

looking for that which is affirming to women); hermeneutics of resistance (aiming to read 'against the grain' of the text).

The main body of the thesis engages with representatives of three schools of interpretation. Phyllis Trible represents the literary approach. Abraham offers a scrupulously thorough and fair critique of Trible's reading of Genesis, exposing difficulties with a number of her exegetical conclusions.

Carol Meyers' work is discussed as representative of Social-Scientific criticism. Of all the theologians discussed, she goes furthest in acquitting Eve of any sin. Indeed, she manages to eliminate sin from Genesis 1-3 altogether. Unsurprisingly, she rejects the Biblical text as an authoritative source, preferring to use archaeological, anthropological and demographic data to reconstruct the setting for the creation narrative. On that basis, she finds a balance of power between male and female in Genesis, and elsewhere in the Old Testament era. Abraham demonstrates that her reasoning is inadequate, circular, anachronistic, and based on westernised assumptions (pp.166-168).

Finally, he discusses the work of Phyllis Bird, placing her work in the Historical-Critical tradition. As with the others, he gives a detailed overview of her interpretation of Genesis 1-3, and then offers a critique, outlining exegetical, hermeneutical, theological and practical difficulties. There also the fundamental logical difficulty. Bird, along with other feminist scholars, does not think authority resides within the text. Yet she still wants to find 'a norm' within the text. How can these two be reconciled?

The strength of this monograph is that Abraham succeeds in showing the flaws of Trible's, Meyers' and Bird's arguments using their own presuppositions. Along with the theologian Mieke Bal, they refuse to ascribe 'authority' to the Biblical text, yet they make use of it when it supports a feminist view point: there is an implicit tension here (p.136). The author documents the internal inconsistencies in their work, as well as demonstrating where they argue against each other. Along the way, there is much useful and interesting comment on other feminist theologians.

In his conclusion, Abraham includes some reflections on the cultural situation in India. He argues that the Hindu tradition leads to the subjugation of women, and examples are given. By way of contrast, in that context, Christianity is seen to elevate women. Moreover, within the Western context, Abraham observes that in their preoccupation with 'equality', feminist theologians have actually failed to engage with some of the real life challenges to women posed by the breakdown of the 'traditional' family.

Does this thesis succeed? On a descriptive level, yes. It is a useful analysis of the writing of Trible, Meyers, Bird, and others. It may be of help to students of Genesis 1-3 as well as those studying feminist theology. As befits a PhD thesis, the work is academically neutral and makes

every effort to be sympathetic and fair to non-evangelical scholars. Disappointingly, in a work which forms part of a series which claims to offer 'the best of scholarship by evangelical Christians' (v), Abraham fails to question the fundamental premise of feminist theology (that 'patriarchy' per se is toxic). He takes that as a given, arguing that the patriarchy of Scripture is descriptive not normative. He raises legitimate questions (cautiously) in the conclusion, but one would have hoped that a work in this series would be willing to be more courageous in exposing the massive implications of placing (female) experience above the authority of Scripture.

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*God in the Dock:
Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament
(JSOT Suppl. 357)
Carleen Mandolfo*

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SUMMARY

Introducing a dialogic reading of lament psalms, Mandolfo offers a way of reading them that goes beyond the normal form-critical identification of staple components. Her attention to the shift in voice in the lament psalms can only be welcome. She makes fruitful use of Brueggemann's categories of 'testimony' and 'countertestimony', as well as of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. Her interpretation of the tension between the voices mainly in terms of the underlying sociological realities appears, however, to be unsatisfactory and does not do justice to the deeper issues of life.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Indem sie eine dialogische Leseweise der Klagepsalmen einführt, bietet Mandolfo einen Weg an, diese Psalmen jenseits der normalen formkritischen Identifikation der Bestandteile zu lesen. Ihre Aufmerksamkeit gegenüber dem Stimmenwechsel in den Klagepsalmen kann nur willkommen heißen werden. Brueggemanns Kategorien „Zeugnis“ und „Gegenzeugnis“ sowie Bakhtins Konzept des Dialogismus werden fruchtbar genutzt. Ihre Interpretation der Spannung zwischen den Stimmen als hauptsächlich auf die hintergründigen soziologischen Realitäten zurückgehend scheint jedoch unbefriedigend und wird den tiefer liegenden Lebensaspekten nicht gerecht.

