierkegaard terugvoer na die waardige eenvoud daarvan om 'n onderbeklemtoonde, eksistensiële-gelowige mens in die problematiese kulturele bedding van die vroeg 21^e eeu te wees. *In het teken van tegenspraak* is dus nie 'n Kierkegaard-monografie nie, maar 'n boek wat eerder sleutelgedagtes van Kierkegaard as 'n kontrapunt inspan om oor die eietydse samelewing, kultuur, kerk, geloof en God self te mymer. Dit is dan ook die stemming wat die boek by 'n mens agterlaat: Eg-Kierkegaardiaans, bestaan die boek eerder uit eksistensiële mymeringe as wat dit pretendeer om 'n sistematies-filosofiese analise van die kultuur, die kerk en die teologie daar te stel.

In die Hervormde teologiese konteks, waar die verhouding tussen filosofie en teologie grootliks as kosbaar geag word, sou die vrugbare ontmoeting tussen filosofie en teologie dan ook waardeer word: die boek is onder meer 'n uitstalling van die homiletiese en pastorale potensiaal wat in die ontmoeting tussen teologie en filosofie opgesluit lê. Natuurlik is dit so dat Kierkegaard die post-Kantiaanse filosoof is wat hierdie ontmoeting minder problematiseer as enige van sy 19^e eeuse tydgenote en 20^e eeuse eksponente. Maar dat Kierkegaard 'n altyd-belofteryke teenwoordigheid in die kerk en teologie daarstel, weliswaar dikwels teen die grein in van dit wat normaalweg deur die kerk as vanselfsprekend geag word, blyk ook in hierdie teks weer baie duidelik.

Die teks beslaan 14 diggeskrewe hoofstukke, 'n verwysingsregister en 'n gekondenseerde Kierkegaard-bibliografie. Elkeen van die hoofstukke word deur Doedens ingelei met 'n aktualiserende refleksie oor eietydse kultuur- en geloofskwessies, wat dan opvolgend vanuit die Kierkegaard-fragmente toegelig word. Dit bring 'n inspirerende leeservaring mee. Predikante sou veel beter preekgeleiers hier vind as in sogenaamde preekbundels en die talle homiletiese “gidse” wat in die handel beskikbaar is: Vir iemand soos Kierkegaard sou dit trouens ondenkbaar wees dat 'n predikant iemand anders se preek oorpreek – hoogstens sou die prediker van eksistensiële geleiers gebruik kon maak wat self weer hermeneuties-eksistensiël begrond moet word. Maar daardie geleiers moet baie versigtig gekies word. Wanneer Kierkegaard dan wel as so 'n geleier gekies word, word die eksistensiële geloofsbegrip na die diepsinnige, die eenvoudige, die gestroopte gevoer: Kierkegaard voorsien ons van “die ander geluid” (p 7) en hy begelei ons om dié ander geluid in ons eie bestaan te kan oorsê sonder om dit bloot na te sê. Doedens munt daarin uit om Kierkegaard só aan die woord te bring dat ander enkelinge self weer tot 'n woord gebring kan word; om Kierkegaard te laat praat sodat ons self weer kan praat.

Doedens adem 'n welkome kultuurpessimisme in sy mymeringe. Hy reflekteer oor die eietydse leefwêreld as een wat slegs nog die skyn van 'n maalstroom van opwindinge vertoon, maar vanweë die hiperreële verbruikerskultuur eintlik volkome lusteloos geword het.

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Die begrip “hiperreële verbruikerskultuur” (ek ontleen dit vanuit Jean Baudrillard se kultuurkritiek) beteken dat die *wyse* van die bevrediging van behoeftes (gegewe die tempo waarmee verbruikersitems as intrinsiek betekenisgewend verselfstandig word) belangriker as die behoefte self geword het. En mense is in ons tyd werklik onvervuld en angstig. Hulle put geen vervulling en sinswaarde uit die eindelose fetisjering van verbruikersitems nie. Die hoop wat hierdie lewe en die waarborge vanuit hierdie lewe moet oorstyg, is afwesig. Die geloof wat die lewe rig én telkens weer relativeer, het in die hiperreële kulturbegrip van ontsakralisering, die ontwaardiging van die individu, onmiddellike verbruik en sikliese vervangbaarheid verdwyn. Daar is nou nog net “zoete broodjies en goedkoop genade” (p 7) te bespeur.

