

God is big enough for our questions: introducing learners to a critical approach to study of the Bible

Andrew Jaensch
Australian Lutheran College
Opening lecture 2014

Andrew is Australian Lutheran College's Queensland faculty member, based in the School of Education at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane.

Introduction: 'God is big enough for our questions'

An early exponent of a critical approach was the biblical character Job. His is not so much a case of an engagement with the Bible as it is now known, but with God in person. Through the book we hear Job questioning God's way of acting; and we also observe God respecting Job's challenge by listening to him and engaging with him (5:1–27), by stepping back as Job debates with his friends (8:1 – 37:24) and by taking him on 'man-to-man' as the book closes (38:1 – 39:30). God rebukes the friends in language which implies that they were speaking only *about* God and not *to* God as Job had had the integrity and the temerity to do. In all this God was declaring Job's questions worthy of engagement. God was big enough for Job's questions, and God is big enough for the questions of people today as well, including those questions aroused by the reading of Scripture where certain texts leave the reader puzzled or perplexed.

This paper has been prompted by scholarship in the area of biblical criticism as well as the writer's own experience in reading the Bible. An early and still vivid experience for me was as a teenage Sunday school teacher trying to accommodate within my own understanding of God the disturbing violence in parts of the Old Testament and especially the way the authors described God's participation in this violence. My attempts to address questions about this issue at the time achieved only very limited resolution. The questions have lingered and resurfaced in this paper and the research surrounding it.

The claim that God is big enough for our questions is part of the dedication of a book recounting and exploring an American evangelical Christian's embracing of critical biblical scholarship. Kenton Sparks dedicates his book, *God's word in human words*, to his father 'who taught me that God is big enough for our questions' (2008: 7). The author had in mind especially the questions raised when reading the Bible.

This paper focuses on the experience of Bible readers in theological colleges, in Christian schools and in parishes. It asserts that God is also big enough for their questions. Taking this further, the article develops an argument that it is the role of those who teach to help their Bible students to identify and ask the questions which are already at work in them as well as to guide the learners sensitively and honestly to recognise further questions that need to be asked.

What follows here begins with an explanation of 'a critical approach'. That is followed by a learning and teaching example of a critical approach. And the paper concludes by asking why a critical approach is so important, and who should be introduced to a critical approach. At different points links will be made to my own experience of a critical approach as a learner and to the experiences of my students at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane who participated in a project researching their experiences. Finally, the article highlights links between a critical approach to study of the Bible and both student-centred learning and inquiry learning.

This paper seeks to complement an already developed body of literature on a critical approach.¹ In addition policy documents of Australian Lutheran College (2007, 2010), from which the Lutheran Strand units of study emerge, highlight the purposes of those units in both fostering critical thinking and supporting formation in the Christian tradition. This paper seeks to contribute to this field of study through a special focus on the use of a critical approach within the Australian Lutheran context, from higher education to religious education in schools and also within parishes.

What is 'a critical approach'?

It can be tempting for researchers and teachers working within the church to use other, perhaps softer-sounding terms in place of 'critical'. Terms such as 'Bible study' and 'Bible reflection' may be less likely to be misunderstood, especially in ways which sound alarm bells for some Christians who sense a negative connotation to the idea of being 'critical'. But the term 'critical' has been retained here because of its wide use in education and scholarship. Educators understand and are at home with the notion of being 'critical'.

The original Greek notion of criticism is illuminating here as well. Both criticism and education are about arriving at a judgment, coming to a decision, using discernment. Reflecting this, Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) lists such things as 'the ability to identify and fully examine assumptions and evidence, the ability to frame questions that guide exploration of issues and help form deep understandings, and the ability to dialogue critically with diverse viewpoints', in its evidence for lifelong qualities for learners ('A framework for Lutheran schools', 2012: 10). LEA's Christian Studies Curriculum Framework lists among the essential skills and dispositions of learners: 'discussion skills in which clear reasoning process are employed', and 'the ability to dialogue critically with diverse viewpoints' (2012: 10).

