

A common theme in these essays (except perhaps the last) is the wide range of non-fundamentalist ways forward in each tradition. Thus the word-play of the title: one can liberate these texts from their captivity to the fundamentalist, and restore a glorious vision of the healing power of God/faith/tradition (depending on the essayist), thus revealing the text as newly liberating. I would like to believe it, and indeed largely agree with much of the (somewhat general) sentiment expressed here. But the gatecrasher to the party is Dan Cohn-Sherbok, who reviews with bracing clarity the fact that the Bible (or in his case, Jewish scripture) simply doesn't match up to such a vision consistently, and by way of a disarmingly frank reading of Christian Zionism as well as some blunt texts from Joshua, he concludes that the only way forward in religious debate (or at least in his chosen case study of the occupation of the land of Israel) is to 'take leave of the Bible' and embrace instead 'good will, compassion and common sense.' Which rather indicates that the discussion this book calls for has not yet begun, since none of the other contributors (in the limited space allotted to them, obviously) seems to feel the force of this problematic side to scripture.

But here the book by Boer comes marching centre stage and announces that the project of 'rescuing' the Bible from its own darker side and its captivity to right-wing political thought is exactly what is called for by what he describes as the 'worldly left', an alliance of good old liberal secularism and the minority 'religious left'. Boer's book faces head on the challenge of finding a liberating text in the midst of so much that tends to the reactionary, whether in intent or in its actual reception through the centuries. The book is written with typical Australian energy and eschews close referencing of its targets. Those solemnly sitting in public lectures in York may find analyses such as 'You simply have to be kidding if you think [the Synagogue and the Church] can on their own become prophetic bodies' slightly blunt, and evaluations such as 'ridiculous' and (the admittedly critiqued) 'Omigod isn't this terrible!' won't perhaps win him a sympathetic hearing.

Nevertheless, there is an important focus here on how the Bible can be read with an appropriate theological suspicion which will seek to discern how it can become life-giving while not ignoring its oppressive potential. There is also a striking and largely successful critique of secularism when it is confused with atheism. And there is much to appreciate in Boer's call for a recovery of the tradition of revolutionary readings of the Bible (which is almost exactly in line with the recent book by Rowland and Roberts, *The Bible for Sinners*), arguing that given the diversity of readings enabled by the polyvalent canon, one simply has to take a stand and mine the Bible for its own political myth of liberation, the condemnation of oppression, and the celebration of revolutionary chaos.

Boer is Marxist, and cheerfully admits up front that one may find echoes of *The Communist Manifesto* in this

book. How might one evaluate it? Well, it is I think a coherent political position (and this is basically an exercise in conceptualising a biblical politics after all), and one may have some sympathy with his critique of the religious right. His use of Ernst Bloch to describe the Bible as the 'bad conscience' of the Church is quite illuminating, and he has little difficulty running rings around various ways the politically conservative appeal to scripture, drawing examples from Australian public discourse as well as creation science in the USA (and Christian Zionism, again). Nevertheless, this political coherence does not of course map onto the contours of the biblical conception(s) of how life is to be lived. Boer somewhat takes this in his stride (hermeneutically this is a kind of *sachkritik* approach judging the text by its political vision), but then it is interesting to find him critiquing some right-wing polemic on the grounds of misappropriating the text. His view of the canon as the practice of political suppression of discordant voices is also problematic, not just because it is too simplistic to be of use historically, but also because if it were true it would surely undermine his insistence on the irreducible polyvalence of the biblical text in the first place.

In the end, then, Boer breaks out of the civilised discussion of the Kim/Draper volume to offer a prophetic rallying cry, and for my money is more alert to the difficulties of the liberating project envisioned by the essayists than they are (Cohn-Sherbok excepted), but his own view of the Bible as resource for the new world left will not satisfy those who would like to see the Bible taken on its own terms. The right discussion is being had in these two books, but there is a long way to go.

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The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah

Walter Brueggemann

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SUMMARY

In this volume the author discusses the main theological themes of the book of Jeremiah and asserts that the resounding theological note in the book is the sovereignty of God. The book's theology of restoration is quite different from that of Deuteronomy since the return of the nation is not dependent upon Israel's repentance, but is exclusively grounded in divine forgiveness. The place and function of the book of Jeremiah within the Old Testament canon is also considered, and Brueggemann concludes that it held a defining position in emerging Judaism.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Autor diskutiert in diesem Band die theologischen Hauptthemen des Jeremiabuches und bekräftigt, dass die Souveränität Gottes die weithin klingende theologische