Ek het persoonlik in verskeie publikasies probeer aandui dat ’n kritiek van die verbruikerskultuur die grootste enkele uitdaging is waarvoor die Protestantse kerk in Suid-Afrika te staan gekom het. Die kerk moet teenoor hierdie kultuur te staan kom as esoteries, ánders. Die kerk mag eenvoudig nie aan hierdie kultuur konformeer nie. Tog is die wrange vrugte van daardie bondgenootskap oral op die kerklike landskap rondom ons te bespeur. ’n Menigte kerke het lank terug al weggedeins van die uitdaging om hierdie massaverbruikers van tyd, ruimtes, medemens en die natuur filosofies-eksistensiële én evangelies-eksistensiële te begelei tot ’n lewe wat bo die verbruikerskultuur uitstyg. In Doedens se gemoed is daar genadiglik nie plek vir “kliëntgerigte” predikante wat ’n “diens” lewer en ’n “produk” aflewer aan die hand van Amerikanistiese (presies 40 dae!) “programme” in lugversorgde “diensruimtes” nie. Hy het daar geen erg aan nie. Doedens is juis geïnteresseerd in predikante en gelowiges wat dwarsdeur die stumpsinnigheid en oppervlakkigheid van die grootskaalse eietydse verbruikerspopularisering van die Christelike geloof kyk – daardie sosiale fenomeen wat die gerespekteerde Suid-Afrikaanse kultuurkritikus Johann Rossouw in sy opspraakwekkende boek *’n Rooi Z4 en ’n Renaissance-kasteel* (Kaapstad: Zebra) met ’n skerp diskursiewe skalpel as die “gnossies” ontbloot het. Trouens, die parallelle tussen Doedens (vanuit die religie) en Rossouw (vanuit die kultuurkritiek) se nadenke oor die kultuur is hoogs insiggewend, getuienisdraend daarvan dat die verbruikerskultuur die hand in die sfeer van die religie oorspeel het en dat die pendulum stadig maar seker besig is om terug te draai na die waarde van eenvoud en onopgesmuktheid in die geloofslewe.

Doedens is net so ernstig as sy Deense voorganger oor die outentisiteit van die eenvoudige geloofslewe en soek opnuut waarde in begrippe soos die enkeling, eenvoud, die sonderlinge eie-aardigheid van die Christelike geloof, lyding, gestrooptheid, ewigheid, die paradokse van liefde en die (inderdaad gekwelde) vreugdes van gelowigwees. Doedens vind in Kierkegaard die ideale eksistensiële geleier om self eksistensiële oor geloof in die 21^e eeu na te dink. Die volgende temas word hoofstukgewys in die boek hanteer: (1) Die enkeling en mense, (2) Eksistensie, (3) Geloof, (4) Sonde en vergifnis, (5) Eenvoudige wysheid, (6) Die teken van die teenspraak – Jesus Christus, (7) Die Woord van God, (8) Gebed, (9) Waarvoor ek sal leef en sterf, (10) Gesag, (11) Getuienis, (12) Die vreugde van herhaling, (13) Liefde & (14) Hierdie hartstoglose tyd. Elkeen van hierdie hoofstukke bevat aforistiese kosbaarhede van Doedens se Kierkegaardiaanse anatomisering van die verbruikerskultuur. Net enkele snedes ter prikkeling, telkens vry en kontekstueel vertaal uit die Nederlands:

“Verwag geen troos van romerige sjokolades en robuuste 4x4’s nie – voor die dood gaan die ruilhandel reguit berg-af ...” (p 10);

“Volgens Kierkegaard is daar in hoofsaak twee maniere waarop die enkeling oor die ewigheid kan leer praat. Die eerste manier leer die enkeling vanuit die filosofie, veral van die mees konsekwente van haar beoefenaars, die Griekse filosoof Sokrates. Die tweede manier is verbonde aan die Christelike geloof en die figuur van Jesus Christus.

