

superbly supplements her philosophical approach.

The book starts off with a chapter outlining the scope of domestic violence and discussing the prevalence of domestic violence. Due to a number of factors and mechanisms, it is generally assumed that the prevalence of domestic violence is underreported. However, even the reported statistics are frighteningly high. Conway quotes some surveys that highlight the extent of the problem, on both sides of the Atlantic. She is firm in her opinion that the church has a duty to respond to individual victims of domestic violence, whether they are within or without the folds of the church. In addition, she stresses the duty of the church to confront the causes and effects of domestic violence within society.

The following chapters outline the reality of domestic violence and the prevailing societal attitudes. It paints profiles of both the abused and the abuser (dispelling a number of cherished and popular myths). The expanding circle of effects is sketched, as occurrences in one section of society domino into the other. In the end, domestic violence is everybody's problem. The causes of domestic violence are examined, not from a feminist or criminological focus, but starting from a study of the word of God. The church, contends Conway, should counter the aftermath of violence as well: the multi-pronged destruction of marriage, home and wholeness, and the knock-on effects on society as a whole. Conway sternly critiques the generally accepted public / private dichotomy, which so often also pervades the church, leading to a reluctance to take a stand on the issue of domestic violence. Throughout the book, her emphasis is as much (if not more) on the eradication of domestic violence, as it is on escape from violence. She maintains that the tendency to favour escape at the expense of eradication has done little to improve the situation in society as a whole.

Conway proceeds to examine the causation of domestic violence, combining theories on the cultural patterning of violence, contextual and situational factors and reinforcement to illustrate the complex roots of domestic violence.

The second half of the book deals mainly with the legal recourse open to a victim of domestic violence (based on the Family Law Act 1996) and possible sources of help. Though these aspects would be specially relevant to UK citizens, they are nevertheless a source of general practical wisdom. In particular, the chapters dealing with escape and eradication are important in any societal context. To address eradication, Conway builds on a basic

framework of compassion and control, with intervention being victim-orientated, offender-orientated and society-orientated.

The ultimate chapter consolidates the antecedent chapters. A practical response by the church is proposed that challenges domestic violence at a level of complexity as deep as the perplexing causation of the problem. Five 'break points' are identified – weak spots in the causation of domestic violence that can be the target of sensible and effective eradication projects.

The liberal sprinkling of footnotes throughout the book testify to Conway's research, and are one more indication of the diligence and care with which this book was compiled. This book is well worth the buy.

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EuroJTh (2000) 9:2, 201–203

0960–2720

### ***The Promise of Hermeneutics***

**Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout and Anthony C. Thiselton**

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle:

Paternoster Press, 1999, xii + 260 pp.,

£12.99, pb., ISBN 0-8028-4635-1

(Eerdmans); 0-85364-900-6 (Paternoster)

### **RÉSUMÉ**

*Trois spécialistes de l'herméneutique à la pointe de la recherche tentent une voie moyenne entre la voie sans issue de la recherche du sens (unique) des textes et le désert d'un indéterminisme radical du sens. Les textes imposent des limites au sens, mais, à l'intérieur de ces limites, une palette d'interprétations peut être légitime. Lundin analyse l'héritage cartésien en herméneutique et tente de montrer la nécessité d'emprunter une direction nouvelle. Walhout tente de construire un modèle d'interprétation de la fiction considérant le discours comme action; il s'appuie pour cela sur l'œuvre de Wolterstorff. Thiselton exploite et développe les idées de Lundin et de Walhout pour proposer des avancées en herméneutique. C'est là un ouvrage excellent et créatif, qui demande de la concentration.*

### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Dies Buch besteht aus Beiträgen von drei hervorragenden christlichen Gelehrten, die einen Weg zwischen der hermeneutischen*



