

Introduction

David Jobling (Guest Editor) and Julie Kelso

Roland Boer's recent book/manifesto, *Rescuing the Bible* (Blackwell Manifestos; Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2007), is a call for a new coalition of the religious and secular Lefts, a mutually beneficial coalition whose goal is the retrieval of the Bible from the tight-fisted, abusive control of the (religious) right. Boer claims that this union will be beneficial for both because, on the one hand, the secular Left has failed in its project of liberation and would do well to align with the religious Left, for whom the Bible offers a number of possibilities for (radical?) liberation. Boer's research is, and has been for a good while, concerned with those rich traditions within Marxism and other reformative religious and political discourses in which the Bible and theology have been crucial and necessary elements. Boer wants the secular Left to reclaim the Bible precisely for its liberational possibilities. On the other hand, Boer suggests that the religious Left cannot, on its own, effect substantial social change, largely because of the institutions within which its constituents work ('...inherently conservative, patriarchal, stuffy and often brutal institutions', p.41). The religious Left can hardly afford to continue their reformative projects without the secular Left.

This fascinating, and at times emotionally charged argument has generated much discussion already and here we offer three critical responses. This volume grows out of a session at the Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting in Auckland in July, 2008. Three scholars from different parts of the world (Anne Elvey, George Aichele and David Jobling) responded to Roland Boer's book *Rescuing the Bible* and Boer responded to the respondents. The three responses here are developments of the oral ones, but only Jobling's is significantly different from his oral one. A consequence of this is that Boer responds here to aspects of Jobling's oral presentation, as well as his written one; Boer explains at the appropriate place that he is doing this.

Essentially, the responses can be characterised by six criticisms: a problematic absence of eco-justice concerns; that the charge of theft of the Bible (by the religious right from the Left) is debatable (Aichele wonders whether the Left might not have given the Bible away); whether the Bible as canon is uni- or multi-vocal; the problematic interpretation of the terms 'use' and 'abuse'; whether Boer gives an accurate depiction of the religious Left today; and finally the importance of those historical revolutionary figures who made use of the Bible ('the ghosts of revolution').

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Finally, the books reviewed in this issue are as follows:

1. Caroline Vander Stichele and Alasdair G. Hunter (Eds), *Creation and Creativity: From Genesis to Genetics and Back* (reviewed by George Aichele);
2. Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp (Eds), *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography, and Narrative* (reviewed by Mark Sneed);
3. Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah* (reviewed by Chad Eggleston);
4. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (reviewed by Jay Twomey);
5. Susanne Scholz, *Introducing the Women's Hebrew Bible* (reviewed by Michael Carden);
6. Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints and Other Abject Subjects* (reviewed by Michael Carden);
7. John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (reviewed by Fred W. Burnett);
8. Markus Cromhout, *Jesus and Identity: Reconstructing Judean Ethnicity in Q* (reviewed by J.C. Baker);

9. Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (reviewed by Wade J. Berry);
10. Roland Boer, *Rescuing the Bible* (reviewed by Hans Leander);
11. Cleo McNelly Kearns, *The Virgin Mary, Monotheism and Sacrifice* (reviewed by Michael Carden);
and
12. David Odell-Scott (Ed), *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* (reviewed by Christina Petterson).