Sokrates en Christus was ware enkelinge, wat elk op hul eie wyse geleef het kragtens 'n nie-ekonomiese absolute" (p 11);

"Die bepaling van die gees is: die enkeling. Die bepaling van die dier is: die massa. Die Christendom is gees en staan dus in betrekking tot die kategorie van die enkeling en nie die massa nie" (p 14);

"Die keuse vir 'n onvryheid voor die verbruikerskultuur sou Kierkegaard sonde noem" (p 18);

"Die hoogste waartoe 'n mens in staat is, is om te kies dat God hom sal help" (p 22);

"Die lewe moet beproef juis ter wille van die geloof: solank mense nie beproewing ervaar nie, sal daar altyd die geneigdheid wees om die gansandere God 'Onze Lieve Heer Gerritje' te noem" (p 30);

"Alle kwaad, alle onreg, kan teruggevoer word na die wantroue, die ongelooft van die enkele mens" (p 38);

"Sokrates is vir Kierkegaard 'die eenvoudige wyse' – daarom kan Sokrates sê: 'Ek weet dat ek nie weet nie'" (p 46). Die Christendom het vergeet wat dit beteken om eenvoudig te wees, om te sê dat ek weet dat ek nie weet nie;

"In die naam van die lewende paradoks Jesus Christus kry menslike onmag, verlatenheid en gebrekkigheid deel aan God se almag, voorsienigheid en barmhartigheid. Dit is die soort ruilhandeling waarop ons eerder behoort te fokus" (p 69);

"Jy kan jousef uitbid net soos wat jy jousef kan uithuil, wanneer daar geen trane meer oor is nie. En wanneer jy jousef so uitgebied het, bly daar net een woord oor: Amen" (p 70);

"Die krisis van die kerk, die krisis van die moderne wêreld, is 'n gesagskrisis – mense plaas hulle nie meer stilswyend en gedemp onder God se gesag nie. Mense klou nou nog net aan mekaar, mense vertrou nog net die groot groep. Mense het God dood verklaar en daarmee 'n streep getrek deur onvoorwaardelike gesag. Getuig dit van 'n buitengewone werklikheidsin of 'n geslepe ongehoorsaamheid?" (p 82).

Die boek bestaan uit tientalle sulke intrigerende opmerkings, afgesien van die ruim gesiteerde Kierkegaard-tekste, wat natuurlik self altyd boeiend is. Udo Doedens se *In het teken van tegenspraak* sal nog vir geruime tyd 'n welkome plek op my studeertafel hê. Ek voorsien dat ander lesers ook so daarvoor mag oordeel.



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Gerhard, J J, SJ 2006 – *The miraculous parallelisms of John*

Publishers: The Orlando Truth. Pages: 168, Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof D van der Merwe (University of South Africa)

John Gerhard, a Roman Catholic priest, is a former professor of theology and Biblical studies at St John's University in New York City and has dedicated more than 30 years of full-time research to the analysis of the literary structure of the Fourth Gospel. His analysis was primarily directed at discovering and identifying parallelisms in this Gospel and this book is the result thereof.

The book directly challenges the historical critics and endeavors to demonstrate "that their subjective opinions fail of persuasion". This Gerhard does by trying his best to prove "with detailed and comprehensive objective evidence" that the Fourth Gospel contains an extraordinary display of parallelisms, literary patterns and symmetries. According to him, this demonstrates the brilliance of the author's poetic and literary genius and demonstrates that the claims of the historical critics are in serious error. Gerhard is of the opinion that the continuity of the text of the Fourth Gospel is well ordered and consequently that no dislocations or redactions by editors have destroyed the original continuity of the text.

