

***Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* Review:**

SNYMAN, Gerrie. 2008. *Om die Bybel anders te lees. 'n Eتيك van Bybellees*. Pretoria: Griffel. Papier. ISBN 978 0 9802556 6 X. Pp. 196. Prys onbekend.

In an engaging book on contemporary biblical interpretation which is focused on the ethics of biblical hermeneutics, or ethical interpretation of the Bible, Gerrie Snyman provides a manuscript which engages with the presuppositions, implications and consequences of reading and interpreting the Bible. Snyman explains in his introductory chapter with its ambiguous title "*Want die ander sien ons nie raak nie*", how and why the ethical use of Bible and its interpretation has become a serious concern for him – and much of this autobiographical style would be maintained throughout this volume – and, also, what he understands an "ethical reading of the Bible" to imply.

In the following eleven chapters Snyman addresses a number of topics which generally follows a logical sequence: why it is necessary to read with an eye for the Other; demonstrating the vagaries of heterosexual ideological influencing on the interpretation of texts in the lesbian debate; spelling out the broad contours of an ethics of Bible reading; and, demonstrating the former in considering the link between violence and biblical interpretation. In Chapter 5 the myth of literal interpretation is debunked; followed by a (re)consideration of canon, inspiration and its implications for the status of the Bible; and, providing the link between the Bible and authority and power as further illustration of the previous 2 chapters.

Chapter 8 introduces some practical perspectives on reading "otherwise" – the concerted effort to read with an eye for the Other, followed by a chapter on the implications of considering the Bible itself as an Other. In the last two chapters, Snyman pleads for a "good" reading, providing some "good reasons" for it; and his plea for understanding the Bible in a different way, among others as a plurality of texts, makes for a fitting final chapter. In the conclusion, Snyman discusses Bible reading and the Bible itself as a social and cultural phenomenon.

Snyman's arguments, although they give every evidence of good research and serious contemplation of the issues at stake, do not comprise a textbook on biblical hermeneutics or even on the ethics of biblical interpretation. The book is rather an ethical consideration of hermeneutics, more popular than academic in style, and as can therefore be expected containing a fair amount of generalisations, and as regard technical apparatus, only a few references in the text and a *select* bibliography. His arguments often unapologetically interact with his personal convictions and predominantly his struggle to find an authentic voice for Afrikaans white, male Bible readers in post-Apartheid South Africa; accompanied by, as those who know the author soon recognise, his brand of subtle humour and "fyn spot" (e.g. Qumran "as the appletart which throws everything over", ch 11.3). Smaller issues on which more debates are possible, and even likely, do not distract from the generally coherent, sustained and informed argument.

Snyman's commitment to address his own context has rendered a full-length book in Afrikaans – he would have realised that the commitment to persuade "his" community about the importance

of regarding the Other in biblical hermeneutics, will restrict his readership. *Om die Bybel anders te lees* does not in the first instance demand agreement with the views it presents, but in fact anticipates divergence of opinion as much as agreement on the urgency of hermeneutical ethics and the role of the other in the enterprise. It seeks to stimulate discussion but above all, consideration for the otherness of the biblical texts, their readers and interpreters, and the very process of biblical interpretation itself. It is strongly recommended and deserves to be read widely.

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