

***Bible and Mission:
Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*
Richard Bauckham**

Carlisle: Paternoster Press/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, xiv + 112 pp., £6.99, pb,
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SUMMARY

Richard Bauckham makes the proposal that *mission* is the hermeneutic for reading the Bible's grand metanarrative. He analyses the metanarratives of modernity, postmodernity, and economic globalisation which compete with a biblical worldview. For Bauckham, the issues of particularity and universality are foundational elements in the biblical narratives and mission is the component that mediates the two. He demonstrates these convincingly in biblical narratives spanning both testaments. Bauckham powerfully presents a biblical theology that is refreshingly relevant to the witness of the church globally. Readers interested in biblical theology or mission will need to engage with his argument.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Richard Bauckham schlägt vor, Mission sei die Hermeneutik, um die großartige Metaerzählung der Bibel zu lesen. Er analysiert die Metaerzählungen der Moderne, Postmoderne und der ökonomischen Globalisierung, die mit einer biblischen Weltansicht konkurrieren. Die Fragen von Partikularität und Universalität sind für Bauckham grundlegende Elemente der biblischen Erzählung, und Mission ist die Komponente, die zwischen beiden vermittelt. Er zeigt diese Zusammenhänge überzeugend in biblischen Erzählungen aus beiden Testamenten auf. Bauckham präsentiert kraftvoll eine biblische Theologie, die für die weltweite Kirche erfrischend relevant ist. Leser, die an biblischer Theologie oder Mission interessiert sind, müssen sich mit seiner These auseinandersetzen.

RÉSUMÉ

Richard Bauckham soutient la thèse que la mission est la clé herméneutique pour la lecture de la grande métanarration biblique. Il analyse les métanarrations de la modernité, de la postmodernité et de la mondialisation économique qui sont en compétition avec la vision du monde biblique. Les thèmes du particularisme et de l'universalité sont à ses yeux des éléments fondamentaux du récit biblique et le thème de la mission est celui qui fait le lien entre les deux. Sa démonstration à partir des récits des deux Testaments est convaincante. Il élabore ainsi une théologie biblique tout à fait pertinente pour le témoignage global de l'Église. Tout ceux que la théologie biblique ou la missiologie intéressent tireront profit de cet ouvrage.

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Richard Bauckham makes the ambitious proposal that *mission* is the hermeneutic for reading the Bible's grand metanarrative. Along the way Bauckham analyses the metanarratives of modernity, postmodernity, and economic globalisation which compete with a biblical

worldview. For Bauckham, the issues of particularity and universality are foundational elements in the biblical narratives and mission is the component that mediates the two. This is a fruitful approach making it relevant to postmodern particularity and modern and globalized universality, as well as identifying a key pattern running through Scripture. He organizes his argument into four sections. First, he justifies his hermeneutic. Secondly, he applies this hermeneutic to narratives found in both testaments. Thirdly, he elucidates the significance of geography in the biblical metanarrative. In the fourth part of the argument he applies the resulting theology to three current and competing metanarratives. In each step of the argument the significance of the Bible's pre-modern worldview, with its ubiquitous dialectical particularity and universality are clarified.

Bauckham is keenly aware of global trends. In the first chapter he describes postmodernism and its promotion of diversity and the particular. Then he describes the ideologies postmodernism confronts: the modern, economic globalization, and Islamic metanarratives. His description of the first two metanarratives contains a short but savvy socio-political critique of Western hegemony. Bauckham then skillfully critiques the shortcomings of postmodern ideology from a biblical perspective. Unfortunately, he does not critique Islam's metanarrative(s).

Bauckham then describes and justifies his hermeneutic. For Bauckham, the main theme of the Bible is the development of the Kingdom of God. The Bible's proposition that all creation coalesces in the absolute rule of God is a universal that, until its consummation, continually appears in a diversity of local particulars. The movement in biblical narratives from the particular to the universal is *mission*. This understanding and the proposal that mission is the hermeneutical key for understanding this development is made clear by two related methods of reading the Bible, canonical and narrative. Bauckham assumes that the development of the Kingdom of God is the Bible's grand metanarrative, unfortunately not demonstrating it. In the final chapter he acknowledges the long debate in biblical studies concerning whether or not a biblical metanarrative is discernable. He also acknowledges that not all biblical narratives fit cleanly into his proposed theme. In spite of this he holds that the primary plot in the Bible is the Kingdom of God.

In the second chapter Bauckham effectively advances his argument by summing up the entire biblical narrative in four smaller stories: the narrative of Abraham, the development of the nation of Israel, the kingship of David, and the ontology of humble origins which characterizes most biblical protagonists. In the latter, Bauckham focuses on Paul's Corinthian experience. He gives rich insight into how these trajectories provide their own nuanced contribution to understanding the Kingdom. In each instance the movement from the particular to the universal is made by means of God's mission to extend his rule over all creation.

