

the doctrine that has historically sought to articulate this relationship: the doctrine of Providence.

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*Hear, O Lord:
A Spirituality of the Psalms*

David G. Firth

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SUMMARY

In order to understand how the psalms apply to the lives of God's people, one should always remember that they convey particular spirituality. This review highlights the method employed in Firth's book as he examines this spirituality. Adopting Brueggemann's methodology as set forth in *The Message of the Psalms*, Firth investigates how the psalms aid the believer in interpreting life in a fallen world. By additionally emphasising the eschatological nature of the Psalter, he furthers his purpose in the book, which is to help other believers interpret, apply and pray the psalms for themselves.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Will man verstehen, wie die Psalmen auf das Leben des Gottesvolks anzuwenden sind, sollte man sich immer daran erinnern, dass sie eine besondere Spiritualität vermitteln. Diese Rezension widmet sich besonders der Methode, die Firth in seiner Untersuchung dieser Spiritualität anwendet. Unter Benutzung der Methode Brueggemanns aus *The Message of the Psalms* untersucht Firth, wie die Psalmen den Gläubigen anleiten, das Leben in einer gefallen Welt zu interpretieren. Durch die zusätzliche Betonung des eschatologischen Wesens des Psalters unterstützt er die Absicht seines Buches, die darin besteht, anderen Gläubigen zu helfen, die Psalmen selbst zu interpretieren, auf sich anzuwenden und zu beten.

RÉSUMÉ

Pour comprendre comment les Psaumes s'appliquent à la vie du peuple de Dieu, il faut se souvenir qu'ils véhiculent une spiritualité particulière. Cette recension s'intéresse à la méthode employée par Firth pour étudier cette spiritualité. Adoptant la méthodologie exposée par Brueggemann dans son commentaire sur les Psaumes, Firth montre comment les Psaumes aident le croyant à comprendre la vie dans un monde déchu. En soulignant en outre la nature eschatologique du psautier, il aide encore le croyant à interpréter les Psaumes, à se les approprier et à les prier pour lui-même.

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While there are various approaches in psalms studies that add insight to our reading and understanding of the Psalter as religious literature, it must always be remembered that this collection of Hebrew poetry was intended to convey a spiritual message about living as God's people.

The wide range of prayers within the Psalter (intentionally) reflects the holistic manner of life for the faithful, and consequently, conveys a coherent spiritual perspective that should not be overlooked in the overall study of the psalms. On this note, in *Hear, O Lord: A Spirituality of the Psalms*, David G. Firth examines this spirituality and illustrates how it is significant for the modern day Christian.

To do this, Firth adopts the general approach offered by Brueggemann in *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) of categorising of psalms in three groups: psalms of orientation, disorientation and new orientation. Using this grid, Firth examines how the psalms paint an understanding of the ordered world, disordered world and reordered world. Simply put, psalms of an ordered world tell us that God has made a basic order for life and creation. They lead us to organise our lives in accordance to God's ways, as well as trust and praise him in view of his character. Psalms of a disordered world, however, remind us of the reality in which we live. Though there is general order, the presence of sin and evil has brought about the presence of disorder, and these psalms help us to grasp the reality of pain in this life. Subsequently, psalms of a reordered world lead us from order and disorder to a place of restoration and deliverance. In these ways, the psalms as a whole bring us through the experience of faith as we discover the reality of God's reign over life in this fallen world.

While Firth employs much of Brueggemann's method, he notes that 'his anti-royalist tendencies have tended to see him diminishing the role of the so-called "Royal Psalms", those explicitly associated with the king. As a result, the theme of the reign of God, and the tension with which this exists alongside our human experience and the eschatological expectations of the Psalter, is underplayed' (11). Thus, in contrast to Brueggemann, Firth emphasises the importance of seeing the 'eschatological edge to the final message of the Psalter' (125). He does so by examining the 'hope beyond order' that the Psalter conveys and thereby shows that the psalms anticipate something yet to come, which is particularly applicable for the believer.

Overall, this book achieves the purpose for which it was written. It is both profitable for understanding the spirituality of the Psalter, and practical for considering how New Testament believers in the twenty-first century can (and should) pray these ancient prayers in their own life-experience. For anyone seeking to better understand and apply the psalms in their own spiritual pilgrimage, Firth's work will prove helpful.

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