What does this kind of criticism mean in the context of studying the Bible? Drane speaks of biblical criticism as 'a general term for the various methods that contemporary scholars use to analyse the Bible' (2011: 351). He goes on to explain that 'the word "criticism" does not imply that scholars are seeking to attack or tear down the Bible, and that its usage is similar to that of the term "literary criticism", which refers to the careful and analytical study of a piece of literature using a particular set of methods' (2011: 351). Even though this approach sometimes raises questions relating to history associated with the biblical text, it is not to be equated with the historical-critical method. It is the approach 'that most honours the text in all its givenness, and ... is therefore not inimical to a contemporary appropriation of the Bible, but rather its essential precondition' (Barton: 5).

The first two of Barton's 'ten theses' concerning biblical criticism are fundamental to my own approach to the matter as educator, researcher and writer. 'Biblical criticism is essentially a literary operation, concerned with the recognition of genre in texts and with what follows from this about their possible meaning ... Biblical criticism is only accidentally concerned with questions of "introduction" or history' (5).

Though the need to employ a critical approach in biblical study might seem obvious, fear can easily arise in Christians where the approach and the rationale for it are not carefully and sensitively

¹ Research and writing addressed in this article includes the work of Crump (2013) and Winter (2004) applying a critical approach to study of the Bible in the context of Christian faith. Stead (1996) relates a critical approach to religious education in Catholic schools. Policy and curriculum documents of Lutheran Education Australia (2000 and 2005) make connections between a critical approach and learning and teaching in Australian Lutheran schools. Clines (2010) explores the use of student-centred learning in higher education biblical studies. Pelikan (1992), Ormerod (2008), Boeve (2010), Biggs and Tang (2007) and Solvang (2004) highlight the imperative of higher education to foster a rigorous and critical approach to study. Giving attention also to a faith tradition context of higher education are Christenson (2004), Constantino, Fleming and Paul (2009), Hay (2008), Sandsmark (2002), Solvang (2004), Martin (2008) and Sparks (2008).

outlined. The perception of a claim of intellectual superiority on the part of the advocate of a critical approach can be created as well. It is far better to explain simply, honestly and clearly what we mean by a critical approach as well as what we do not mean.

My own experience of a critical approach in a substantial form began in undergraduate theological studies, and it was very unsettling. I believe I would have benefitted back then from a different kind of introduction to a critical approach, but Christians should not be surprised if engagement with critical study of the Bible produces intellectual and spiritual pain. This experience is reflected in the work of American social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957) whose theory of cognitive dissonance explains how humans try to achieve internal consistency. My personal experience as a Christian reader of the Bible, as a teacher, and as a researcher all prompted me to become much more intentional about introducing my students to a critical approach to study of the Bible.

In planning for this I considered what kinds of questions about the Bible reflect and invite a critical approach to it. Here are some of them.

- The apparently-conflicting accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2.
- The ethical difficulties presented by accounts of Israel's conquest of Canaan.
- The claim that words from the lips of Jesus in the gospels may not have come from Jesus' lips, at least not in the way the gospel writers have expressed them.

Questions like these continue to be stumbling blocks for readers of the Bible, especially Christians, so ways of addressing them appropriately with students need to be explored. At the same time, in biblical study it is crucial to avoid a focus on critical questions alone, especially where the students are Christians. There is a need to distinguish between a book (the Bible) and the One to whom that book points (Christ). Where the biblical study takes place in a faith context, the focus should not neglect the crucified and risen One at the heart of scripture. This implies that Christian Bible students need to learn to approach scripture in other non-critical devotional and liturgical ways which speak to the heart as well as to the mind.

A critical approach in practice

Nevertheless, the need remains to take seriously critical questions about the biblical text. Here then is an example of an activity from my undergraduate classroom which does exactly that. The students involved are studying education with a view to teaching in Lutheran schools. They are all either Christians or people viewing the Bible from a Christian perspective. This learning activity is prompted by difficulties raised for Bible readers by instances of 'ethnic cleansing' in accounts of the conquest of Canaan. The learners are asked to brainstorm adjectives for the God of the Bible. These are assembled on a screen or cards for all to see. The group is then asked to categorise them and to identify apparent clashes between them. If terms are included which point to a violent side to God, then the teacher—the writer in this case—calls for comments on those. If no such references have been included, the teacher adds to the cards some descriptive terms for God as reflected in the accounts of the conquest of Canaan and invites student reactions.

