

The Audience of the Gospels. The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Earliest Christianity
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Edward W. Klink III (ed.)

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der vorliegende Band widmet sich der Diskussion der These Richard Bauckhams und anderer, die besagt, dass die vier Evangelien nicht nur für eine bestimmte christliche Gemeinschaft im ersten Jahrhundert geschrieben wurden, sondern für die Kirche insgesamt. Der Herausgeber Klink führt in das Werk ein und beschliesst auch den Band. Bauckham selbst antwortet seiner Hauptkritikerin Margaret Mitchell ausführlich. Weitere Aufsätze betrachten die apokryphen Evangelien und das antike Genre der *Vita* und argumentieren, dass diese nicht im Widerspruch zur These Bauckhams stehen. Das Buch steuert einen nützlichen Beitrag zu einer entscheidenden Debatte bei.

SUMMARY

This volume is devoted to discussion of the thesis of Richard Bauckham and others that the four Gospels were not written for the benefit of one first-century Christian community only but for the entire church. Editor Klink introduces and closes the volume and Bauckham himself extensively replies to his main critic, Margaret Mitchell. Other essays look at the apocryphal Gospels and the ancient genre of bios (*vita*), arguing that they don't contradict Bauckham's thesis. The book is a useful contribution to a vital debate.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage considère la thèse, défendue par Richard Bauckham et d'autres, selon laquelle les quatre évangiles n'ont pas été rédigés à l'intention de la seule communauté chrétienne du premier siècle, mais pour l'ensemble de l'Église. L'éditeur, Edward Klink a rédigé l'introduction qui ouvre ce livre et le texte de conclusion. Bauckham lui-même répond longuement à Margaret Mitchell, principale critique de sa thèse. D'autres contributions traitent des évangiles apocryphes et du genre de la biographie dans le monde gréco-romain ancien, en s'efforçant de montrer qu'il n'y a pas là matière invalidant la thèse de Bauckham. L'ouvrage apporte une contribution utile à un débat important.

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Richard Bauckham has served Church and academy well by raising the issue of the intended readership of the Christian Gospels. In a volume with essays by himself and others, entitled *The Gospels for all Christians* (Eerdmans 1998), he argued that all four Gospels were written for all the Church. They may have been written in a specific community but they were not intended for that community alone and still less were their contents tailored to the needs of these (hypothetical) communities. If correct, this thesis should decisively change the

redaction-critical study of the Gospels.

With Bauckham's help his pupil Edward Klink has now published a volume of essays which aims to continue the reflection in Bauckham's spirit and thus to cement the new paradigm. Klink opens the collection with an overview of the debate that was sparked by the original publication. He also looks briefly at some publications before 1998 which pointed forward to what he sees as a paradigm shift. His contribution is limited to the American scene. In the second essay Michael F. Bird studies the non-canonical Gospels and concludes that Bauckham's paradigm cannot be invalidated by appealing to them. As far as we can know anything about them, they too were probably written for wide circulation. Justin Marc Smith discusses Greco-Roman biographies (bioi / *vitae*), the genre to which the Gospels probably belong, proposing a new classification: some are about people from the past and others about (near) contemporaries of the author; among the latter, some were written for a distinguishable audience but others not. Smith argues that the authors of contemporary biographies often had personal relationships with their subjects and were hoping for very wide audiences. He sees the Gospels as such contemporary biographies, written for a wide readership.

Richard Bauckham himself replies to his fierce critic Margaret Mitchell (Chicago) regarding the relevance of patristic evidence. He argues that whatever the Fathers may have thought about the communities in which the Gospels originated, they were aware that their intended readership was wider than that. Even if Mark and John allegedly wrote at the request of others, general circulation of their books was intended and their locations had no hermeneutical implications. Against Mitchell, Bauckham argues that in their actual exegesis the Fathers are never influenced by the presumed Gospel audiences.

The next essay is by Craig Blomberg, who seeks the middle ground between the old and the new paradigms: 'The Gospels were written for specific communities but also in hopes [sic] that they would eventually reach as many Christians as possible.' (133). Surprisingly, Blomberg goes over the issue of the Fathers again, criticising Bauckham. I suspect that he misses the point Bauckham is trying to make. Anyway, he never comes up with a specific example of how knowledge of the hypothetical first recipients of a Gospel should influence our reading of it. It is a weakness of the book that Bauckham and Blomberg do not interact with each other's essays; Bauckham should have been given the opportunity to respond not only to Mitchell's prior criticism but also to Blomberg's.

