

about salvation, not from physical or political bondage but from spiritual slavery. In *Romans*, Holland applies this corporate reading to Paul's letter to the Romans.

After a brief introduction which deals more with biblical theology than with the usual introductory questions, Holland gives a verse by verse explanation of the letter, each chapter starting with the NIV translation. References to earlier research are given in footnotes, Greek words are transcribed and ten excursuses added (e.g. detailed essays on righteousness, justification, sin).

With regard to the New Perspective on Paul, Holland makes a crucial distinction in the way justification is used in Romans 4, between its applications to Abraham (Genesis 15: God's promise) and to David (Psalm 32: the acquittal of sin) respectively. Through this distinction, he is able to build on the New Perspective understanding of the term as developed by N.T. Wright (in relation to Abraham), and on the way the Reformers used the word (in relation to David). This approach reinforces the view that justification is not merely a status of righteousness because of covenant membership, as asserted by the New Perspective, but includes the Reformation ideas of forensic justification and being brought into relationship with God.

Why subtitle a commentary on Romans *The Divine Marriage*? From the preface, I cite Holland's own answer to this obvious question:

Mainly because the central message of the Bible has to do with the drama of God seeking out a people for himself. The Old Testament described Israel as God's bride because she was called to a unique, personal relationship with her God. However, Paul's contention is that national Israel's exclusive claim to be the bride no longer stands. The apostle's message is that God has created a new covenant with those who believe in his Son, and that believing Jews and Gentiles have now become the true bride of God. The Jewish remnant and believing Gentiles both draw from the same divinely-appointed stock as they share the promises given by God to Abraham. The theme of the divine marriage (which is the culmination of the new exodus) shaped and guided the letters that Paul wrote. This is especially true for the letter to the Romans, the letter of the divine marriage.

Personally, I can fully understand the warm reception of this book within the evangelical world. However, exegeses working in the Reformed tradition (with Herman Bavinck as the best known name) have long been familiar with redemptive history as a major guiding thread in the reading of the Bible. A covenantal approach is not new for them, but they will surely appreciate that this approach is now presented to a broader public. A more serious objection is that the connection between the covenantal approach and the theme of the divine marriage will seem strange to them. Why not opt for 'body', a typical Pauline metaphor, also used in Romans, or 'family', or 'kinship' (like Scott Hahn's *Kinship by*

Covenant, 2009) instead of 'marriage'? I would rather see a divine marriage motif in the letter to the Ephesians (chapter 5) or the book of Revelation (chapters 19-21). Does the letter to the Romans provide enough literary context to read almost every chapter through this lens, or was Holland creating a Pauline theology of marriage prior to his exegetical work in the letter to the Romans? It is hard to avoid the impression that he sometimes uses this framework artificially in the exegesis of Romans.

The fact remains that Tom Holland has written a thought-provoking book that will undoubtedly be fruitful for many teachers and preachers. More than any other commentator on Romans so far, he uncovers the Old Testament roots of the letter and shows the impact of Paul's thoughts upon the Christian church today.

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The Bible made Impossible: Why Biblicism is not a truly Evangelical reading of Scripture

Christian Smith

Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011, 220pp., hb., ISBN 978-1-58743-303-0

RÉSUMÉ

Christian Smith, un sociologue catholique évangélique, défend la thèse selon laquelle la diversité au sein de l'enseignement scripturaire, et la diversité plus grande encore d'interprétations auxquelles il donne lieu, prouve que le biblicisme ne tient pas compte du problème majeur inévitable que constitue ce qu'il nomme le pluralisme des interprétations généralisé. À ce problème sociologique, Smith ajoute que la conception même du biblicisme ne reçoit aucun appui de ce que la Bible enseigne sur elle-même. En outre, il souligne que le biblicisme engendre de graves problèmes pour l'approche pastorale. Il conclut en indiquant des moyens d'avancer vers une approche plus profondément évangélique, christocentrique et post-bibliciste de l'Écriture.

SUMMARY

Christian Smith, an evangelical Catholic sociologist, constructively argues that the diversity of Scripture's teachings and its even greater diversity of interpretations clearly demonstrate that biblicism ignores the basic overriding problem of what he calls *pervasive interpretive pluralism*. In addition to this sociological problem, Smith continues his argument by submitting that the entire notion of biblicism cannot be sustained by what the Bible claims about itself. Moreover, Smith points out that biblicism causes significant pastoral problems. He concludes by suggesting ways we can move forward to a more thoroughly evangelical, Christocentric, post-biblicist embrace of Scripture.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Christian Smith, ein evangelikaler katholischer Soziologe,

unterbreitet konstruktive Argumente dafür, dass die Vielfalt biblischer Lehre und ihre noch größere Interpretationsvielfalt klar und deutlich zeigen, dass Biblizismus das grundlegende und vorrangige Problem ignoriert, was Smith mit *allumfassende Auslegungsvielfalt* bezeichnet. Zusätzlich zu diesem soziologischen Problem, wie Smith sein Argument weiter darlegt, könne das gesamte Konzept des Biblizismus nicht mit dem Selbstanspruch der Bibel begründet werden. Darüberhinaus zeigt Smith auf, dass Biblizismus beträchtliche pastorale Probleme verursacht. Abschließend schlägt er Wege vor, auf denen wir vorangehen können in Richtung eines gründlicheren, evangelikalen, christozentrischen, post-biblizistischen Umganges mit der Schrift.

