
Editorial: *The Bible and Critical Theory*, Resurrected

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We begin the eighth year of *The Bible and Critical Theory* with a new look, a new website, a new publisher, and plenty of energy and ideas to kick us on to a higher level. We also have a revamped editorial board, which includes a much wider international group of those keen on interesting and innovative approaches to biblical interpretation, rather than the same, tired old scholarship that has been appearing for a century and a half.

But let us backtrack a moment and explain how the journal came to be retuned. The opportunity came when Monash ePress itself was undergoing some changes in 2010, mutating into Monash University Publishing. In light of those changes, we saw our opportunity, decided to take the journal away from Monash and publish it in an open-access format. As those of you who have been reading the journal until now have been aware, it operated on a subscription basis from 2004 until 2010. This situation has always been a compromise: we needed the expertise of a press; they needed the money. To be sure, the press has ensured that *The Bible and Critical Theory* was established on a sure footing, as well as inducting the editors into the intricacies of online publication. The journal certainly would not be where it is without the press.

From the beginning, we had always wanted to publish the journal as open-access. But this was simply not a financial option for the press, so we opted, reluctantly, for subscriptions. All of which raises a basic economic feature of academic publishing: presses require the largely unpaid labour of authors in order to survive, and authors take part in the system due to all of the non-economic incentives: possible jobs, intangible prestige, critical engagement. The upshot is that presses must restrict access to the material they publish, specifically in terms of a price tag. All of which leads to a paradox with which we are all too familiar: we write in order to be read as widely as possible and yet the very modes of publication limit that readership. Of course, we have developed perverse justifications for that system: it must be of greater value if you pay for it, especially to a commercial or university press.

Less than a decade ago it may have been necessary in the humanities to argue for the value of open-access publishing – as was the case when *The Bible and Critical Theory* began. Now, twenty percent of journals are published as open-access (according to the Directory of Open-Access Journals), any new journal barely considers print as an option any more, and even subscription journals offer online publication as the primary option and print as an extra. By now justification for this revitalised version of *The Bible and Critical Theory* is hardly required.

Resurrected, recharged, revamped and retuned: the journal is now published by the Bible and Critical Theory Seminar, the location for innovative biblical scholarship in this part of the world for well over a decade. In various ways, the seminar has always been the basis of the journal, so it is only natural that it should finally be recognised as the actual publisher. We would also like to thank the helpful editors at Relegere, who guided us through setting up the software – especially Will Sweetman, but also Deane Galbraith, Eric Repphun and James Harding, who also happens to be our book review editor.

First off, there are five articles collected here. In “The Relationship of Canon and Messiah: The Convergence of Jan Assmann and Walter Benjamin on a Theory of Monotheistic Canon”, Colby

Dickinson explores the relationship between canonisation and messianism as developed in the writings of Jan Assmann and Walter Benjamin. Rhiannon Graybill's "Uncanny Bodies, Impossible Knowledge and Somatic Excess in Isaiah 29" brings the work of Massumi, Irigaray and Freud together to analyse affect and somatic excess in Isaiah 29. Andrew Wilson draws on Blanchot's reading of the Eurydice and Orpheus myth and Kristeva's analysis of Holbein's "The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb" to propose a new reading of the Phillipian's "Christ-hymn", proposing that "reading the hymn involves playing out the human confrontation with otherness in a way that puts the death of Jesus at the very centre of this psychic drama". Richard Walsh's "The Christians Kill Jesus Again: Spectacle, Drama, and Politics at Oberammergau" focuses on the Oberammergau Passion Play, specifically tracking the tensions between "Jewish roles and Christian voice, between intra-Jewish debate and Christian worship, between politics and theology, and between the villagers of Oberammergau who create the play and the tradition of the (passion)". Walsh argues that these tensions potentially open up the opportunity for dialogue between these somewhat problematic positions. Finally, Karl Hand offers a scientifically-influenced approach to reading biblical texts with his "Does Yahweh Play Dice with the Torah? Or: *And Out of his Mouth Went a Fiery Packet of Discrete Energy*".

Apart from the articles in this issue, you will find all of the back issues on the new site. And we have at last been able to catch up with the book reviews. We have always had a lively run of reviews, with more coming in than room to publish them (we were limited to twelve per issue in the past). In this issue a bumper crop of reviews appears. Henceforth, we will publish reviews as they become available, in order to ensure a rapid turn-around.