

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

genre of the gospels being described as Lives (see Burridge's *What are the Gospels? A comparison with Graeco-Roman biography*, 1992), Mark as the roaring lion, Matthew as the human face, Luke as the burden-bearing ox and John as the high-flying eagle (see Burridge's *Four Gospels, one Jesus?* 1994), and expect an emphasis on the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers when Jesus' humanity and divinity is discussed (Gould).

Contents-wise, the book consists of an introduction (ch 1, co-authored by the two authors) and two parts, the New Testament (Part I, written by Burridge) and the early church (Part II, written by Gould). In a certain sense the first chapter can be seen as a summary of what is to follow, focusing on the Christological debates in the early and modern church on who Jesus was (then) and is (now). In Part I Burridge discuss the historical Jesus-question (ch 2), Jesus as the different gospel writers presented him (ch 3), Paul's understanding of Jesus (ch 4) and the views of Jesus in the New Testament (ch 5). Part II, written by Gould, has as its focus what the early church taught about Jesus (ch 6), the way in which the early Christians had worshipped Jesus (ch 7), the confession of Jesus as being wholly human and divine (ch 8), and modern day understandings of Jesus (ch 9).

Taking its purpose into consideration, Burridge and Gould must be congratulated on a book that is well written. The historical and theological questions surrounding Jesus are presented in a non-technical and understandable manner. Many undergraduate students in my classes over the past two years can vouch for this. The box inserts, explaining some of the "difficult" terms used, are useful and are welcomed. The suggested reading list at the end, however, could have been expanded to have been more representative of the scholarly debate *Jesus now and then* wants to introduce.



Cromhout, M 2007 – *Jesus and identity: Reconstructing Judean ethnicity in Q (Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean context, 2)*

Publisher: Wipf & Stock, Pages xiv-390. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof Joseph Verheyden (Leuven – The Netherlands)

This book, the revised version of a doctoral dissertation supervised by A van Aarde and submitted to the University of Pretoria in 2006, proposes to study the complex and crucial issue of understanding how early Christianity (or "Messianism" as the author prefers to call it) saw itself within its original "Jewish" (Cromhout: "Judean") context, how this perception functioned, and how it eventually may have influenced its emancipation from its roots to adopt (an)other identity/-ies. For this is above all a book about identity, how it is created, and how religion and ethnicity have interplayed in the particular situation of earliest Judaeo-Christianity.

In the first (pp 9-66) of his five chapters, Cromhout offers a detailed analysis of two major books on the historical Jesus (J P Meier's *Marginal Jew* and J D Crossan's *Mediterranean Jewish peasant*) and deals with how they have given a place to the question of Jesus' ethnic identity. Building on "ethnicity theory" Cromhout discusses the topic from several perspectives (creation of identity by means of the group's name, the role of myths related to its ancestry, collective memory, the group's geographical, linguistic, and religious traditions, its social construct, and the particular practices and customs it shared). Meier's Jesus appears to be both in line with and to deviate from its Judean ethnicity. The latter is especially clear in the way in which Jesus' demands had forced his followers to largely give

up the social matrix in which they had been living and how it affected how they, as Judeans, were supposed to behave towards non-Judeans ('Gentiles') and even how they were supposed to envisage the foundations of their sense of being privileged ('Abraham is our father'). What Cromhout wants to know from Meier is to what extent this change had turned Jesus into "a marginal Judean", taking into account the critical role he had assigned himself in realizing the hopes of Israel and what it meant as a challenge to the traditional "ethnically based" claims of his fellow Judeans. Crossan's Jesus seems to have already completely left the Judean fold: "his Judean background is stretched very thin over the ethos of the Roman-Hellenistic empire" (p 61). The obvious question here is what consequences this has for understanding Jesus in terms of Judean ethnicity. In other words, Crossan is questioning the measure of truth in the Third Quest's axiom that Jesus is a Jew/Judean, firmly rooted and at home in Judaism/Judeanism and had decided to remain within its realm. It leads Cromhout to the next step of asking whether there ever was such a thing as a "common Judeanism" in first-century Palestine, a question he (maybe all too) briefly touches upon in the final paragraphs of the first chapter and which he answers in the affirmative. This in turn leads to the second chapter.

This chapter deals with developing a socio-cultural model of ethnicity and in this regard Cromhout builds on a number of authors and concepts, the most important of which are E P Sanders' notion of "covenantal nomism" and what it means for creating national identity, P L Berger's and T Luckmann's famous notion of "symbolic universe" and how it relates to all aspects and domains of human life and J D G Dunn's "pillars" which, according to him, supported Second Temple Judaism. To these notions Cromhout adds Dunn's emphasis on praxis, further insights from ethnicity theory on primordialism versus constructionism, and finally also D C Duling's model for describing ethnicity. All of this results in a new proposal for a model to consider "Judean ethnicity" based on a set of commonly shared socio-religious practices (the 'Habitus/Israel') and on a theological framework or set of beliefs that describe in a normative manner this identity for those inside (the 'Sacred Canopy'). "So what kind of Judean was Jesus?" (p 107). Meier's Jesus appears to be working towards reconstructing the Judean ethnic identity he and the society he lived in, had known. "In all of this, to call Jesus a 'Marginal Jew' is being kind" (p 111). But Crossan's Jesus, on the other hand, "practically obliterates Judean ethnic particularity" (p 113); no longer is he to be found in the margin, he is "off the radar" (p 113). Jesus was for both, but to varying degrees, actively opposing mainstream positions and pushing the system beyond its own boundaries. And this is precisely how Jesus should be viewed.