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Christian Smith provocatively argues for the impossibility of biblicism, that is, a commonsensical, literalist view of the Bible that tends to reduce it to an instructional guidebook for life. He persuasively argues that those leaning towards biblicism in the name of a robust evangelical faith are actually distorting evangelicalism, robbing it of its broader based identity and unity. His book is a welcome addition to other recent texts that challenge similar notions and tendencies within evangelical fundamentalism, such as Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Baker Academic, 2005) and Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking how you read the Bible* (Zondervan, 2008). What makes Smith's book unique within this conversation is that he writes explicitly as a sociologist, while nonetheless demonstrating astute theological awareness.

As a sociologist, Smith paints broad strokes of the phenomenon of biblicism, particularly in its American historical context which, he argues, stems more from an inherited Scottish commonsense realist philosophy and Baconian empiricism than it does from fidelity to the Bible. For Smith, biblicism is not a formal interpretive system, but it is a 'constellation of related assumptions and beliefs'. These assumptions, among others, focus on a perspicuous view of Scripture, apart from the need of tradition or church creeds. This is accompanied by a view of the Bible as the God-given handbook for all of life's problems (4-5). The most basic problem for biblicism, however, is the sociological reality of *pervasive interpretive pluralism*. There are simply a multitude of possible well-intended and intelligently articulated understandings of various scriptural texts, which Smith refers to as 'biblical multivocality and polysemy' (53).

The author provides examples of such pluralism in evangelical circles, many of which are fairly obvious: church government, predestination and free will, war, charismatic gifts, etc. Although he clearly demonstrates the diversity of beliefs among Christians, such differences would be evident regardless of whether one clings to biblicism. Smith is attempting to show that biblicism has been marked by polemics about these issues, resulting in evangelical instability. When he brings up the issue of the morality of slavery, however, one won-

ders if Smith has overstepped his intentions. Certainly, Bible-minded believers were divided over slavery and abolition in American history, but Smith claims that 'the Scriptures proved impotent' to provide a clear teaching. Smith is not blaming the dispute on biblicism, but his tone seems to lean in this direction. Diversity, and perhaps conflict, over interpretations of the Bible are here to stay, even if biblicist tendencies were to vanish.

The main problem Smith addresses is that with all attempted answers to such diversity of interpretations, biblicists are unable to avoid pervasive pluralism although they believe that such pluralism must be avoided and eradicated at all cost. Smith perhaps belabours this point through many examples, titles, captions and illustrations throughout his first two chapters, but his clear, engaging writing style holds the reader's attention.

When considering possible biblicist answers to such pervasive diversity, Smith provides several assumed and speculative responses. These include the noetic effects of sin, lost original manuscripts and the errors of misguided reading. One possible speculative reply is called the 'inclusive-higher-synthesis response'; that is, we must assemble all interpretations to get to the complete truth. Smith follows this with the claim that none of the responses effectively 'rescues biblicism from pervasive interpretive pluralism' (39).

After describing the problem and extent of interpretive pluralism in the first two chapters, then highlighting the common sense philosophy undergirding biblicism at the beginning of the third chapter, Smith provides four possible reasons, or 'historical, sociological, and psychological contexts', why biblicists are not troubled by such pervasive differences. First, he suggests that biblicism is part of a socially shaped homogeneous culture (61). Secondly, biblicists tend to minimise actual differences in order to guard their biblicist understandings. Thirdly, social cohesiveness is formed by isolating common antagonists against biblicism; and fourthly, biblicists may believe that if they give up biblicism, they will be 'ecumenical' and hence, liberal.

Smith rounds out Part one, chapter four, by highlighting other subsidiary problems with biblicism that include the Bible's own lack of self-attestation on this view, and biblicism's lack of social ethic.

In Part two, Smith provides his more robustly evangelical alternative for interpreting Scripture. He begins chapter five with a Christocentric hermeneutic proposal, drawing from Scripture and theological voices including Berkouwer, Barth, Bloesch, Bromiley and Vanhoozer. Smith is careful to say that he does not pretend to solve all interpretive problems (95, 97) but he strongly suggests that a Christ-centred approach to understanding the Bible will move the reader away from thinking of it as simply a collection of instructional propositions, and toward the narrative that points to Jesus. In so doing, Christians become engaged as subjective participants under the guidance of the Spirit in the process of read-

ing and applying the Bible. Rather than making the fatal move of biblicism's idolatry of propositions or liberalism's demythologisation of Christian stories, Smith calls for a reoriented Christ-centred reading of the entire Bible in all its genres.