The class then reads a passage such as Joshua 8—the capture of Ai and the slaughter of its inhabitants. Student reactions of both the head and the heart are elicited and acknowledged. The teacher speaks of his own questions and feelings, the struggle to come to terms with them, and a sense that while much tension will always remain, some resolution is also possible. Then the class is presented with a range of responses from biblical scholars and invited to identify the ones they find more or less satisfying and why. These responses cover a range which includes rejection of the Old Testament and progressive revelation.

At some point this exercise involves introducing students to the theology of the cross. This theology looks towards the New Testament and God's own willing self-submission in Christ to violence. The

learners are asked to consider if and how for them the cross provides resolution. Discussion also takes place as to whether ‘resolution’ is achievable or even desirable. The possibility is offered that a more realistic and appropriate goal is to develop the capacity as Christian readers of the Bible to live with and alongside texts about a violent God.

The value of learning activities like this aside, it is crucial for the teacher to remember that a critical approach involves more than the insertion of an occasional exercise into the learning and teaching. Reading the Bible critically requires an ongoing dedication to investigating the text with honest questions and rigorous method as well as with the humility that recognises the size of the task and the limited certainty that can be achieved.

Having tried learning activities like this, and, encouraged by the way my students embraced them, I embarked on a research project for which the guiding question was: ‘In what ways do education students at ACU respond to a critical approach to study of the Bible?’ The research itself employed a qualitative approach with an initial interview with four students followed by a second interview exploring in more detail some of the ideas and feelings expressed in the initial conversation. Some of the results of that project will be outlined in what follows.

Why adopt a critical approach?

Several reasons will be offered here for advocating a critical approach to study of the Bible. Ultimately all of these reasons are different facets of both good pedagogy *and* good pastoral care because good teaching involves care for the *whole* person.

1. A critical approach is good educational practice because it fosters further and deeper learning.

In fact, a critical approach is not just sound education, but sound education considered from a Lutheran perspective. The role of reason alongside of revelation in the Christian life is key here. That is, what part should reason play in Christians’ quest for truth including in their reading of the biblical text? In his explanation of the first article of the Apostles’ Creed Luther declared—especially for children—that God has created ‘my mind and senses’. It would be theologically inconsistent on the one hand to teach this to children while on the other hand withholding encouragement for them to employ this divine gift in their study of the Bible. For more adult learners Luther wrote:

It is certainly true that reason is the most important and highest in rank among all things, and in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicine, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life ... It is a sun and a kind of God, appointed to administer these things (earthly affairs) in this life’. (Jansz: 48)

It is also true that Luther once called reason ‘the devil’s whore’ (Jansz: 47), but his warning on that occasion was about the destructive role that reason can play in undermining the unconditional nature of the gospel. People use reason to assess their worthiness before God and, deeply aware of their shortcomings, arrive at the conclusion that they could not possibly be acceptable to God. The gospel defies that reason and says, ‘Yes you are accepted—because of Christ’. Alongside this, though, an education including study of the Bible which does not embrace God’s gift of reason at best involves an undervaluing of that wonderful gift.

Another reason for regarding a critical approach as good educational practice in Lutheran terms relates to the notion of paradox. Scandinavian education scholar Signe Sandmark’s attention to the dialectical structure of Lutheran theology is relevant here. Quoting Richard T Hughes in *How Christian faith can sustain the life of the mind*, she writes that ‘For Luther ... the notion of paradox is at the heart of the gospel. The gospel itself is a paradox, where the cross means life and where death on

the cross is exaltation' (2002: 99). Lutheran education by definition works well with paradox and tension, and it provides a challenging yet safe context in which to approach the Bible critically.

