

# My thesis is finished, I'm back from the dead

Bible | 5/4/2017 @ 11:09

The English part of this blog has witnessed to more than eight months of my uninterrupted absence. With the Czech part, it was a little bit better – only five months. This silence was given by my involvement in master's thesis writing, which was accompanied by a number of difficulties, some of them almost insurmountable.

- I was loaded with responsibilities at the School of Missions and Theology probably more than ever.
- My second son (now 9 months old) joined my first son in giving me much joy and much headache.
- In the last four months of writing, the universe seemed not to be happy about me meeting the deadline. My wife got sick, kids got sick, I got sick and went to a surgery, our bedroom became uninhabitable, all kinds of people suddenly needed my assistance, ... and I could continue.



But I somehow managed to pull it off. I wish I had started earlier and had better contact with my supervisor. I made some decisions in the stressful process of shaping my work which he was not aware of and which he would probably have discouraged me to make. So maybe the graders will put me down. But anyway, I think I've done a good job, given the unhappy conditions of my work. I won't publish it before I get an official feedback from the committee. Till then, a summary shall suffice.

Thesis title: **The Place and Significance of Historical Criticism for Biblical Hermeneutics**

This work is concerned with some basic problems which historical criticism poses to biblical interpretation. The first chapter deals with historical criticism in relation to problems of the text's historical distance and contemporary significance. Certain key figures from the field of philosophical hermeneutics are briefly introduced (Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Hirsch, Ricoeur), but attention is also paid to the ways how historical criticism was actually practiced (Wellhausen, Mowinckel). It is maintained that historical criticism is a tool in interpretation and does not impede possible appropriation of the text by those who read it with deep affection.

The second chapter faces historical criticism as a theological problem, which has become most apparent in the inerrantist milieu and which was more or less successfully answered by canonical approaches. A special attention is given to the canonical approach of Brevard Childs, which is understood against the backdrop of Barth's doctrine of the Word of God and Frei's view of biblical narratives. A special attention is given to distinction between approaches of Brevard Childs and James Sanders. It is maintained that Sanders' canonical criticism provides better interpretive platform, because it wants to address the needs of contemporary interpretive communities through a self-aware historical critical enterprise.

The third chapter takes up the problem of violence in the book of Joshua and the problem of theological meaning of the exodus story. Biblical theological insights of James Sanders, James Barr, and Walter Brueggemann are applied. An eye is kept also on Pixley-Levenson debate and it is maintained that traditions of the exodus and conquest must be understood together as literary devices which invite communities of faith to freedom. As a result of the present research, historical criticism is presented as a hermeneutical tool which can help to rescue text's significance for the contemporary communities of believers.

Key terms: historical criticism, hermeneutics, biblical interpretation, Spinoza, Wellhausen, Mowinckel, Gadamer, Ricoeur, emplotment, inerrantism, Barth, Frei, interpretive communities, canonical approach, canonical criticism, Childs, Sanders, Barr, Brueggemann, exodus, violence, conquest, Pixley, Levenson, liberation

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