RÉSUMÉ

Pour aborder les psaumes, Carleen Mandolfo va au-delà de la critique des formes qui cherche à repérer les composantes de base des textes et analyse les dialogues dans les psaumes de lamentations. Sa démarche visant à repérer les changements de locuteurs dans ces textes est heureuse. Elle utilise de manière fructueuse les catégories de « témoignage » et de « contre témoignage » élaborées par Brueggemann, ainsi que la notion de dialogue énoncée

par Bakhtin. Cependant, elle se contente d'interpréter la tension entre les locuteurs en fonction de réalités sociologiques sous-jacentes, ce qui paraît insatisfaisant et ne rend pas compte des problèmes plus fondamentaux de l'existence humaine.

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In this important study, Mandolfo proposes a dialogic reading of the shift of voice which occurs in many lament psalms.

In her review of various scholars, she distinguishes between approaches that understand the Psalms either as prayer (human words to God) or as revelation (words of God to humans). Form-critical or cult-functional criticisms are akin to the former approach, while literary and canonical criticisms are similar to the latter. The former investigate the circumstances in which these prayers were used, while the latter examine the final form of the Psalms, seeing them as literature that instruct the faithful ones in God's ways. Both are interested in dialogue between man and God (vertical movement). Mandolfo's interest concerns the movement between human and human (horizontal). The little attention that has been given to didactic interjections, she concludes, is because they are not staple components of established genres. She discusses three ways in which this multi-voicing has been treated: as oracular interjections, as reflections of wisdom themes and language, and as liturgical elements. For her, all of these interpretations appear to be unsatisfactory.

Her exegetical chapter deals with the lament Psalms 4, 7, 9, 12, 25, 27, 28, 31, 55, 102, and 130, and the two thanksgiving Psalms 30 and 32. For the most part, her discussion is technical. Her main contention is that a dialogic reading causes less problems to understand the shift in mood than a monologic reading that resorts to understand this shift either as a switch into pedagogical role or a sudden expression of confidence (form-critical studies).

I found her theological discussion most rewarding. Based on her exegesis, she introduces the distinction between interjections in indicative and imperative mood. The former can most often be understood as a direct answer to the supplicant's request. In all of them a dialogic relationship is observable. The imperative instructions provide hints about a possible audience.

Her theological analysis leads her to the unsurprising result that the dialogic lament psalms present a world view in which YHWH is depicted as king and judge over the universe. This basic assumption lies at the heart of both discourses, that of the supplicant and of the didactic voice. However they attest to different experiences of YHWH, which can be described with the categories of 'testimony' and 'countertestimony'. The two terms are important in W. Brueggemann's dialogical model. Testimony reflects the official doctrine, associated with the ruling class. Dialogic psalms allow for the incorporation of a 'countertestimony'. The official world view, repre-

sented by the didactic voice, is challenged through the lamenting voice.

The didactic voice is often used to describe YHWH, but also to focus on the pious or wicked, which makes this voice akin to wisdom psalms. Descriptions of Yahweh are more often verbal, than nominal, which appear to be abstractions of the former. The laments also feature negative actions of God, but they never go so far to describe YHWH negatively in abstract terms.

Her fifth chapter investigates the ideological and social setting of the different voices. She discusses briefly the connection of the psalms to the cult. Here she argues that M. Bakhtin's concept of dialogism can also be applied to poetry, in particular to some lament psalms. One voice appears to be incorporated into the discourse of an-other, unmarked but with full integration. The two voices represent separate ideological standpoints that may also display a power differential. Representations in the first or second person makes the supplicant's speech more personal, subjective. The didactic voice is expressed in the third person and thus appears more objective and authoritative. "...dialogic lament psalms deserve credit for allowing the individual to speak her experience in her own voice." (p. 174)

Mandolfo discusses three reading strategies. Multi-voiced lament psalms can be read either as one utterance made up of two distinct voices, or as the supplicant's voice included in and filtered by the official point of view, or as the 'official' position altered and challenged by the voice expressing the supplicant's experience. Only the third possibility takes into account the power differential and at the same time still understands the lament as essentially prayer.

As she has argued before, there is no need for actual speakers. Nevertheless, in her final chapter, she briefly reflects an actual cultic setting. Although the possibility of an involvement of a priest in an actual dialogue remains, it cannot be said with certainty and thus can only serve as heuristic tool.

In my opinion, Mandolfo puts too strong an emphasis on the socio-ideological tensions seen behind the text, which carries the danger of confusing theological with sociological realities. I missed a discussion of spiritual realities, for example in terms of tension between the voice of experience versus that of faith. However, her sociological categories may be used as heuristic tools to come to a deeper understanding of the spiritual realities expressed in the text (without confusing the two), which makes her study all the more worth reading.

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