

EVALUATING THE LEGACY OF
ROBERT W. FUNK

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EVALUATING THE LEGACY OF ROBERT W. FUNK

Reforming the Scholarly Model

Edited by

Andrew D. Scrimgeour

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For

Schubert Miles Ogden
who first introduced me to the promise and perils
of the quest for the historical Jesus

and

David Sten Herrstrom
my life-long mentor in how to be prophet,
priest, and poet with the pen

Yeats said it best:

*Think where [our] glory most begins and ends,
And say my glory was I had such friends.*

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If the unexamined life is not worth living, the unexamined past is not worth possessing; it bears fruit only by being held continuously up to the light, and is as changeable and as full of surprises, pleasant and unpleasant, as the future.

—Brendan Gill

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Foreword

Kent Harold Richards

Legacies reach backward and forward. They are a continuum of the fundamental values that we gain from our past and which must reach ahead into the future.

—Modified words of Paul Tsongas, 1941–1997

The assessments of several colleagues in this volume, as well as some of Bob Funk's own words open the window to Bob's legacy as a scholar and public figure. Much is made of the fact that there are few twentieth or twenty-first century names from biblical scholarship who are even whispered in public circles and the ubiquitous, growing impact of digital media. I think that one of Bob's legacies is that he was regarded both to have impacted positively the little world of biblical scholarship and the bigger world of public conversation.

Sending "white smoke" up as though electing a pope at the Vatican, Bob metaphorically sent smoke up with regard to the authenticity of what words in the New Testament really came from Jesus and what were only latter attributed to Jesus. He was praised for this balloting before casting the votes and after serious debates of the pros and cons. He was also chided for having done it. Legacies have disciples and detractors.

Whichever camp the reader of this volume finds themselves encamped might do well to take a hint from a minor Shakespeare character, Mariana, in *All's Well That Ends Well* (act 3, scene 5) when she says, "no legacy is so rich as honesty." These words were probably meant as a pun when spoken in the play.

However, one element of Bob's legacy, and in whatever of his many endeavors as scholar or public figure you wish to name, he strove for honesty with respect to the issue. You could disagree with him and even

be shouted at. He could tell you that you were dead wrong. He could be angry with you.

Nevertheless, I would urge the readers of this small collection of Bob's legacy to hear the value of honesty. We all will have learned and confirmed an enormous value that at this particular moment in American history, if not in all moments and whatever the subject, is a foundational value. Thanks, Bob!

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Preface

Andrew D. Scrimgeour

Shortly before the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2005 (New Orleans), it was learned that Robert W. Funk had died. Several of his colleagues quickly put together a program to honor him there. Kent Harold Richards, then Executive Director of the Society of Biblical Literature, suggested that a second session should be planned for a future year, when scholars would have had time to reflect more fully on Funk's contributions to the Society of Biblical Literature and biblical studies. With that encouragement, a program for 2007 in San Diego was organized. Under the title "Evaluating the Legacy of Robert W. Funk," six scholars reflected on the major areas of Funk's scholarship and academic leadership:

Greek Grammar: Lane C. McGaughy

Hermeneutics: James M. Robinson

Parables: Bernard Brandon Scott

Historical Jesus: John Dominic Crossan

The Jesus Seminar: Harold W. Attridge

The Academy and Publications: James Wiggins

Those papers are the heart of this volume.

Accompanying each essay are two to four writings by Funk that are illustrative of his contributions to that topic. Reflecting the breadth of his corpus, they range from scholarly articles to administrative reports and even include a fable. While most of these writings are intended for a scholarly audience, some of them were written for the general public and illustrate his insistence that scholars write clearly and without jargon and thereby contribute to the religious literacy of their communities. Included are several pieces that are being published for the first time. A final section includes two interviews with Funk and a letter that he wrote to the graduate students in one of his seminars.

Readers will no doubt observe that all the voices evaluating Funk's legacy in the 2007 session were male and that, as a result, the conference papers reproduced here reflect the same gender imbalance. We regret this greatly and wish that the session and, consequently, this volume offered a greater diversity of presenters and viewpoints.

Apart from correcting typographical errors and conforming the varied pieces to a consistent style, we have left the Funk essays as they were originally written, including the use of now-discouraged terms such as *man/men* for *human/humanity* and *Oriental* to refer to someone from the Near East.

Funk once wrote, "I write principally to find out what I think, or aspire to think, and so am my own first reader.... I am not infrequently amazed and often amused at what I write."¹ I suspect Bob would be both amazed and amused by the words—his own and those of his colleagues—assembled in this volume.

1. Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 1996), 14.

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Jim Kasper and Lucy Hansen for covering the costs of the media companies that taped the sessions honoring Robert Funk at the 2005 (New Orleans) and 2007 (San Diego) Annual Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature as well as other project expenses.

Kent Harold Richards for ensuring that the proposed Robert Funk programs for the Annual Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2005 and 2007 became a reality.

