

**Béatrice BIZOT, *Violence et fraternité. Une lecture du récit de Caïn et Abel*, préface d'Olivier ARTUS. Bruxelles - Bern - Berlin - New York - Oxford - Wien, Peter Lang, 2022, 14,8 × 22 cm, 224 p., ISBN 978-2-87574-655-9**

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Volume 76, numéro 3, septembre-décembre 2024

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1113085ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1113085ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (imprimé)

2562-9905 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Nguyen, C. A. (2024). Compte rendu de [Béatrice BIZOT, *Violence et fraternité. Une lecture du récit de Caïn et Abel*, préface d'Olivier ARTUS. Bruxelles - Bern - Berlin - New York - Oxford - Wien, Peter Lang, 2022, 14,8 × 22 cm, 224 p., ISBN 978-2-87574-655-9]. *Science et Esprit*, 76(3), 453–456.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1113085ar>

As you read your way into this book, there is no resisting the authors' excitement about every aspect of Butler's thought. They open innumerable inviting paths for exploration, the only problem being that a lifetime is too brief to explore them all. Unlike most academic books, this one does not begin by declaring a single thesis and then attempt to prove that thesis. Instead it leads us in all directions.

The book's plenitude is neither an error nor an oversight. Its co-authors tell us in their preface that they were not intending "to satisfy the intellectual needs of academics. (p. xiv) "Our concern is religion and ethics," they declare on p. 11. And so it should be, for those were also concerns of Butler, whose views the co-authors are attempting to draw to our attention and clarify. Their method, they continue, is "empirical and evidence-based." With its help, they promise to lay bare "the critical reading and thinking that is at the heart of Butler's system" (p. 13).

No doubt Butler's critical reading and thinking would differ in some ways from ours. The co-authors are aware of that fact and do not hesitate to borrow from "the canons of contemporary analytic philosophy" (p. 131) in explaining Butler. Contemporary Christian analytic philosophers such as Richard Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga and William Lane Craig make occasional cameo appearances as the discussion unfolds.

If, as already acknowledged, one of the virtues of this book is the vast number of ideas it is prepared to entertain, or criticize, or defend, its vice is that all these ideas, like the atoms of Lucretius, have a propensity to swerve. So the co-authors, in addition to identifying and expounding Butler's thought, do not hesitate to confront it with the thought of atheism, theism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, and ancient paganism. Butler is even summoned to consider Indian mysticism, the moral treatment of animals, slaves and the insane (pp. 229-233).

Broad-mindedness at this level risks distracting the readers it attracts. It does, however, indicate some of the extraordinary resilience and contemporary relevance of Bishop Butler's thought.

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## PHILOSOPHIE

Béatrice BIZOT, **Violence et fraternité. Une lecture du récit de Caïn et Abel**, préface d'Olivier ARTUS. Bruxelles - Bern - Berlin - New York - Oxford - Wien, Peter Lang, 2022, 14,8 × 22 cm, 224 p., ISBN 978-2-87574-655-9.

For centuries, our world had been marked by violence in its cruel and destructive dimensions. In our time, the war between Russia and Ukraine and the battle between Israel and Hamas show us that violence does not diminish in any way. These conflicts were caused by those who are near and dear to one another. It is relevant, therefore, to go back to the beginning of the Bible in order to examine how violence emerges within the context of a fraternal relationship. This is what Béatrice Bizot, a professor

of the Bible at the Catholic University of Paris, tries to do in her book which results from the dissertation she defended at the same university.