Consideration will now be given to two approaches to learning and teaching which go hand-in-hand with the kind of critical approach advocated here: inquiry learning and student-centred learning. Grant Wiggins argues for inquiry learning this way:

Students must be educated to feel what all wise people know: the more you learn, the more you are aware of your ignorance. They must be shown that there is a perpetual *need* to think and that all 'official' knowledge (including that in the textbook) is thinking fashioned into facts by rigorous, sustained but personalized work ... In short the aim of the curriculum is to awaken, not 'stock' or 'train' the mind. That makes the basic unit of the curriculum the *question*. (46)

Inquiry learning does not imply that everything is relative, that nothing is more 'true' or 'valuable' than anything else. On the contrary it requires the learners to test all knowledge by employing reason and the wisdom of scholars and the insights of peers. In biblical study inquiry learning requires them to hold this process in tension with what Christians know to be God's revelation through scripture.

The other approach to learning and teaching closely linked with a critical approach is student-centred learning. David Clines (2010) from the University of Sheffield describes his overnight shift from a teacher-centred model of teaching to a student-centred model. 'For me it happened in a moment when I woke up one morning vowing to stop teaching biblical studies and start teaching students' (7). While not an indispensable element of a critical approach to learning, this shift from subject to learners nevertheless works hand-in-glove with it because the students' questions move from the wings to centre stage. This is what Clines (quoting King, 1993) calls a shift for the teacher from being the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side' (7).

In biblical studies when teachers step to the side students have to step up, to identify their questions and to explore them. Teachers who are guides-by-the-side will act as prompters and provokers of the inquiry, suggesting questions and lines of inquiry the students have not yet recognised, nudging them deeper and deeper. This reminds me of a remark I once overheard from a business owner in my barber's shop: 'The more I stay out of my business, the better it seems to work'. For teachers 'staying out' is very important, in that it allows the learning to be genuinely the learners' own; but so too is 'going in' very important, as teachers prompt open-ended, provocative questions that encourage deeper thinking.

Of course, at the core of the church's mission is the call to proclaim the gospel. A purely open-ended approach to teaching scripture is not going to meet that mission imperative, but there is an irony about this which forms my second reason for advocating for a critical approach.

2. A critical approach to study of the Bible can lead to a stronger and more resilient faith in Christians and create the environment in which faith might be born in others.

Martin Luther used his gift of reason to pursue a particular line of inquiry that placed him in opposition to certain perceived 'custodians of truth' of his day. He did that for the sake of the gospel. If learners today are encouraged to critically examine the biblical text by teachers who have gone there before them and stand alongside them, they are more likely to be able to withstand the kinds of attacks on *the* faith and *their* faith that life will inevitably bring. This will be in part because they are more likely to own their faith, having integrated their knowledge of the biblical literature according to their own cognitive backgrounds.

Three of the findings of my research project at ACU are relevant here. The first is that a critical approach can lead students—whether Christian or not—through uncertainty to greater certainty about scripture as God’s word as they come to terms with the paradox of scripture as both fully divine and fully human. One participant who was an agnostic expressed that being given freedom and encouragement to take a critical approach within a Christian academic context had made it easier for her to consider seriously Christian claims concerning the Bible as God’s word. This student’s faith has continued to grow in the years since the research.

Christian students in the study indicated that being exposed to the idea of more than one creation account in Genesis 1-2 as well as the variety among the gospel accounts increased their confidence in the authority of scripture. Their responses reflect what Sparks refers to as ‘believing criticism’ (2008: 20) as well as what ACU’s Constantino, Fleming and Paul (2009) call being ‘critically loyal’ (to scripture as word of God). Lutherans would speak of being critically loyal to Scripture *as both human and divine*. It is not just the divine ‘dimension’ of scripture which creates faith. The Holy Spirit works through both the human and divine dimensions of the biblical text. The critical study of the humanity of the text is not simply a preliminary exercise so that the ‘real’ divine work of the Holy Spirit in converting students to faith can begin. Understanding the human aspects of the text is also the locus of the work of the Holy Spirit who chose to use human authors fully anchored in their own historical and cultural context.

Echoing this in his work subtitled ‘Reading the Bible critically in faith’, David Crump writes that ‘anyone who has surrendered their reason at the foot of the cross will discover that Christ hands it back again to be used more appropriately and insightfully in the search for truth’ (112). My research shows how this takes place in the minds and hearts of at least some learners.