The book consists of seven chapters preceded by a frontispiece, acknowledgements, author's preface and the actuary's preface. In the "Author's Preface" Gerhard spells out his warrant for writing this book. It was due to the reference of the Pontifical Biblical Commission that the so-called "historical critical methodology" had serious limitations which opened the way for a more literary methodology. Through this book Gerhard tries to bring the historical critical method to trial. He was influenced by the work of J L Kugel who, in 1981 wrote *The idea of Biblical poetry: Parallelism and its history*, in which he explains parallel structure as the uninterrupted flow of text broken into continuous sections of five successive parts, known as pericopes, printed on two horizontal parallel lines. The first three of these are on the top line and the last two along the bottom line of the horizontal parallel lines, as shown in the following example:

Ex: 1——— / 2——— / 3———
4——— / 5———

Through his study, Gerhard shows that John not only composed his Gospel in a 3/2 parallelism mode, but that the pericopes (Biblical text) are connected by matching words in a precise manner: Pericope 1 matches pericope 3

Pericope 1 matches pericope 5
Pericope 2 matches pericope 4
Pericope 2 matches pericope 5
Pericope 3 matches pericope 4

The matching words create a literary pattern, a "cyclic net of 5", known as a C_5 pattern. "This demonstrates the elegant complexity of John's literary style. The patterns, each of which looks like a star, and the comments below the patterns, teach us the author's method of composition. Note that the 5 pericopes are unified in the complete pattern, and that the 3/2 parallelism is the surveillance technology for discovering this 'cyclic net of 5' literary pattern, which we have identified as a C_5 pattern for the convenience of reference" (p 11). The "Key Observations to Understanding the Patterns" are spelled out on pages 63 and 64.

In chapter one Gerhard analyzes the literary structure of the Fourth Gospel. Chapter two sketches the historical development of parallelism in the Fourth Gospel. Gerhard describes the symmetric patterns which appear in the Fourth Gospel in chapter three. In chapter four he presents his observations that enhance appreciation for the elegance of the symmetric patterns in the Fourth Gospel. Chapter five includes an actuary's report on the significance of symmetric patterns in the Fourth Gospel. Chapter six, by far the longest chapter, is divided into two sections. Section A comprises the "Foreword to the Symmetric Printing of John Presented in Section B of this Chapter 6" and section B "Evidence Demonstrating the Consistent Appearance of the Symmetric Patterns Throughout the Entire Gospel". Chapter seven closes this discussion with reference to how the symmetric patterns facilitate the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Unfortunately, there is no concluding chapter in which one would expect final conclusions to be made and there is no complete bibliography either. Throughout the book references (e.g. pp 18, 19, 26, 27, 60, 62) have been sporadically added.

Although Gerhard has good intentions, the reviewer unfortunately cannot share in the fantasy and outcomes of this book. Far too many questions remain unanswered. It is true that parallelisms, literary patterns and symmetries frequently occur in the Fourth Gospel (see, for example, the prologue, ch 9 and 17 on chiasmic structures), but nowhere does Gerhard define the criteria used to demarcate throughout the Gospel, as he did in chapter six, the five pericopes that form the C₅ pattern. When the five groups of words or phrases that link the pericopes are compared, there is no pattern or logical relationship between them. There is also no consistency in the length of the pericopes; they simply differ too much in length, at times from thirty-nine verses (e.g. p 103) to one verse (e.g. pp 118, 133). If such structures are interpreted as divine inspiration and the inerrancy of the Fourth Gospel, then what about the rest of the New Testament? This, Gerhard does not discuss at all.

It is true that many times scholars who consistently work with the historical critical method take it too far by dissecting Scripture, thereby doing an injustice to the interpretation of its message. Still, the historical-critical method cannot be disregarded because it still has a complementary role to play *together with* other exegetical methods in the process of reading and understanding the text and message of the New Testament.

Unfortunately, this book is disappointing. Its value lies in learning from it how not to force an invaluable device, such as parallelism, on the *whole* of a book. It also emphasizes that in the exegesis of historical texts literary investigation is critically important to do justice to the interpretation and understanding of the text.



Nürnberg, K 2007 – *The living dead and the living God: Christ and the ancestors in a changing Africa*

Publishers: Cluster Publications. 312 Pages: Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Dr J Beyers (Pretoria)

This publication is the result of a lifetime of work by the author in a predominantly African church. His keen interest in the relation between African spirituality and the Christian faith becomes evident in this work. The author attempts to address the interaction between traditionalism and modernity from an African perspective, as well as the interaction between

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traditionalism and post modernity. Culture changes and, according to the author, theology have not kept up with the changes. This book is an attempt to catch up with the debate.