Bauckham devotes a chapter to elucidating the significance of geography in the Bible, its move from the particular to the universal, and the Bible's tendency to use it symbolically in both testaments. Bauckham convincingly demonstrates that in biblical narrative and missionary movement there is no longer any one particular geographic centre.

In Bauckham's impressive application of his biblical theology he answers the postmodern charge that metanarratives by definition are oppressive and authoritarian. In contrast to the postmodern perspective, the Bible's metanarrative embraces both particularity and universality. The two do not conflict but make up the whole. The biblical worldview opposes the modern metanarrative and its concept of human mastery and the myth of progress. In opposition to the globalised economical worldview, the Bible rejects the totalizing notion that capitalistic economics is the universal panacea. The biblical God is true and requires witness in mission to this truth. However, due to the limits of human understanding the claims of universal truth must remain humble and open to debate and clarification. Missing in Bauckham's description of NT mission is the necessity of establishing witnessing communities (churches) in the multitude of particular localities globally. But overall, Bauckham provides good practical application.

In summary, Bauckham has presented a compelling argument for the organic way that mission provides the interpretive key for the biblical story. It is remarkable that he provides so much content and insight in such a concise fashion. However, some key issues, such as the Kingdom of God being the Bible's grand metanarrative are left undemonstrated. There is no bibliography or indices. Regardless, Bauckham has powerfully presented biblical theology in a way that is refreshingly relevant to the witness of the church globally. Readers interested in biblical theology or mission will need to engage with Bauckham's argument.

Glen Taylor, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

***Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible:
Meaning and Power***
William K. Gilders

Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004, x + 260 pp., £24.09, hb, ISBN 0-8018-7993-0

SUMMARY

Due to source-critical considerations, William K. Gilders argues that the theological meaning assigned to blood ritual in Lev. 17:11 was a late development within Israel. Therefore, he urges scholars to refrain from using it as an interpretive key for blood rituals elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Alternatively, Gilders contends that a lack of theological explanation accompanying blood rites indicates that these served the practical function of "indexing" relations within the cultic realm and that this "indexing" was

intended to map an ideal social reality onto Israelite life.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Aufgrund quellenkritischer Überlegungen argumentiert William K. Gilders, dass die theologische Bedeutung, die in Leviticus 17,11 dem Blutritual gegeben wird, eine späte Entwicklung in Israel widerspiegelt. Er bittet daher die Gelehrten eindringlich, diesen Text als interpretativen Schlüssel für Blutrurale an anderen Stellen der Hebräischen Bibel zu verwenden. Alternativ behauptet Gilders, das Fehlen einer theologischen Erklärung bei Blutruralen weise darauf hin, dass diese die praktische Funktion des "Katalogisierens" von Beziehungen innerhalb des kultischen Raumes einnahmen und dass dieses "Katalogisieren" dazu gedacht war, eine ideale soziale Realität auf das israelitische Leben zu projizieren.

RÉSUMÉ

Soumettant le texte de Lévitique 17 à une analyse selon la critique des sources, Gilders conclut que le sens théologique du rituel sacrificiel et du rôle du sang exposé dans le verset 11 constitue un développement tardif en Israël. Il recommande donc qu'on évite de se fonder sur ce texte pour y trouver la clé d'interprétation du rituel sacrificiel dans les autres textes de la Bible hébraïque. Il considère au contraire que l'absence d'une explication théologique du rôle du sang dans les textes décrivant ou mentionnant les rites sacrificiels indique que ces rites avaient simplement pour fonction de traduire des relations au sein de la sphère culturelle ayant pour but de représenter une organisation sociale idéale destinée à façonner la vie israélite.

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This published doctoral thesis argues that Lev. 17:11 should not be used as the interpretive key for blood rituals in the OT. William K. Gilders suggests that this misuse arises from a tendency on the part of scholars to supplement the lack of theological explanation accompanying blood rites in the OT. By contrast, he infers from this absence of explanation that these texts are more concerned with formal ritual practice than theology.

Drawing on the socio-cultic approaches of Catherine Bell, Jonathan Z. Smith and Nancy Jay, Gilders recommends that one ought to describe the practical outcomes of blood manipulation rather than hypothesise about its theological meaning. He views rituals as signs which "index" relationships within the ritual-realm. These relationships are "existential," no different from that established between oneself and an object to which one points. On this assumption Gilders proceeds to document the relationships "indexed" by blood-rites rather than assign theological significance to the latter.

In Chap. 1 Gilders argues that textual support is lacking for the traditional explanation for why blood is placed on the altar, namely that as a symbol of "life" it must be returned to the "source of life" (i.e. YHWH). Though he observes that Lev. 17:11 conceptualises blood as "life" within a cultic context, he considers that this verse is not applicable in the interpretation of P's