

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-

tine empires in the first five centuries of the Common Era (CE). The ways in which ancient Jews participated or refrained from participating in this mobility become clear through a combination of literary, epigraphic and other material sources. She discusses the nature of these sources and the methodological challenges they pose, and she provides excellent surveys of research on mobility in Graeco-Roman and early Christian society and on Jewish mobility in antiquity.

Her focus is on mobility on the part of Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine itself as well as between Palestine and the Diaspora, especially as far as Egypt, Syria, Rome and Babylonia are concerned. She describes the significance of this quest as follows: 'Whether, how, and to what extent particular segments of the ancient Jewish population were mobile has important implications and consequences for our understanding of the transmission of knowledge amongst Jews and the cultural exchange between Jews and non-Jews in antiquity' (1f).

In the *first part*, Hezser describes the material basis of Jewish travel in antiquity as consisting of spatial perceptions, the road network, the extent and significance of hostels, road stations and private hospitality, the means of land travel and the extent and significance of sea travel, in order to survey the travelling options which ancient Jews had. *Part two* addresses the literary presentation of mobility in ancient Jewish sources: first the narrative depiction of mobility in Jewish narrative sources and then the *halakhah* of travel, the halakhic regulations relating to particular aspects of travel. These regulations address 'the major issues and problems that Jewish travellers might have encountered during or as a consequence of their journeys. Since almost all aspects of daily life were religiously significant for rabbis, their advice for a proper religious lifestyle also included the situation of travellers, taking cultic, economic, and family aspects into account' (197). The author concludes that 'The very phenomenon of such an extensive and intricate discussion of travel-related issues indicates that mobility constituted an important aspect of daily life for ancient rabbis and their contemporaries' (197). After this, Hezser studies the references to travel between the land of Israel and Babylonia in Late Antiquity, the extent and significance of Jewish pilgrimage in antiquity, the mobility of women and the relation between travel and trade.

The concluding chapter addresses the close link between 'Mobility and the Rabbinic Movement'. Hezser notes that

the very transmission, collection, and eventual composition of rabbinic works is based on mobility and networking amongst rabbis within Palestine and between Palestine and Babylonia in late antiquity. Rabbinic society in particular and Jewish society in general can be understood properly only if mobility is recognized as the basis of communication and intellectual exchange amongst Jews and between Jews

and non-Jews (3f).

The volume closes with a bibliography and an index of references and subjects. It offers a fresh, and excellent, detailed analysis of ancient Jewish travel that leaves little to critique. In addition to discussing ancient Judaism, its widespread mobility and its significance for the rabbinic literature, Hezser's study also sheds light on the mobility involved in Christian mission in the first six centuries. One might add most of the earliest Christian missionary efforts to the picture, as they were undertaken by Jewish Christians, first and foremost among them Saul of Tarsus. The infrastructure and conditions of land and sea travel in the Near East would have been similar, to a large extent, for all inhabitants of the region.

The infrastructure and conditions described here would also have applied to Christian pilgrims travelling in the Near East during the period surveyed here, in particular to and within Palestine; for a recent survey see S. Penth, *Die Reise nach Jerusalem: Pilgerfahrten ins Heilige Land*. Geschichte erzählt 26 (Darmstadt: Primus, 2010); for a collection of the most ancient reports of pilgrims see H. Donner, *Pilgerfahrt ins Heilige Land: Die ältesten Berichte christlicher Palästina-pilger (4. -7. Jahrhundert)*, 2. Aufl. (Stuttgart: KBW, 2002). They also affected bishops and other Christian leaders travelling within or through Palestine, synods, councils, etc.

It would be intriguing to apply the material of this study of Jewish mobility to the existence and development of the Christian canon: could one – to play on Hezser's words quoted above – claim similarly that the *very transmission, collection and eventual composition of the canon is based on mobility and networking amongst early Christian communities and leaders in the Eastern Mediterranean in the first two centuries*? The same issue may be raised regarding the rise and development of early Catholicism and of later Christian orthodoxy.

Hezser recently served as the editor of the excellent *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) which offers the same benefits.

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**Herman Bavinck: Pastor, Churchman,
Statesman, and Theologian**

Ron Gleason

New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing
Company, 2010, xvi + 511pp,
£22.99, pb, ISBN 978-1-59638-080-6

RÉSUMÉ

Voici la première biographie couvrant la totalité de la vie de Herman Bavinck, l'auteur de la *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* récemment traduite en anglais. L'auteur explore l'arrière-