Chapter one provides a broad scope of what the author attempts in this book. The terminology is defined in order to prepare the playing field. The book consists of two parts: Part one deals with Traditionalism and the second part addresses Modernity.

In chapter two the author reviews the main aspects of what a traditional African worldview comprises. The traditional African worldview can be described as dynamistic and animistic. The whole universe is filled with an impersonal power influencing the existence of all things. The spirits of ancestors take a prominent place in this invisible spiritual world. All people are dependant on the ancestors' care, protection and advice. All actions taken in life ought to be directed towards the ancestors and guided by them.

This worldview, which is inherently part of African culture, makes it difficult for Christianity to get a foothold. Christ is presented as the ultimate authority and head of his body the church. For Africans it is unthinkable that the ancestors can be replaced, be it by the Son of God.

Although the author endeavors to present a solution to this impasse, he tends to get stuck in the traditional understanding of traditional African spirituality. The author mentions early on in his work that culture changes and this change also happens in African culture. Traditional African spirituality is then merely one (old) layer within the diachronic study of African culture. African culture has been exposed to Christianity for quite some time now. This exposure must have contributed to the change African culture has undergone. This process is not fully taken into account in this work.

In chapter three the author offers what to my knowledge is the best Biblical perspective on the function and role of ancestors. It is clear from Old and New Testament accounts that although ancestors were acknowledged in those times too, they did not take on the status the ancestors do within an African context. The key measure by which the author determines the position of ancestors is to consider the authority they exercise in the lives of their descendants. He reaches the conclusion that ancestors can be recognized, respected and can even serve as a source of inspiration. However, ancestors can never be allowed to intervene in the lives of their descendants. He mentions that in Africa theologians attempt to reconcile Christ's absolute authority with the role of the ancestors by calling Christ "brother ancestor". The author disagrees with such syncretism, but allows it as a metaphor for understanding Christ from an African perspective.

Chapter four turns to a perspective offered from a Lutheran point of view. The Reformation is based on the absolute authority of Scripture, grace and faith in Christ. The dead do not play any role in salvation, nor even in a life of piety. The dead can never usurp the position of authority Christ has.

The author then resorts to a critical discourse with Catholic theology. He criticizes the position of the Pope and the concept of churchly hierarchy. The position and function of the saints are also criticized.

In Part two a perspective from the point of view of modernity is given. It discusses how authority functions within a modernistic world. The author commences chapter five by discussing the main characteristics of modernity, putting the emphasis on the rise of individualism over against the acceptance of objective authority. The clash between traditionalism and modernity is then discussed with special attention being given to the influence on social structure and the position of women. As a conclusion to the chapter the author indicates possible religious reactions to modernity.

Chapter six is an endeavor to provide a key-hole perspective of what lies ahead. Along the lines of economics, sociology and religion the author indicates how modernity eventually leads to post modernity and what effect it has on traditionalism. The conclusion he reaches is that the church is in need of a dynamic theology.

In the last chapter the author provides guidelines on how Christianity should respond to modernity and traditionalism. Not only insights from the past are necessary to understand the position ancestors have in the traditional African worldviews, but the reality of the present and the trends of the future all need to shape Christian thought. From the author's remarks it is clear that he cannot but implore traditional Africans to choose between Christ and the ancestors. Christ is the final and absolute authority. On the other hand, the author challenges Western Christians to open their minds to realize the value of mourning rituals as acknowledgement of the passing away of the deceased.

The value of this work lies in the fact that it presents a balanced evaluation of the position of the deceased in Christianity. Ancestor worship is not dealt with as a simple theological issue that can be neglected. It discusses the complexity and implication of the position of the deceased and presents challenges to all Christians.



Anderson, B W 1988 – *The unfolding drama of the Bible*

Publishers: Fortress. Pages 93. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Dr F J Boshoff (Ermelo)

This booklet is intended as a study guide to assist the reader to fully understand the Biblical message from beginning to end. The study guide originally appeared in 1953 and was reprinted in 1957 and 1971.