It is worth noting here that Luther’s reformation insight resulted in a radical shift in his view of the Bible. The cross now became THE focus, not the text which testified to the cross. When people today grasp this same view of things with the cross at the centre, might it not free them to live *under* the cross and *within* the unavoidable tensions associated with problematic questions they experience with the biblical text?

A second finding from the research project relevant here is that while a critical approach can be threatening for students with a prior Christian commitment, it can ultimately foster depth and maturity in their commitment. One of the research participants in particular, a committed Lutheran Christian had this to say: ‘Now I feel like I’m a lot more critical ... I really like to hear a sermon now where I’m challenged to interact in my mind’. This maturing process is reflected in Sparks’ contention that ‘once we admit that the Bible, as divine discourse, is accommodated to various human viewpoints and contexts, then we will listen with more care to all that it says’ (2008: 358). There is a link here with James Fowler’s ‘Stage 5’ of faith which

... involves going beyond explicit ideological systems and clear boundaries of identity...(and) accepts as axiomatic that truth is more multidimensional and organically independent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp ... (It) is ready for significant encounters with other traditions than its own. This position implies no lack of commitment to one’s own truth tradition. Nor does it mean a wishy-washy neutrality. Rather, conjunctive faith’s radical openness to the truth of the other stems precisely from its confidence in the reality mediated by its own tradition ... (It) assumes that each genuine perspective will augment and correct aspects of the other in a mutual movement toward the real and the true. (Fowler, 1981: 186,187)

A third relevant conclusion is that in the context of a critical approach the power of the biblical story remains and is further enhanced by questions arising from a critical analysis. Evidence of this was the research interview response that ‘different accounts of the story sort of reinforces it for me, makes me want to believe it more; it’s not just one simple story, it wasn’t just a rumour, it was confirmed

once again. So, it makes it more solid, I think'. Echoing this value among 21st century youth, Jacqueline (2010) has highlighted the significance of story in the spirituality of millennial young people. To what extent this applies to older Bible students calls for further study, but the role of 'story' is likely to be significant for people of any age.

3. A critical approach to study of the Bible promotes good health, including and especially spiritual health. And this is because at its core it is honest and allows the learner to be fully, honestly human.

A critical approach requires no divided self where people, and especially Christians, feel unable to pursue the nagging questions that challenge their faith. Instead a critical approach allows them to move into more and more challenging questions where fear is diminished and faith strengthened, as it has for me.

Once again, to be a follower of Christ means surrendering one's reason at the foot of the cross, and then getting it back again to work with. There is something paradoxically Lutheran about that. On the one hand this means that I am called to witness to a truth which sometimes tests my own boundaries of reason and faith, and which is resolved ultimately only in the cross. But the cross which we are called to carry is not made heavier by discouragement of honest inquiry, wherever it might take the learner. David Winter contrasts himself with the Christian speaker he heard in his youth who declared that if the Bible said that Jonah swallowed a whale instead of vice versa, then he would believe it. Winter responds that 'God would not ask human beings to whom he has given intelligence and reason to act so grotesquely in defiance of them.' (20)

4. A critical approach allows the learners to find in scripture the foundation of a just worldview and a just way of life.

A great deal of Christian acceptance of societal injustice has its foundation in an uncritical reading of scripture. Adopting a critical approach to reading scripture includes adopting a critical approach to any and all conclusions that critical approaches lead to. There is not just a single, clear-cut socially-just way to read the biblical text on every issue. However, it is relevant to bring the historical issue of slavery into this discussion because this is one which seems about as clear-cut as a justice issue could be. The former claim by some in the USA that the Bible supported slavery has been thoroughly documented in Mark Noll's book, *The Civil War as a theological crisis*. Uncritical interpretation of the Bible has also led to centuries of religious anti-Semitism from the Christian church and its members.

Will many Christian churches gain a similarly sobering perspective of their historical position on women's ordination, for example, when they look back in a decade or so? Taking a critical approach to scripture includes being mindful of what may later be recognised as errors in interpretation which devout Christians strongly defended but which a critical approach to the reading of scripture has then exposed as just plain wrong and which have contributed to unjust and in some cases even tragic consequences for many, such as has happened with pro-slavery and anti-Semitic stances.