Note des Buches bildet. Die Restaurationstheologie des Buches unterscheidet sich klar von derjenigen des Deuteronomiums, da die Rückkehr der Nation nicht von Israels Umkehr abhängt, sondern ausschließlich in der göttlichen Vergebung wurzelt. Der Ort und die Funktion des Jeremiabuches innerhalb des alttestamentlichen Kanons werden ebenfalls betrachtet, und Brueggemann schließt, dass das Buch eine wichtige Rolle im entstehenden Judentum spielte.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet ouvrage, l'auteur traite des thèmes théologiques principaux du livre de Jérémie et affirme que la souveraineté divine y est la note théologique dominante. Sa théologie de la restauration est bien différente de celle du Deutéronome dans la mesure où le retour de la nation ne dépend pas de la repentance d'Israël mais découle exclusivement du pardon divin. Brueggemann se penche sur la question de la fonction du livre de Jérémie dans le canon de l'Ancien Testament et conclut qu'il a joué un rôle déterminant dans l'émergence du judaïsme.

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Walter Brueggemann has written prolifically on the book of Jeremiah and may very well be the most influential Jeremiah interpreter of our day from North America. In this little book, he seeks to extract the theology which has been woven into the complex book we know as Jeremiah.

The book consists of four chapters. In chapter one Brueggemann synthesizes the complexities which are involved in interpreting this canonical book. Here he quickly sweeps over older approaches to the book of Jeremiah – whose primary focus was to recover the “authentic” material of the prophet – and shows how these have since gone out of fashion. He proposes that “a move from ‘source’ to ‘voice’ permits us to understand the variety and tension in the book as a part of its organic coherence, albeit a quite complex coherence” (p. 5). He then goes on to discuss some of the streams of tradition in which the book of Jeremiah is rooted, namely the Sinai Pericope, Hosea, and Deuteronomy. Next, Brueggemann outlines in broad strokes the portrait of the prophet Jeremiah as it is painted in the book. Though he does not go as far as Robert Carroll, who says that any access to the historical prophet has been hopelessly lost in the ideological construct of later Deuteronomists, Brueggemann does not believe that the book offers a “reportage” of the person of Jeremiah. The prophetic persona, rather, has undergone later development in the hands of Deuteronomic traditionalists. However, this latter portrayal is not a distortion of the historical prophet because Brueggemann asserts that Jeremiah himself stood firmly in the Deuteronomic tradition. Finally, Brueggemann shows how the material in the book is structured according to the bi-partite theme of *judgment* and *hope*. In this sense, Jeremiah’s prophetic call (Jer 1:10) sets up the reading strategy for the book.

At the heart of the prophetic claim is the conviction that God will judge his rebellious nation, but cannot – and will not – abandon his people (p. 38). In sum, although the book of Jeremiah is riddled with tension, Brueggemann believes that these “competing voices” reflect an interpretive struggle concerning the *continuity* of Israel’s life with Yhwh and the *discontinuity* of Israel’s life which is caused by severe judgment (p. 41).

The meat of the book is found in chapter two – “The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah.” According to Brueggemann, the resounding theological note of the book of Jeremiah is the sovereignty of God. As the canonical book makes clear, Yahweh is the decisive agent in Jerusalem; he is the punisher of his nation. Brueggemann asserts that everything which unfolds in Jeremiah is concerned with fleshing out the claim that Yahweh is powerful and gracious, will not be mocked, and wills relationships, but wholly on his own terms (p. 56). He suggests that Yahweh’s sovereignty is displayed in three principle arenas. The first – Yahweh’s sovereignty through prophecy – is evident already in Jeremiah’s prophetic call. The placement of this call at the outset of the book is a purposeful move designed to give authority to the entire book. This caption makes it clear that all of the material in Jeremiah constitutes “the words of Jeremiah” (1:1). Thus, from the call narrative we are to conclude that the work of the prophet Jeremiah is to be the means whereby Yahweh punishes and saves Jerusalem (p. 61). Yahweh’s sovereignty is also displayed through judgment. Since Yahweh has been wronged by his people, his judgment is fully in the right. Brueggemann examines six cases of poetic rhetoric which are used by the prophet to support this claim. For example, Yahweh is depicted a husband who has been affronted by his wife (particularly in Jer 2-4). Does not such a scorned spouse have every right to judge his errant marriage partner (i.e. his nation)? Another image which is used is that of Yahweh as a powerful healer who does not heal his ill-stricken nation because they have gone so far away from him that they are beyond recovery. The purpose of these metaphors is to put the blame for the nation’s demise squarely on the shoulders of the rebellious nation. In the third and final section of chapter 2, Brueggemann shows how Yahweh’s sovereignty is displayed in his plan of restoration. Though the poetry is preoccupied with the exile of the nation, this in reality is penultimate because the God who scattered is also the one who will restore. This is what Brueggemann terms the “two-stage theology” of the book (i.e. destruction – restoration). This theology comes to head in chapters 30-33 where most of the oracles of promise have been clustered. But whereas the basis for the demise of Israel was her own sin, restoration in Jeremiah is entirely grounded in divine forgiveness. There is no call to repentance, and thus the future of Israel is solely dependent upon Yahweh’s *own* inclination. This theology is a “genuine *novum*” in Jeremiah and does not grow out of the theology of Deuteronomy, for in that tradition, according to Brueggemann, the

future depends on repentance (cf. pp. 40-41, 120-128, 136-143).