Bernhard W Anderson, emeritus professor of Old Testament Theology at the Princeton Theological Seminary distinguishes between two types of Bible study. On the one hand there is what he terms the academic approach, in which the Bible is viewed from the outside as if by an observer.

Then there is the other approach which he advocates, in which the world is observed almost from within the Bible and through the window of Biblical faith. He approaches the Biblical message as a drama in three acts, with a prologue in the beginning and an epilogue as a conclusion. After the prologue, which deals with creation, the genesis, follows the first act which he calls: The *formation* of God's people. This act deals with the exodus from Egypt and the institution of the Covenant. The people's disobedience, decay and injustice signal the end of the first act.

He calls the second act: The *reformation* of God's people. This act deals with the exodus and the return from exile in Babylon. Ezra and Nehemiah take a prominent place on the stage and there is strong emphasis on observance of the Law and of religious rituals. The third act is called: The *transformation* of God's people. This act traces the development of traditional ethnic people into the Christian community of saints and religious people the world over. And so the Church of Jesus Christ appears on the stage. The Acts of the Apostles, in particular, report on the rise and expansion of the Church.

According to Anderson, this Biblical drama does not only have a beginning and a climax, but also a conclusion. All things, history and nature, heaven and earth form part of God's plan, of Him who is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. The original Paradise is recreated when the Lord says there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Anderson presents this study guide in the form of eight lectures. At the end of each lecture topical questions are listed which lend themselves to discussion in the context of Bible Study.

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He also recommends other works for further study and enrichment that will lead to a better understanding and more insight.

This booklet is particularly suited to Bible Study purposes and will be of great assistance to the study leader. It will also be of particular value to anyone who wishes to have a better understanding of the course Biblical events took, as well as the reasons behind the events and the significance thereof.



Snyman, G 2007 – Om die Bybel anders te lees: 'n Etiek van Bybellees

Uitgewers: Griffel Media, Pretoria. Bladsye: 196. Prys: Onbekend.

Resensent: Dr G J Malan (Mosselbaai)

Gerrie Snyman is verbonde aan die Departement van Ou Testament en Ou-Nabye Oosterse Studies, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika. Sy vertrekpunt met hierdie boek is dat die gebruik van die Bybel vir die teologiese regverdiging van apartheid deur kerke uit die reformatoriese tradisie die huidige lees van die Bybel vir lidmate problematies gemaak het. Die Bybel kan nie meer vandag op dieselfde manier gelees word nie. Volgens hom het die ou manier van Bybellees meegebring dat sekere Bybelleesers merke op ander mense gelaat het. Om hierdie rede moet die Bybel anders gelees word.

Die boek bestaan uit 11 hoofstukke wat op 'n inleidende hoofstuk volg en uitloop op die slot. In die inleiding meen Snyman dat Bybellees vir reformatoriese lidmate dieselfde gebly het: hulle is steeds vasgevang in raspolitiese diskriminatoriese denke wat hulle in die Bybel raakloop. Hy pas dit toe op rasseverhoudinge, die gay vraagstuk in die kerk en vroue se opdraande stryd om erkenning in die kerke. Hy reken dat apartheid 'n bepaalde sistemiese denkwysse agtergelaat het, veral by blanke lidmate. Anti-Afrika en Anti-Semitiese denke sou via filosowe en teoloë soos Hegel, Bauer, Heidegger, Bultmann, Funk en Crossan invloed op Reformatoriese kerke uitoefen. Snyman, self uit Gereformeerde kring, meen Totius het apartheid teologies regverdig. Die versoening wat Jesus bring sou vanweë die invloed van Plato en die belydenisskrifte eensydig klem lê op vergifnis van sonde ten koste van heiligmaking. Dit maak die versoening losstaande van ons verbondenheid met ander mense. Die enigste oplossing sou wees om anders te begin dink. Ten einde hierdie andersoortige denkwysse moontlik te maak, moet die Bybel anders gelees word.