One of Lutheran Education Australia's five 'Lifelong qualities for learners' is that the learners will be 'Caring, steadfast supporters and advocates' (2012: 48). This will be reflected in the learners' attitudes toward injustice along with other ways of thinking and living: 'These learners 'defend and promote what is worthy, even in the face of criticism and adversity'.

Working critically with scripture provides the learners with the best foundation for developing this lifelong quality.

A critical approach with whom?

My research project took place within a higher education context. Nevertheless, the findings prompt me to make my short answer to this question 'everyone'. Why patronise any group which the church

has the call to teach by determining that they wouldn't be interested, or wouldn't be able to handle it? My long answer to the same question is that any teaching must have the student at the centre. This includes not just *what interests the student* but also *the student's best interests*. What will help the learner learn to grow? How should that be done in a way which is sensitive and thoughtful? Adopting a critical approach is a call to humility and care by the teacher, not an invitation to show off or shock the learners. Good pedagogy is also good pastoral care.

With children

The earlier the learners are appropriately helped to hear and read the Bible critically, the better it is for them, because much intellectual and spiritual pain is caused by the child being given one impression and the teenager or adult a contradictory one.

Barbara Stead's research into the use of the Bible in Catholic primary schools in Victoria in the 1990s can help us with the question of working with young learners in study of the Bible. Commenting on J R Tolkien's suggestion that the adaptation of any adult work for children is 'a dangerous process, even if necessary', she says:

It is necessary because we want to introduce children to a particular aspect of the arts or sciences; it is dangerous because we must not allow them to be satisfied with a first answer, but ensure that we whet their appetite for more. Tolkien's warning applies equally to the Bible. (1996: 6)

It was Barbara Stead who first made me aware of the importance of never teaching children anything they would later have to unlearn.

With teachers

It is crucial that future teachers in Lutheran schools be led into a critical approach in the first instance for the sake of the integrity of their education with its necessary emphasis on academic freedom and critical thinking. It is also crucial for the education of their own students.

In any teacher education program of Christian churches there is a necessary overlapping and potential tension between a critical approach to study of the Bible and the context of this education within a faith tradition (with its emphasis on both critical thinking and formation in the Christian tradition itself). It is core to a Lutheran theology of education that it be true to *both* goals. In addition, policy documents of Australian Lutheran College (2007, 2010) highlight the purposes of those units in both fostering critical thinking and supporting formation in the Christian tradition. The same balance pervades Lutheran Education Australia's 'Core propositions describing highly effective teachers in Lutheran schools' (2000), and in its curriculum statements. Lutheran schools need teachers—especially Christian Studies teachers—who have had the integrity and courage to approach scripture critically, who have come out not only intact but also more mature at the other end, and who can help their charges to do the same. Lutheran Education Australia's 'Christian Studies Curriculum Framework' curriculum statements reinforce this in referring to learning 'where the learners are challenged to think critically and laterally about increasingly complex issues' (LEA, CSCF, 2005, 8).

With congregations

Certainly readiness for learning needs to be considered here. A learner-centred approach in congregations will care for the learners by avoiding two extremes: at one extreme thoughtlessly destabilising the faith of Christians who are simply not ready for a critical approach, and at the other extreme a paternalistic protectiveness towards Christians who would love to be taken further in honest critical study of scripture. To err on the side of caution carries with it the risk of a gap opening up and widening between the people of the church and its theological leaders including the clergy, creating unnecessary misunderstanding and suspicion.

Some are concerned about the risks to faith associated with adopting a critical approach, especially with the young. While there are risks associated with getting Christians to get in touch with their own confronting questions about scripture, as well as those of others, there is a much greater risk of Christians having the carpet of a superficial approach to scripture ripped out from under them when they can no longer ignore the big questions. It is much better and safer for mature, honest, skilled teachers to guide them through places where they themselves have been. These are teachers who encourage learners to express their questions, their anxieties, their growth, and who do the same themselves.