In chapter 3 Brueggemann explores the place and function of the book of Jeremiah within the Old Testament. Here he develops his thesis that the book of Jeremiah is at its core saturated with Deuteronomic theology, suggesting that the key players in the book (e.g. Baruch, Seriah, Shaphan, and even Jeremiah himself) themselves propounded the covenant theology of Deuteronomy, yet moved beyond that tradition in their programme of restoration (as just mentioned). Brueggemann then moves on to discuss the similarities and differences between Jeremiah and the prophets, and finally the writings. Given the breadth of material he attempts to cover, however, he can only offer a sketchy overview of the relationships between Jeremiah and the various books he addresses. He concludes that while it is not the dominant or triumphant voice in the "interpretive contest for the future of Judaism," the book of Jeremiah "occupies a defining position in emerging Judaism" (p. 135).

In the fourth chapter – "The Continuing Influence of the Book of Jeremiah" – Brueggemann devotes a few pages to the contribution of the book of Jeremiah to the New Testament, and then rounds off this short chapter with a reflection on what the book of Jeremiah has to say today. He proposes that Jeremiah is "a powerful script in the contemporary context for giving dramatic articulation to the new vulnerability we face" (p. 195).

Brueggemann is to be commended for his ability to synthesize concisely and clearly the massive amount of subject matter found in the book of Jeremiah. What I missed from the volume, however, was a discussion of how the material in Jeremiah contributes to development of Old Testament eschatology and messianism. Additionally, I would have appreciated a discussion on how Jer 29:10-14 (which says that Israel will repent before she is restored) fits in with Brueggemann's assertion that the plan of restoration in Jeremiah is not preceded by national repentance. Is a different plan of restoration envisioned here? On the whole, however, Brueggemann has succeeded in providing us with a well-written book whose main concern is to discuss the theology of the received text (MT), and is accessible to students and pastors alike (though scholars may find a few valuable nuggets in the book as well).

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Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables

Boccaccini, Gabriele, ed.

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SUMMARY

The essays in this volume cover a variety of topics related to the Parables of 1 Enoch. Topics covered include the structure of the text, its place in 1 Enoch and Second Temple Judaism, the social setting and date, and the concept of the son of man. Emerging from the essays is a consensus that the Parables were composed in the period of Herod. The work is outstanding in its breadth and detail.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Artikel in diesem Band decken eine Vielfalt von Themen an, die mit den Gleichnissen des 1. Henochbuches verbunden sind. Die behandelten Themen umfassen die Struktur des Textes, seinen Platz im 1. Henochbuch und im Judentum der Zeit des zweiten Tempels, die soziale Verortung und Datierung sowie das Konzept des Menschensohnes. Die Artikel fördern einen Konsens zutage, der die Komposition der Gleichnisse in die Zeit des Herodes legt. Das Werk ist herausragend in seiner Breite und in den Details.

RÉSUMÉ

Les textes contenus dans cet ouvrage couvrent une variété de sujets relatifs aux paraboles de 1 Enoch, parmi lesquels la structure du texte, sa place dans le livre, son rapport avec le judaïsme du second temple, son contexte social et sa date, ainsi que la notion du fils de l'homme. Il en ressort un consensus selon lequel ces paraboles ont été composées au temps d'Hérode. L'ouvrage est remarquable tant par son champ d'investigation que par ses analyses détaillées.

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Gabriele Boccaccini is to be praised for putting together a fascinating collection of essays on the Parables of 1 Enoch. These essays originated from the Third Enoch Seminar held at Camaldoli, Italy. After an introduction from Boccaccini, the book divides into six sections and concludes with an essay by Sacchi. The bibliography compiled by von Ehrenkrook is simply outstanding and will greatly assist anyone working on this material.

Each section of the book consists of several main essays with responses, and in some sections there are several shorter essays. The first section, 'The Structure of the Text', with major essays by Nickelsburg and Knibb, addresses the redactional and compositional history of the text. The location of the Parables is discussed in the second section, 'The Parables within the Enoch Tradition', as several scholars note various grammatical and literary links with other portions of 1 Enoch. VanderKam particularly argues that the Parables are dependant literally on the Book of the Watchers but not on the Astronomical Book. In the third section, 'The Son of