Wat sou hierdie anders soort lees (Hoofstuk 1) behels? Eerstens moet lidmate oortuig wees daarvan dat 'n ander soort Bybellees nodig is. Die redes: apartheid sou die gereformeerde tradisie kragteloos gemaak het, die nuwe politieke bedeling sou die Calvinisme met sy idee van verchristeliking van die samelewing in 'n krisis gedompel het. Dit is ten nouste verbonde aan 'n letterlike interpretasie van die Bybel en 'n meganiese verstaan van die leiding van die Heilige Gees by besluite wat kerklike vergaderings sou neem. Invloed van die positivisme sou die Godsbeeld beïnvloed naamlik dat God ongenaakbaar, partisaan en feitlik sou wees. Die menslike aspek van die tot standkoming van die Bybelse tekste is verruil vir 'n verstaan van die Bybel as letterlik God se Woord. Die gevolg is dat die tekste op gesigwaarde geneem word eerder as om na die betekenis van die tekste self te vra.

Die ideologie van heteroseksualiteit sou die hantering van die gay vraagstuk bepaal (hoofstuk 2). Letterlike lees van betrokke tekste sou hierdie ideologie bevorder het, asook Augustinus se siening van die seksdaad as sondig. Die verhouding tussen man en vrou sou dié wees van onderdaan en meester. Grade van seksuele oortredings sou beweeg tussen die pole van onnatuurlike seks en seks in die huwelik. Tog is prostitusie, verkragting en

veelwywery toegelaat as synde deel van die natuur. Die negatiewe uitsprake van Bybelse tekste oor homoseksualiteit kan verstaan word binne die konteks van afgodery en die eksklusiwiteit van Israel en die godsdienstige en kulturele oorlewing. Hiermee kon, vanweë strukturele resonansie met huidige sienings van hetero-seksualiteit, hetero-normatiewe beginsels terugprojekteer word na die tekste.

'n Etiek van Bybellees (hoofstuk 3) beteken erkenning dat Bybellees verantwoordelikhede meebring deur subjektiwiteit in ag te neem van by huidige lesers, die skrywers en die destydse lesers. Begrip vir die konteks en denkraamwerk waarin tekste ontstaan het open moontlikhede vir eie verstaan van tekste in nuwe kontekste met ander denkraamwerke. In gemeentes met outoritêre denkraamwerke kom magsbelange van predikante in gedrang wanneer lidmate meer oor die Bybel leer. Sulke predikante verswyg daarom maklik inligting oor die tekste ter wille van beveiliging van inkomste en statuur. Demokrasering van die gemeenskap bring wel toleransie in baie gemeentes. Gebrek aan historiese lees van tekste veroorsaak gebrek aan insig oor die ideologiese perspektiewe waaruit tekste ontstaan het asook ideologiese perspektiewe van lesers soos met die opstel van die belydenisskrifte of huidige lesers s'n. Die oplossing is die historiese lees van tekste met verantwoording teenoor die teks en die erkenning van eie vooronderstellings.

Die Bybel is letterlik verstaan as welwillende teks en daarom kamoefleer dit ons moontlike gebruik van die Bybel as wapen (hoofstuk 4). Omdat geweld deel is, veral van die Ou-Testamentiese leefwêreld, is die regverdiging van geweld met kolonialisme, lyfstraf, en die doodstraf soms maklik gepleeg. Die harde, wrede en ongenaakbare lewensetiek van die antieke wêreld kan nie bindend wees vir mense van die 21^e eeu nie. 'n Bybellees met suspisie word voorgestel. Snyman ontbloom Totius se standpunte oor die Bybelse regverdiging van apartheid en die Gereformeerde sinode van 2003 oor die plek van die vrou in die kerk as destruktiewe lees van die Bybel as wapen in diens van bepaalde ideologieë.

Die letterlike lees van die Bybel word as mite ontmasker (hoofstuk 5). Letterlike lees berus op monologiesiteit, naïewe realisme se onmiddellikheid van kennis en die gebruik van natuurlike oordeel ("common sense") en 'n verstaan van die waarheid wat gegrond is in die geletterdheid van 'n skrifkultuur. So 'n kontekslose lees van die Bybel bestaan eintlik nie, omdat kontekste altyd ter sprake kom.

