

## Anthony Rees- Method

Bible and Ecology Seminar, 19 September 2016

Notes by Jason John

The concepts involved are reasonably straightforward

Enable people to enter conversation

## Survey of ecological hermeneutics

Earth bible series 2000-2002

Guided by a set of ecojustice principles

1. Intrinsic worth
2. Interconnectedness
3. Voice
4. Purpose. Cosmic design, each piece has its place
5. Mutual custodianship. Responsible custodians are partners with not rulers over earth
6. Resistance. Earth suffers human action but also actively resists

Earth becomes a subject- Earth, not the earth. Not an instrument but a community of which we are a part.

Retrieves the voice of Earth.

E. Conradie- the vision in these principles are bold and audacious, though he recognises limitations in them.

No ref to God's ongoing activity in the world. Nothing specifically religious. Such openness allows for the type of dialog Habel et al were hoping for with scientists and other faith traditions.

Don't have to be religious to study the bible.

Above we see hermeneutics of suspicion and of retrieval.

Now have added **suspicion, identification, retrieval**, and moved to assessing books in complete form.

## 3 pronged apparatus for Earth Bible

Suspicion.

In feminist scholarship assume text is patriarchal, as is its interpretation most of the time.

Most people accept this. We may never read the bible in the same way again.

Near canonical interpretations have had their patriarchal biases laid bare.

Ecol hermeneutics – look for evidence of how Earth and inhabitants are represented, and how that reveals how humanity sees its place in Creation.

Consider each passage to see where Earth's voice is silenced.

Where are the Earth Bible principles denied and affirmed?

### Identification

Literary critics- bible creates characters with whom we identify, despite the minimal info we get about them.

David remains much loved despite his failings. We sense the distress of Hagar. Etc etc

We are drawn into the human xp in the stories, and so make choices about what we do and don't see in the characters and the people they meet.

We now try to identify with a non-human member of the Earth community. Eg Numbers. Heb: "in the wilderness"-

The wilderness is where the story takes place, usually pushed to the background. Now we identify *with* the wilderness, and its wide variety of life. It is given a voice. How do battles affect the land: fields, habitats, the earth is trampled by a vast nomadic group traversing it. What affect do cities have?

Even if not historical, why was it imagined in so ecologically destructive a fashion?

What does it mean for trees to be used for weapons, or sacrificial pyres? How do 2m people affect water? Why waste it in rituals. Animals lose their habitat, a donkey is beaten. We read with these non humans in focus.

### Retrieval

Hear the voice of Earth in a reconstructed text as she tells the story of her experience.

Controversial.

David Horrell says this creates a new text. The next texts lack theological significance, are creative works of imagination. But that's true of all interpretations to some extent, as are the scriptures themselves.

Creativity has always been a feature of scriptural interpretation, so why not now, and why not in ecological hermeneutics?

Imaginative identification (borrowing again from feminist hermeneutics).

May these studies actually make a difference.