Chapter 6 is by Adele Reinhartz who argues that Bauckham's arguments are inconclusive and not very important after all. Some of her arguments are silly, such as the suggestion that Luke wrote for an audience of one, Theophilus. She does show that Bauckham's arguments are not logically binding but, in my opinion, fails to appreciate that the old paradigm cannot be

proven either. She rejects Bauckham's view that John 3:24 and 11:2 show that the Fourth Evangelist knew Mark's Gospel and expected his readers to know it as well, arguing that the Evangelist may just as well presuppose knowledge of oral traditions. Edward Klink brings the collection to a close by summarising and critically discussing the other essays.

In view of the exorbitant prices that T&T Clark charge for hardback books, the book is rather thin. One misses chapters in which each of the four Gospels is discussed in more detail. The book contains a bibliography and indexes, but also typos. I can only hope that the debate will continue in other places.

Pieter J. Lalleman
Spurgeon's College, London

Reformed Dogmatics

Herman Bavinck

Abridged and edited by John Bolt

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette publication récente vient à la suite de l'édition anglaise complète de la dogmatique réformée en quatre volumes de Herman Bavinck. Le présent ouvrage est une édition abrégée (qui comporte néanmoins 847 pages) basée sur l'édition anglaise complète. On y a parfois modifié l'ordre de la matière pour l'adapter à la structure du texte abrégé. Bien qu'il semble privilégier le traitement dogmatique dans l'œuvre de Bavinck, il parvient néanmoins à donner habilement une idée de la manière riche dont Bavinck aborde l'histoire de la dogmatique. On imagine que cette réalisation remarquable constituera une introduction précieuse à l'œuvre de Bavinck pour bien des lecteurs.

SUMMARY

This recent publication follows the recently completed English translation of the four volumes of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. The shorter book, which nonetheless runs to 847 pages, is an abridged version of the English version of *Reformed Dogmatics*. As such, it is drawn from the subsequent English texts, although it sometimes rearranges the order of material to fit an abridged structure. Although it seems focused on the dogmatic material in Bavinck's work, it also skilfully manages to give a flavour of Bavinck's rich handling of the history of dogma. One imagines that this book will be an outstanding introduction to Bavinck for the interested layperson and for that purpose the production of this book is an outstanding accomplishment.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses kürzlich erschienene Buch folgt der unlängst vervollständigten, englischen Übersetzung von Herman Bavincks vierbändigen *Reformierte Dogmatik*. Das

vorliegende kürzere Werk, das immerhin noch 847 Seiten umfasst, stellt eine Zusammenfassung der englischen Ausgabe von *Reformierte Dogmatik* dar. Es folgt als solche der Anordnung der englischen Texte, obwohl es wegen der gekürzten Fassung zuweilen die Reihenfolge des Materials verändert. Auch wenn es sich augenscheinlich auf die *Dogmatik Bavincks* konzentriert, versteht es doch sehr geschickt, auch einen Eindruck von Bavincks umfassender Abhandlung der Dogmengeschichte zu vermitteln. Dieses Buch wird für den interessierten Laien eine herausragende Einführung in das Werk Bavincks abgeben und ist für diesen Zweck hervorragend geeignet.

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Between 2003 and 2008, the Dutch Reformed Translation Society oversaw the translation and subsequent release of a standardised English version of Herman Bavinck's seminal four volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. This English text – *Reformed Dogmatics* – has quickly come to be recognised in the anglophone theological world as a work of some significance. Its attempt to seriously engage with the biblical and ancient texts (in their original languages), its awareness of the development of dogma throughout the history of the Church, and its appropriation of orthodox theology in the modern world mark out *Reformed Dogmatics* as a modern classic.

This abridged work, compiled by Professor John Bolt who was also the editor of the English version *Reformed Dogmatics*, is an attempt to draw together the most important material in Bavinck's dogmatic conclusions in one volume and in so doing, to make Bavinck more immediately accessible.

The most useful feature of this abridged volume, of course, is that it presents a summary of Bavinck's dogmatics in one volume, albeit one running to 847 pages. As someone who appreciates Bavinck's theology, I am asked on a semi-regular basis for recommendations as to what one should read as an introduction to his work. *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck's *magnum opus*, is the 'must read' material. But while Bavinck's work is far more concise than, say, Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, reading Bavinck's *Dogmatics* is nonetheless a major undertaking that – for the interested and often busy lay person – might seem inaccessible by virtue of its size. In that light, it is excellent for the future dissemination of Bavinck's writings that the interested potential reader can be first directed to a single volume.

As one used to reading Bavinck in his fuller form, I approached this book with a great deal of curiosity as to how the balance of Bavinck's neo-Calvinist methodology (in the relationship of biblical data, its appropriation in the early church, the subsequent medieval and Reformation debates, and the path to a present day understanding of the topic) would be preserved. This abridged version does a remarkable job of reducing the volume of material whilst preserving the structure and progression of dogmatic loci found in the original.