Sackgasse namens 'Ein Text hat nur eine einzige Bedeutung' und der Wildnis eines radikalen Bedeutungsindeterminismus suchen. Texte setzen der Bandbreite von Bedeutungsmöglichkeiten Grenzen, aber innerhalb der Grenzen gibt es eine legitime Interpretationsvielfalt. Lundin schreibt mit guten Einsichten über das Vermächtnis Descartes' und die Notwendigkeit, eine neue Richtung zu finden. Walhout benutzt ein Sprechakt-Modell für Interpretation und entwickelt besonders den Ansatz Wolterstorffs weiter. Thiselton verbindet die Einsichten Lundins und Walhouts und entwickelt sie richtungsweisend für zukünftige Hermeneutik weiter. Ein hervorragender und kreativer Text, der Konzentration verlangt.

This book is a complete rewrite of *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (1985). It is composed of three important new essays, the first of which is Roger Lundin's 'Interpreting Orphans: Hermeneutics in the Cartesian Tradition', which sets the scene for what follows. Lundin writes in his usual, wonderful prose style making use of philosophical, theological, historical and literary resources. He centres his argument on the motif of the orphaned interpreter who is the heir of the Cartesian tradition, which rejected traditional (parental) religious and philosophical authority. The 'self' becomes the centre of authority to all Descartes' secular and religious intellectual children. This Cartesian 'self' thinks that it stands apart from society and history to look objectively at truth. Lundin argues that this is simply self-delusion and 'prejudice against prejudice', for nobody can stand outside the flow of history.

The essay charts two traditions within the Cartesian family, one which is seen in Schleiermacher and the other which comes to fruition in Hegel. Schleiermacher felt that the interpreter must seek to set aside the history that separates an ancient text from a reader. The modern Cartesian heirs on this side of the family are E.D. Hirsch and his disciples in the evangelical world who sharply divide exegesis from application, imagining that we can leap over two thousand years of history and land in the presence of the apostles themselves! The Hegelian side of the family, the allegorists, have surveyed the multiplicity of interpretations and have lost confidence in the ability of 'the self' to find the truth about word or world and thus focus on how it can create truth. However, both intentionalists and al-

legorists are simply different ways of re-enacting the 'Cartesian moment of self-fathering'.

Lundin seeks to push behind Descartes' squabbling heirs and aim for a Christian hermeneutic in the tradition of Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. This will put tradition back in its rightful place as an *aid* rather than a hindrance to interpretation. One begins with questions posed by one's tradition, but these questions are in turn reshaped by the text and a spiralling, interpretative, friendly dialogue between text and reader is set up. Thus one can actually learn from texts and see more than one's own reflection and one can adjudicate the validity of different interpretations even if Cartesian certainty is impossible and undesirable.

Walhout's essay 'Narrative Hermeneutics' is a superb overview of a hermeneutic based on speech act theory which resists the idea that texts are autonomous and can 'make sense' in isolation from the context of the actions which brought them into being. Walhout develops the notions of reference and mimesis in texts such that reference indicates the relationship between the language of a text and the world it projects whilst mimesis indicates the relationship between the projected world and the actual world we inhabit. Textual analysis can be thought of as constituted by five main actions, which correspond to five actions that go into composing the text. The reader must (1) analyse the formal structures of the text, (2) survey the world projected by the text, (3) attempt to see the significance the author attributes to this projected world, (4) compare the fictional world with our understanding of the actual world, (5) analyse the models or paradigms which the texts presents us with. In these ways the text is the *object* of the actions of author and readers. It is also an *instrument* of readerly action in various ways. The climax of hermeneutics is the interaction of text and reader and the ethical use of narrative texts is that which tends to embrace other uses. The discussion on the ethical impact of narrative is the highlight of the essay in my view. In a nutshell, Walhout thinks that fictional narratives provide models for our ethical reflection but not prescriptive models, which have to be followed. Personally I would argue that biblical narratives, at least, attempt to provide *both*, but Walhout's explorations are rich and suggestive. Of the three essays, this was the one



that stood out most as one definitely worth a revisit.