Chapter Three offers a survey of more than a hundred pages (pp 117-231) of what Judean ethnicity looked like in the first century and in a time during which old isolationist theories or aspirations had continuously come under the threat of being broken down by reality, firstly that of the post-Alexandrian Hellenistic era, then that of the Roman Empire. Cromhout's survey covers the full range of linguistic and literary evidence and deals with religious praxis and with socio-religious organization (the synagogue, the Temple, and the religious authorities). Much is of course known from similar surveys and the reader could be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the topics listed (the fact that the evidence cited is a mix of a wide variety of Jewish and Graeco-Roman sources which occasionally require more critical or careful assessment, is of little help, but by having all of the evidence put together once more, one has to realize both the complexity and the encompassing nature of the phenomenon. Everything contributes towards building or strengthening identity, and nothing in the life of the average "Judean" seems to be "neutral" or irrelevant a propos the issue that is being studied.

In the short fourth chapter (pp 231-256) the attention is turned to the Galilee and its inhabitants, and particularly the question of how they related to the Judeans of the South. Cromhout criticizes attempts at turning the former into a distinct region or people and claims the evidence strongly supports these "Northerners" shared the same symbolic universe with

their southern neighbors, including their view on the role of the Temple and the importance of the Land, a view that had been working its way north from the time of the Hasmoneans on.

In the fifth and final chapter (pp 257-380), Cromhout deals with the topic of his main concern, namely to establish the identity of the community that composed and read Q. The first part deals with some introductory questions regarding the date, provenance, and extent of Q, and especially with that of its composition. Mainly in dialogue with J S Kloppenborg whose stratification hypothesis is discussed at large (alternatives such as those put forward by D Jacobson or C M Tuckett only receive marginal attention), Cromhout comes to see Q as the result of two strata (not three, as Kloppenborg suggested), of which the second – the “polemical and judgmental” is – in Cromhout’s words (p 287) – the most important one for reconstructing the identity of the Q community. Cromhout then continues by reading Q² (the ‘main redaction’) according to his model, first dealing with the “Habitus/Israel” (i.e., the name of the group, its language, religious praxis, use of kinship imagery and the concept of the Land) and then dealing with its “theology” (i.e., Q’s Christology, the role of Torah, the Kingdom, collective memory, traces of ‘ancestry mythology’, eschatology, and ‘the others’ or the Gentiles). The same reading along the lines of this model is then applied to Q¹ (pp 344-366) and Q in its final form (pp 366-377). This triple reading of Q reveals that kinship and eschatology were the basic issues in Q¹, and that it was only in Q² that the wider range of topics was addressed. It also reveals that the Q group was becoming increasingly (re)constructionist, i.e., it was heading towards discontinuing traditional covenantal nomism, and was creating for itself an identity of its own, distinct from that of other groups. The fundamental difference between the Q group and some of the other Judean sects and renewal movements was that Q (as other Messianist groups) “participated in an eschatological renewal that (re)constructed covenantal nomism, while the other Judean movements of the time had an eschatological vision that aimed at the renewal of traditional understanding of covenantal nomism” (p 380).

Much in this book, in particular the attempt at offering a model for “reading” identity markers in a text, is worthy of attention and the reviewer certainly concurs with the author’s strong emphasis on “the discontinuity factor”. However, some of the more critical (or weaker) aspects of the approach and the conclusion should not be ignored, two of which I shall mention. (a) Cromhout rightly concludes that “the Q people were part of a reform movement *within* Judeanism that was *destined from the start* to become a movement *outside* of Judeanism” (p 380), but he introduces this clause with a modifier (“although this was never their intention”), seemingly unaware of the consequences it has. For example, what evidence is there that this movement was “not intended”; and if this had indeed been the case, what does it mean for the “real” identity of the Q group as it resulted from their move? (b) There is no need to point out the potential, but also the dangers, of the kind of approach used here, an approach in which a model is being applied to a text. Disregarding the often discussed issue of working with a hypothetical text, one possible danger is that one looks for evidence for each and every aspect of the model, at the risk even of misinterpreting the text. This is what may have happened with the first category, that of “the name” (pp 288-89). There is no reason to conclude with Cromhout that “evidently the Q people identified themselves with this symbolic usage [of the name ‘Israel’] and saw themselves as part of Israel, and as heirs of the ancestral land” (p 289). The Q Christians do not call themselves Jews/Judeans, neither do they identify with “Israel”, a term that only appears twice in Q and both times with a most critical connotation. Rather, Q is on the brink of leaving “Israel” behind. Again, this has considerable consequences for describing Q’s “Judean” identity. These two critical remarks do not, as such, invalidate Cromhout’s overall methodological approach or the general conclusion, but certain aspects thereof may require more systematic (and critical) reflection. The author has certainly shown the ability to undertake such.