Die beskouing oor die Bybelteks as kanon en deur God geïnspireer is die gevolg van die skrifkultuur se verstaan van waarheid (lees: letterlike lees van die Bybel) (hoofstuk 6). Inspirasie is in die Gereformeerde tradisie gesien as die manier waarop geskryf is. Kuyper en Bavinck se teorie oor inspirasie kon nie probleem van die rol van die mens met die tot standkoming van Bybeltekste oplos nie. Volgens Snyman is inspirasie eerder 'n geloofsuitspraak oor die waarde van die Bybel as dat dit iets sê oor die wyse van tot standkoming van die Bybel.

Hoofstuk 7 spreek die probleem van Skrifgesag en magsbelange aan. God se almag waaraan gelowiges hulle moet onderwerp, is die godsdienstige werklikheid wat prakties in die kerk as ideologie funksioneer. 'n Amptenary word geskep om die wil van God uit te voer aan die hand van tekste soos die belydenisskrifte en kerkordes. Mense wat nie hieraan gehoor wil gee nie, word weggewys of nie toegelaat nie. Kerke het sodoende 'n monologiese stem wat nie ander stemme toelaat nie. Voorbeeld hiervan is die hantering van die "Nuwe Hervormers" deur teologiese professore en amptenary van die NG Kerk. Aanwending van die belydenisskrifte sonder in ag neming van hulle historiese kontekste lei daartoe dat hulle as wapens kan dien vir sekere magbelange. Letterlike lees van uitsprake van Jesus oor kinders as voorbeelde van hoe mense moet glo, het Bybellees sonder rasionaliteit en kritiese vraagstelling meegebring asook Bybelonkunde. Op outoritêre manier moes lidmate aanvaar wat godsdienstige leiers se interpretasie was.

Die etiese moment in die ontmoeting met ander word aan die hand van Emmanuel Levinas se filosofiese etiek gedoen. Wat Jesus oor kinders en die koninkryk gesê het, het te

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make met die aanvaarding van die koninkryk as magtelose mense sonder status. Matteus 5:38-9 word in hierdie verband toegepas (hoofstuk 8).

In antwoord op die vraag hoe ons Bybellees ander raak word die teks as die “Ander” hanteer. So behou die teks integriteit sonder om ’n ideologie te dien (hoofstuk 9). Bybellees is ’n etiese handeling wat geregtigheid aan die teks moet laat geskied en nie die andersheid daarvan mag vernietig nie.

Die etiese lees van Bybeltekste is sensitiewe lees (hoofstuk 10). Die proses is kompleks en het te make met die verhoudings tussen die skrywer, die teks, die leser en die “Ander”. So word gevra na die optrede, houding of gedagte wat deur die betrokke lees van ’n teks gesanksioneer word. Snyman illustreer dit aan die hand van die lees van die boek Ester.

Snyman wys in Hoofstuk 11 op die implikasies vir die verstaan van die Bybel as kanon. Kanon dui op herhaling en herinterpretasie van verhale vir nuwe omstandighede. Historiese bewussens moet lesers help om die ontstaan van Bybeltekste te verstaan as langzaam en nie reglynig nie. Die verskil tussen Ou en Nuwe Testament moet erken word en magsbesluite moet erken word met die samestelling van die kanon.

Ten slotte stel Snyman: die Bybel behoort as sosiale en kulturele verskynsel gelees te word op “etiese” (*etic*) manier. Dit staan tenoor ’n “etiese” (*emic*) lees soos dié wat apartheid regverdig het.

Die boek lewer ’n belangrike bydrae tot die debat oor Skrifbeskouing. Snyman verdien lof vir sy hermeneutiese benadering, veral binne die Gereformeerde kring. Hy stel magsbelange aan die kaak en roep op tot Bybellees wat verantwoordelik is teenoor die teks en die “Ander”. Dis net jammer dat die vertrekpunt veral die teologiese regverdiging van apartheid, (met in mindere mate die vrou se plek in die kerk en die gay kwessie) is, eerder as die krisis waarin post-moderniteit die letterlike lees van die Bybel geplaas het. Predikante en lidmate kan baie baat vind by die boek.