Using Genesis 4 as referent text, Bizot formulates the question of her research as follows: why did the biblical authors choose fraternity as a framework to talk about violence for the first time? (p. 18)

Before giving her own opinion, Bizot shows her dissatisfaction with what was said by other biblical scholars (p. 159-160). On the one hand, Bizot does not think that Gn 4 serves as an explanation or a justification of the violence that took place in so many families in the first book of the Bible. Thus, the etiological function of the text is rejected. On the other hand, Bizot does not agree with the idea of looking at Gn 4 as a starting point of several fraternal conflicts which progressively end up with a possible reconciliation. According to our author, Cain and Abel are introduced as brothers in the story but their fraternal relationship is not the main focus. Each of them presents himself in an individual manner to God who looks at the offering of one and then of the other without paying attention to their relationship. Following Paul Ricœur, Bizot considers fraternity not as a given of nature, but as an ethical project (p. 162-163). In other words, it is not enough to be born of the same parents to be brothers and sisters of one another. One needs to learn how to become a brother or a sister. In this sense, it is important to observe the role of God's intervention in this story. In fact, fraternity is not placed under the authority of human parents, but that of God. His constant presence helps Cain know how to become a brother even at the moment when his brother is no longer there. It is God who establishes Cain as a brother, namely as the guardian of his deceased brother. Thus, God allows Cain to discover himself as a brother, not simply in a biological sense, but in an ethical one: to be a brother of someone is to be responsible of him or her.

And violence in all this? For Bizot, violence is not caused by the difficulties related to the fraternal relationship since this relationship is not described as such at the moment of crisis (p. 163). The biblical authors do not place the beginning of violence in the context of a fraternal relationship. Of course, the conflict happens to two biological brothers, but this conflict is not rooted in their relationship as brothers. Violence emerges therefore outside fraternity. In any event, human beings are helpless in the face of violence which is related to an obscure power (*roves* [croucher], cf. Gn 4:8), present under an animal form, over which neither God nor human beings have a complete control (p. 200).

But how does violence emerge in the human life? Relying on the Masoretic text, Bizot wonders about the absence of the complement after the verb אָמַר (to say) in Gn 4:8. Indeed, the Hebrew text does not tell us about what Cain said to Abel (the expression "Let us go out" or "Let us go out in the field" was added by translators). The fact that Cain does not say anything to his brother speaks volumes about his inner aggressiveness. Instead of expressing himself to his brother, Cain lets his aggressiveness speak. Thus, his anger overrides his words. Moreover, his anger goes to the wrong person: toward Abel instead of to God the one who turns away from him and his offering (p. 60-65). And so, when human beings are not able to express themselves in words, they tend to be violent in actions. The same happens when they do not listen to God's commands and thus isolate themselves in an aggressive manner. It is in the absence of God that a system of law was established. Thus, the

laws become a necessary answer to the challenge of violence in a society where God is considered to be absent (p. 196).

Is God responsible for violence since he looks with favor on Abel and his offering, but not on Cain and his suffering? For Bizot, it is not the offering that catches God's attention, but man. God does not look at the offering and then at man, but the other way around. His reaction has nothing to do with the offering or its quality. It is God's way to test man in his relationship with the other and thus to help him to be open to otherness. Indeed, until the moment when Cain and Abel present their offering to God, they ignore one another. Thus, God's turning away from Cain and his offering allows him to recognize the existence of another person: Abel.

Bizot makes a connection between Gn 2 and Gn 4. In Gn 2:16-17, God said to Adam, "You are free to eat of all the trees in the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat; for, the day you eat of that, you are doomed to die." (JB) From what God said, we notice that he did not foresee the possibility of not eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. What happens if Adam does not eat the fruit? By not mentioning the other alternative, God seems to tell man that his freedom is not unlimited. He seems also to push man to assume his freedom by transgressing the divine command. The same idea is expressed in Gn 4 when God turns away from Cain and his offering. By doing so, God shows him a way of handling freedom and leads him to accept limitations. Indeed, Cain is not the center of the whole universe. He is only one creature among others. Besides him, there is another individual in the person of Abel. It is upon this fundamental conviction that a fraternity worthy of the name can be built.

Does God really punish Cain when he kills his brother? For Bizot, the divine character is mentioned, but does not express itself in "I." Indeed, God does not say to Cain directly, "I curse you, I declare the ground unproductive, I banish you..." On the contrary, when Cain mentions a possible vengeance, God insures him of his own protection. With this promise, God will constantly accompany human beings in their confrontation with violence. And so, the idea of a retributive God comes from Cain who becomes fearful after killing his brother. As for the sanctions expressed in Gn 4:10-12, they seem to be the automatic consequences of Cain's action: the ground opened its mouth to receive Abel's blood, did not yield up its strength to Cain and became unproductive. Thus, the ground, almost personalized in the story, is considered to be the author of the sanctions that result directly from Cain's action.