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Many archivists and librarians for their generous assistance:

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- ♦ Brandon C. Wason, Curator of Archives and Manuscripts, and Debra A. Madera, Special Collections Reference Assistant, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.
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Part 2: Greek Grammar

- ♦ "The Narrative Parables: The Birth of a Language Tradition." Pages 43–58 in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honor of Nils Alstrup Dahl*. Edited by Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977. Used by permission of Universitetsforlaget.
- ♦ "Biblical Languages in the Professional School Curriculum." Vanderbilt Divinity School, 1968. Archives, Westar Institute, Drew University Library.

Part 3: Hermeneutics

- ♦ "The Hermeneutical Problem and Historical Criticism." Pages 164–97 in *The New Hermeneutic*. Edited by James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.
- ♦ "Language, Hermeneutic, and the Vocation of the Word." Pages 1–18 in *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

Part 4: Parables

- ♦ “The Old Testament in Parable: A Study of Luke 10:25–37.” *Encounter* 26 (1965): 251–67. Used by permission of Christian Theological Seminary.
- ♦ “Beyond Criticism in Quest of Literacy: The Parable of the Leaven.” *Int* 25 (1971): 149–70. Used by permission of Sage Publications.
- ♦ “Theoretical Frame of Parables.” Email to Westar scholars, 6 November 2004. Archives, Westar Institute, Drew University Library.

Part 5: Historical Jesus

- ♦ “The Looking-Glass Tree Is for the Birds: Ezekiel 17:22–24; Mark 4:30–32.” *Int* 27 (1973): 3–9. Used by permission of Sage Publications.
- ♦ Introduction to *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. New York: Scribner, 1993. Pages 1–6. Used by permission of Scribner.

Part 6: The Jesus Seminar

- ♦ “The Issue of Jesus.” *Forum* 1.1 (1985): 7–12. Used by permission of Polebridge Press.
- ♦ “On Distinguishing Historical from Fictive Narrative.” *Forum* 9.3–4 (1993): 179–216. Used by permission of Polebridge Press.
- ♦ “The Jesus Seminar and the Quest.” Pages 130–39 in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*. Edited by Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001. Used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Part 7: The Academy and Publications

- ♦ “Society of Biblical Literature—Report of the Executive Secretary, 1968–1973.” *Bulletin of the Council of the Study of Religion* 4.4 (1973): 8–28. Used by permission of Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- ♦ “The Learned Society as Publisher and the University Press.” *Bulletin of the Council of the Study of Religion* 4.3 (1973): 3–13. Used by permission of Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- ♦ “Religious Studies as Witches Brew.” 1981. Westar Institute Archives, Special Collections, Drew University Library.
- ♦ “Legends of the School of Scribes or The Seventy Pens of Power.” Centennial Banquet, Society of Biblical Literature, Dallas, Texas, November 8, 1980. Westar Institute Archives, Special Collections, Drew University Library.

Part 8: A Letter and Interviews

- ♦ Letter to Graduate Seminar students, Graduate Department of Religion, Vanderbilt University, Spring 1969. Westar Institute Archives, Special Collections, Drew University Library.
- ♦ “A Conversation with Robert Funk about the Society of Biblical Literature.” Edited transcription of a taped interview. Ernest W. Saunders, March 25, 1979. Society of Biblical Literature Archives, Pitts Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.
- ♦ Treloar, Richard. “Transcript of a Conversation with Robert Funk during His Visit to Melbourne.” 6 July 2000. *Colloq* 32.2 (2000): 151–67. Used by permission of *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review*.

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- ♦ “Chronology.” *The Fourth R* 19.2 (2006): 2. Used by permission of Westar Institute.
- ♦ “Publications of Robert W. Funk.” *The Fourth R* 19.2 (2006): 21–23. Used by permission of Westar Institute.

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Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
ASNU	Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAG	Bauer, Walter, William F Arndt, and Felix Wilbur Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BDR	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Friedrich Rehkopf. <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> . 16th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984.
Ber.	Berakhot
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>ChrCent</i>	<i>The Christian Century</i>
<i>Colloq</i>	<i>Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review</i>
ConBNT	Coniectanea Neotestamentica
<i>DrewG</i>	<i>The Drew Gateway</i>
<i>EvK</i>	<i>Evangelische Kommentare</i>
<i>FFF</i>	<i>Foundations and Facets Forum</i>
fr	frame of reference
FR	Field of Reference
IDB	Buttrick, George A. <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 4 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1962.
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>

<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBR	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JThC	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
NEB	New English Bible
RGG	Betz, Hans Dieter, et al., eds. <i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . 3rd ed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1956–1957.
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SEÅ	<i>Svensk exegetisk arsbok</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
Shabb.	Shabbat
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SymBU	Symbolae Biblicae Upsalienses
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
ThLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TG	transformational-generative
ThTo	<i>Theology Today</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>