Thiselton's essay 'Communicative Action and Promise in Interdisciplinary, Biblical, and Theological Hermeneutics' is, as one would expect, an amazingly rich and insightful piece boasting massive breadth of knowledge. It draws the previous two essays together by focusing on the key issue behind the book: how to chart a new path in hermeneutics between the Scylla of Cartesian, mechanical repetition and the Charybdis of radical, unconstrained textual indeterminacy. Thiselton argues that texts set limits within which right interpretations (plural) can continue to arise. Texts encourage active reader participation and biblical texts fall all along the spectrum of polyvalence between closed to open. Although reader-response criticism has brought gains it was reactionary and, in its radical Fishian version, is misleading. Humans and hermeneutics are thoroughly temporal so, inspired by the work of Robert Jauss, Thiselton calls for a rediscovery of the importance of the history of interpretation of biblical texts, which mediates between those texts and us. Fresh insights occur *within* reading traditions. The climax of the chapter is the application of speech act theory to understanding the central biblical notion of 'promise'.

It is impossible to give a clear impression of any of these deep and provocative essays in the space allocated. All unite in pointing to a way forward through the current hermeneutical confusion and all would repay second and third readings. It is a demanding read (especially Thiselton whose essay was also, if anything, over long) best suited to postgraduates or dedicated undergraduates.

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EuroJTh (2000) 9:2, 203–204

0960-2720

***Reading for Good: Narrative Theology and Ethics in the Joseph Story from the Perspective of Ricoeur's Hermeneutics***

**Theo L. Hetteema**

Studies in Philosophical Theology 18.

Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996, 380 pp., no price, pb., ISBN 90-390-0252-5

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Das Buch bietet im ersten Teil eine Darstellung der hermeneutischen Theorie Ricoeurs, und im zweiten eine Interpretation der Josephsgeschichte in Genesis 37–50, die als narrative Einheit gelesen wird. Nach der guten Darstellung der Theorie ist der zweite Teil enttäuschend, da er sich weder mit neueren literarischen Ansätzen (Alter, Sternberg), noch mit theologischen Interpretationen (von Rad, Clines) ausführlich auseinandersetzt, und Diskursanalyse als irrelevant abtut. Positiv ist nur die Herausstellung einzelner ethischer Themen (z. B. Vorsehung, Versöhnung), die größere exegetische Beachtung verdienen.*

**RÉSUMÉ**

*Dans sa première partie, l'auteur présente la théorie herméneutique de Paul Ricoeur, et propose ensuite une interprétation de l'histoire de Joseph (Gn. 37–50) lue comme une unité narrative. L'exposé théorique est bon, la seconde partie décevante: elle ne prend en compte ni la théorie littéraire moderne (Alter, Sternberg), ni les interprétations théologiques (von Rad, Clines), et laisse de côté l'analyse de discours. Le point positif est la mise en évidence de thèmes éthiques particuliers (la providence, la réconciliation).*

The first part of this book is devoted to an exposition of Ricoeur's theory of hermeneutics, particularly his concepts of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration—that is, the stages between the conceptualisation of a narrative in an author's mind and its reinterpretation by the reader.

The second part of the book is devoted to an interpretation of the Joseph narrative. Hetteema takes the whole of Genesis 37–50 as a coherent unit, which could lead to a fresh and positive reading of the book. But in fact this section is disappointing. Though he is aware of the work of the newer literary critics such as Alter and Sternberg, there is very little interaction with them. Discourse analysis is dismissed as irrelevant, and those who have tried to deal with the theology of the Pentateuch, such as von Rad and Clines, are virtually ignored. The result is a pathetically inadequate discussion of the Joseph story as a whole and Genesis 38 in particular.

It must be said that Hetteema does raise issues about the ethics of the biblical story of Joseph that ought to have a much higher profile in exegesis, e.g. the concept of providence in this text and its definition of reconciliation.