Through a careful analysis, Bizot offers a solid knowledge of Gn 4. Focusing on the link between fraternity and violence, she considers Gn 4 as a bridge between a perfect world where God and human beings live in harmony and a wounded world where God accompanies human beings in their confrontation with violence. Far from being a retributive God, he intervenes in history to remind human beings of the automatic consequences of their evil actions and at the same time to offer his fatherly protection even to the wrongdoers.

Bizot's book certainly contributes to the discussion on the link between fraternity and violence in our world where fratricide still takes place. It is, however, marked by some deficiencies. At the methodological level, for example, the literary analysis chosen by Bizot could have been developed in a more substantial way. Indeed, the author relies heavily on historical criticism which is less relevant when thematic issues

are tackled. A narrative approach might have been more helpful to talk about, for example, the connection between the violence committed by Cain and the violence alluded to by Lamech. As for the content, the present book might have been more persuasive if its author had really engaged in dialogue with other biblical scholars. *Abel ou la traversée de l'Éden* by Marie Balmory might have been helpful for the discussion on the different functions of offering (p. 46-51) and on the nature of a fault committed or to be committed (p. 52). And *Pas seulement de pain... Violence et alliance dans la Bible* by André Wénin could have been illuminating for the connection between fraternity and violence. Those two books, though listed in the bibliography, were not really taken into consideration in the arguments that Bizot puts forward. Despite these insufficiencies, the book sets some solid markers for the study of Gn 4 and its functions in the Pentateuch as well as the topic of fraternity and violence. It could be read as an appetizer before the main course of any exegetic study on Gn 4!

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Jean-Pierre LÉMONON, **Le Christ de Paul. Paul a-t-il cru en la divinité de Jésus?**

(Paul apôtre, 8). Montréal-Paris, Médiaspaul, 2022, 13 × 20 cm, 177 p., ISBN 978-2-27122-1615-3.

Certains présupposés sur lesquels repose l'ouvrage et certaines limites sont présentés en introduction : seules les sept lettres généralement reconnues comme authentiquement pauliniennes sont considérées dans la présente monographie (1 Th, 1-2 Co, Ga, Ph, Rm, Phm), de sorte que certaines épîtres de la tradition paulinienne, généralement reconnues pour contenir une « haute christologie », comme Colossiens, sont exclues. Ce livre est destiné à des lecteurs déjà familiers avec les lettres de Paul et il ne contient pas les éléments habituellement présents dans la littérature spécialisée. Certes, le but est de répondre à la question posée en sous-titre de l'ouvrage, relative à la croyance de Paul en la divinité du Christ, mais, pour ce faire, un pas de recul est réalisé afin d'enchâsser cette question dans une vision plus large de la christologie paulinienne. Ainsi, ce n'est qu'à l'avant-dernier chapitre qu'une réponse sera apportée à la question.

Le premier chapitre, intitulé « La révélation du Fils de Dieu : fondement de la christologie paulinienne », est assez bref (8 p.). Lémonon survole les principaux textes où Paul fait état de ses lettres de noblesse juives ou de sa disposition antagoniste face à l'Église naissante avant sa rencontre du Christ et comment celle-ci a transformé son parcours et sa foi (Ga 1,11-17; Ph 3,5-9; 1 Co 15,8-10). L'incapacité d'accepter un Messie crucifié et humilié explique la posture d'abord violente de Paul face aux partisans de Jésus. En Ga 3,10-14, Paul rend compte de sa nouvelle compréhension du Christ : la croix, qui était signe de malédiction, est en fait une bénédiction pour toutes les nations, puisque Christ libère ainsi les humains des impératifs de la loi.

L'humanité de Jésus représente le thème du deuxième chapitre. Dans les lettres de Paul, rares sont les références aux paroles ou aux actions de Jésus dans sa condition