Chapters six and seven point the way forward by suggesting how Christians may live in light of the complexity and plurality of interpretation while embracing a Christological hermeneutic. If the main thrust of the Bible is pointing us to Jesus, believers can more easily accept that the Bible will not always be clear or obvious at every juncture. For Smith, this truth need not drive us toward despair, but rather should lead us to embrace the often forgotten 'mystery' of a God who is beyond our mere understandings. Chapter seven continues Smith's debunking of biblicism's reductionist foundationalism, while calling for a critical realism that fosters interpretive humility instead of the binary polarisations of biblicism. Here, Smith seems to cut himself short, as he does not fully develop (nor does he intend to) a theory of interpretation, inspiration or epistemology. Critical realism itself is a river with several tributaries, and leaves one wondering if such interactive 'critical' practices will genuinely evade the interpretive polarisations Smith is seeking to avoid.

All in all, Smith's book is a provocative and engaging starting point for evangelical scholars and churchmen who wish to seriously consider the fragmentation and healing prospects for contemporary evangelicalism and its view of Scripture.

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Jewish Travel in Antiquity

Catherine Hezser

TSAJ 144; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011;

x + 529 pp. €139, cloth; ISBN 978-3-16-150889-9

SUMMARY

This volume begins with an excellent survey of travel in the ancient world, in particular as it concerns Jewish travel in the first six centuries CE. Hezser then describes in detail the material basis of such travel (road network, hospitality, the means of land and sea travel) and examines the literary representation of travel in Jewish sources (narrative traditions, the halakhah of travel, Jewish pilgrimage, travel and trade). She argues for a high mobility of ancient Jews and its significance for the rabbinic movement. This detailed analysis also sheds light on ancient Christian travel and its significance for the structural and theological formation of Christianity.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Band beginnt mit einem hervorragenden Überblick über Reisen in der Welt der Antike, insbesondere über Reisen im Judentum in den ersten sechs Jahrhunderten

n.Chr. Hezser gibt dann eine detaillierte Beschreibung der Infrastruktur und materiellen Basis dieser Reisen (Straßennetz, Gastfreundschaft, Land- und Seewege). Sie untersucht dabei, inwieweit das Thema Reisen einen literarischen Niederschlag in jüdischen Quellen gefunden hat (narrative Tradition, die *Halakhah* des Reisens, jüdische Pilgerschaft, Reisen und Verkehr). Die Autorin argumentiert zugunsten einer hohen Mobilität von Juden in der Antike und was dies für die rabbinische Bewegung bedeutet. Die detaillierte Studie beleuchtet auch das Reisen im Christentum der Antike und dessen Bedeutung für die strukturelle und theologische Entwicklung des Christentums.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage débute par une excellente présentation de ce qu'étaient les voyages dans le monde antique, en particulier les voyages effectués par les Juifs au cours des six premiers siècles de notre ère. L'auteur décrit en détail les conditions matérielles de ces voyages (le réseau routier, l'hospitalité, les moyens de locomotion terrestres et maritimes) et étudie leur représentation littéraire dans les sources juives (les traditions narratives, la *halakah* des voyages, les pèlerinages juifs, les voyages et le commerce). Elle montre la très grande mobilité des Juifs de cette époque et en analyse l'importance pour le mouvement rabbinique. Cette étude détaillée apporte aussi un éclairage sur les voyages des chrétiens dans l'antiquité et montre comment cela a contribué à la formation structurelle et théologique du christianisme.

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This comprehensive monograph by the professor of Jewish Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, examines 'how ancient Jewish scholars and merchants overcame obstacles, maintained contacts with distant colleagues, and crossed the boundaries into enemy territory to pursue their interests' (Preface). With care and erudition, she challenges the idea that ancient Jews were closely bound to one country and not particularly mobile, at least in comparison with other ancient groups such as early Christians:

Ancient Christians are ... considered to have been very mobile, as wandering charismatics in Roman Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean and as missionaries in various parts of the Roman Empire, and this mobility is believed to have been an important factor in the dissemination and eventual 'triumph' of Christianity. Jews, on the other hand, are commonly thought to have been rather sedentary, with local communities gathered around rabbis who were family-men and engaged in local trades. ... The assumed immobility has traditionally been associated with an inward focus: Jews mostly met and socialized with fellow-Jews... (1).

In the Introduction Hezser describes the increased mobility of the inhabitants of the Roman and Byzan-