With pastors

All of this implies that clergy must have already themselves stepped into the waters of a critical approach, felt safe there, and are willing to continue to wade back in with their people. Such ministry constitutes real pastoral care.

These are teachers who see themselves as being and providing not only an anchor but also a sail for learners: an anchor tied to Christ, and a sail propelled by the Spirit to move further and deeper into an understanding of God's word and a desire to live it. Critical thinking clarifies the centre of the biblical narrative which reminds us that the Bible is not God, and the Bible did not die for us, and the Bible was not crucified for us. In a mysterious and paradoxical way the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth which includes both our ever growing cognitive awareness of the humanity and divinity of the text of scripture, and our understanding of the centrality of the cross of Christ, who himself is God Incarnate, fully human and fully divine.

Conclusion

Having engaged God with his questions, Job initially promises a kind of silence (40:3–5); but a critical reading of this scripture does not allow us to read this as the closing down of all debate about scripture by people of faith. It is more the case that the whole of this stirring book encourages us towards a lifelong raising of questions and wrestling with God as people who have surrendered their reason at the foot of the cross and received it back again.

References

- Barton, John, 2007. *The nature of biblical criticism*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville.
- Clines, David, 2010. 'Learning, teaching and researching biblical studies, today and tomorrow', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 129/1, 225–29.
- Christenson, Tom, 2004. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, Augsburg, Minneapolis.
- Constantino, Andrew, Dan Fleming, and Lucienne Paul, 2009. 'A series of questions and reflections on our first years as religious education of religious educators'. Paper presented at the Sixth National Symposium on Religious Education and Ministry.
- Crump, David, 2013. *Encountering Jesus, encountering Scripture: reading the Bible critically in faith*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Drane, John, 2011. *Introducing the Old Testament*, 3rd ed, Lion, Oxford.
- Festinger, Leon, 1957. *A theory of cognitive dissonance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Fowler, James, 1981. *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, Harper Collins, New York.
- Hay, Catherine, 2008. *Teaching scripture in a tertiary setting: addressing audience response*.
- Hughes, Richard T, 2001. *How Christian faith can sustain the life of the mind*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Jacqueline, Dominique, 2010. 'Talking about God to Generation Z', *SchoolLink*, 16:03.
- Janz, Denis R, 2011. 'Whore or handmaid? Luther and Aquinas on the function of reason in theology', in *The devil's whore: reason and philosophy in the Lutheran tradition*, edited by Jennifer Hockenberry Dragseth, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 47–52.
- King, Alison, 1993. 'From sage on the stage to guide on the side', *College Teaching* 41:3–35.

- Lutheran Education Australia, 2005. *A vision for learners and learning in Lutheran schools*. LEA, Adelaide.
- Lutheran Education Australia, 2012. *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework: Curriculum Statements*, LEA, Adelaide.
- Lutheran Education Australia, 2000. 'Core Propositions Describing Highly Effective Teachers in Lutheran Schools', Wednesday 10 November 2010, from <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=53>
- Noll, Mark, 2006. *The Civil War as a theological crisis*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- Sandsmark, Signe, 2002. 'A Lutheran perspective on education', *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*, 6/2, 97–105.
- Solvang, Elna, 2004. 'Thinking developmentally: the Bible, the first-year college student, and diversity', *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 7/4, 223–229.
- Sparks, Kenton, 2008. *God's word in human words: an evangelical appropriation of critical biblical scholarship*, Baker, Grand Rapids.
- Sparks, Kenton, 2012. *Sacred word, broken word: biblical authority and the dark side of Scripture*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Stead, Barbara, 1996. 'The Bible in religious education', in *Exploring the religion classroom: a guidebook for Catholic schools*. Maurice Ryan and Patricia Malone. Wentworth Falls: Social Science Press.
<http://ri.bne.catholic.edu.au/ree/RE/REL/Documents/CU4%20The%20Bible%20in%20Religious%20Education.pdf> (Retrieved 25 June, 2011)
- Wiggins, Grant, 1989. 'The futility of trying to teach everything of importance', *Educational Leadership*, 47/3 (Nov).
- Winter, David, 2004. *Making sense of the Bible*, Lion, Oxford.