

**Hermeneutics
and the Authority of
Scripture**

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Hermeneutics and the Authority of Scripture

Edited by Alan H Cadwallader



Adelaide
2011

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Preface

The question of hermeneutics has increasingly come to dominate all disciplines of human knowledge. It has moved appreciably from a concentration on how to apply the results of research knowledge to considerations of the frameworks by which we conduct research as a meaningful exercise. In this sense contemporary epistemologies and ethical concerns are increasingly seen as critically entwined with the industry of knowledge. The pursuit of meaning has come to be recognised as guiding the very mechanisms that are deployed in the conduct of research. The hermeneutical enterprise therefore is part and parcel of the entry into and the perseverance in research.

Critical analysis of the Bible is no different, even when there is a predisposition or confessional commitment to treat the bible as sacred scripture. Biblical research is inextricably affected by those epistemologies and ethical sensitivities that inform understanding and the search for meaning in our contemporary world.

The essays in this collection amply testify to the breadth of epistemologies and the development of ethical awareness in relation to a range of concerns impacting our world. The reader will find engagements with the Bible informed by developments in science, law, ecology, feminism and linguistics. Key ethical issues about violence, fundamentalism, anti-semitism and patriarchy are variously recognised as inextricably involved in the interpretation of the Bible if the Bible is to be handled with responsibility and accountability in today's world. What is clear from these essays is that if the interpreters take hold of the freedom to interpret the Bible in engagement with and critique of structures of knowledge in the contemporary world, then two results follow. Firstly, the Bible re-gains a vibrancy by its re-engagement with human pursuits and, especially, with the human pursuit of knowledge. Indeed, human pursuits and the pursuit

of knowledge are themselves invigorated in that re-engagement. Secondly, the Bible is both challenged by and issues a challenge to those very human pursuits, including the pursuit of knowledge. Indeed, as some of these essays argue, the Bible itself demands and reveals in its own fabric such a rigour of hermeneutical engagement.

This collection of essays have been selected primarily from papers that were presented at the *Hermeneutics and the Authority of Scripture* conference held in Canberra in 2007. The Australasian Theological Forum, the organisers of the conference, provided the necessary resources for the keynote speakers at that conference, Terence Fretheim, William Loader and Frances Watson and for the publication of this collection. A number of unforeseen factors stalled the publication of these essays but the resultant collection still speaks powerfully of the radical importance and value of hermeneutics as the guiding dynamism in the continuing authority of the Bible both within confessional communities and in wider cultural interactions. I am grateful to each of the authors in this collection for the wells of patience that they have displayed in awaiting publication. Frances Watson's paper, regrettably, was unable to be included, having already been published elsewhere.

All the essays in this collection, whether drawn from presentations at the conference or received afterwards, were anonymously peer reviewed. I wish to thank those scholars who volunteered their time to select those papers that were suitable for inclusion and who made suggestions for their refinement. Finally, a sincere word of thanks to Hilary Regan and all the support staff at ATF Press who have determinedly pursued a commitment to the publication of fine theological and biblical scholarship in the Australian and New Zealand contexts.

Canberra, 2011

Alan H Cadwallader

The question of hermeneutics now dominates all disciplines of human knowledge and its construction. It has moved from a concentration on how to apply the results of research knowledge to considerations of the frameworks by which we conduct research as a meaningful exercise. The study of the Bible is not exempt from these developments.

The essays in this collection amply testify to the breadth of frameworks that are now being applied to the Bible and the development of ethical awareness in the construction of knowledge. The reader will find engagements with the Bible informed by developments in science, law, ecology, feminism and linguistics. Key ethical issues about violence, fundamentalism, anti-semitism and patriarchy are directly addressed as inextricably involved in the interpretation of the Bible, on the understanding that both Bible and interpreter must be responsible and accountable in today's world.

Critical analysis of the Bible is no different, even when there is a predisposition or confessional commitment to treat the bible as sacred scripture. Biblical research is inextricably affected by those epistemologies and ethical sensitivities that inform understanding and the search for meaning in our contemporary world.

Alan H Cadwallader is Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Australian Catholic University in Canberra and author of *Beyond the Word of a Woman*, ATF Press, 2008.

