

is overall a well-produced and stimulating work which adequately demonstrates the possibilities of combining detailed exegesis with a theologically committed reading of Scripture.

David G. Firth  
Cliff College

### *Psalmen 51 – 100*

**Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger**

Freiburg: Herder, 2008, 727 pp., € 100,-, hb; ISBN  
978-3-451-26826-7

### *Psalmen 101-150*

**Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger**

Freiburg: Herder, 2000, 912 pp., € 125,- hb; ISBN  
978-3-451-26827-4

#### SUMMARY

The commentary on Psalms 51-100 by Hossfeld and Zenger offers a poetological analysis of the individual psalms presenting them each in the context of the fractional collections of the Psalter. In the second volume on Psalms 101-150, this promising approach has been continued and further improved.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Kommentar von Hossfeld und Zenger zu Ps.51-100 bietet eine poetologische Kommentierung der Einzelsalmen und stellt diese jeweils in den Kontext der Teilsammlungen des Psalters. Im zweiten Band 101-150 wurde dieser vielversprechende Weg fortgesetzt und weiter verbessert.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Le commentaire des Psaumes 51-100 par Hossfeld et Zenger analyse la poésie de chaque psaume en le situant dans le contexte de la collection à laquelle il appartient au sein du psautier. Dans le deuxième volume consacré aux Psaumes 101 à 150, les auteurs poursuivent cette approche prometteuse en l'améliorant.

\* \* \* \*

After the first part had appeared in the year 2000, eight years later it is followed by the volume on Psalms 101-150. Already in the first commentary (51-100), Hossfeld and Zenger (HZ) declared that the volume on Psalms 1-50 will appear last. The introduction can be written only when each individual psalm will have been commented and, thus, the total arrangement of the Psalter will have been included.

In the volume on 51-100 HZ specified the line of approach for the comments (10): On the one hand, the analysis of the "individual shape of the text" is being dealt; on the other hand, the arrangement of the individual psalms within the context of "each partial com-

position" is considered. The general approach of HZ is illustrated in detail in the comments on Ps 51 by Zenger (38ff.). Each interpretation is preceded by *bibliographical notes* on the psalm. With regard to Ps 51, the list comprising 25 titles is extensive, as one would expect. As for the other psalms, three or four references may suffice (e.g. Ps 77). The broad horizon which includes literature in various languages (German, English, French, Italian, Spanish and Dutch) is remarkable. A special *translation* into German is provided for each psalm, which clearly observes the poetry of the Hebrew text without sounding clumsy. In a few instances, additional explanations are given in brackets; e.g. 51:5:

Surely I was sinful (i.e. embroiled in sin) at birth,  
Sinful (i.e. as sinner) from the time my mother  
conceived me.

The presentation of the text already incorporates the arrangement of verses which is referred to in the subsequent analysis. Questions concerning *text and translation* follow in minor typeface. Here, a detailed assessment of the Hebrew syntax is provided. In addition to text-critical aspects, controversial topics are debated if necessary. For example, with regard to Ps 51, the syntactic function of v.6cd is clearly discussed and evaluated.

The ensuing *analysis* consists, first of all, of the *analysis of genre*. As for Ps 51, Zenger examines in detail Würthwein's thesis that this is a so-called sickness psalm. Zenger presents Würthwein's view fairly, but clearly disagrees with his perspective. Zenger's main counterargument is influenced by the overall structure of the Psalm, which is symptomatic of the commentary's approach. He argues that especially the statements in the centre of both main parts vv.3-11 (v.6cd about "justification") and vv.12-19 (v.16 about "righteousness") speak against a "sickness doctrine" imported into the psalm" (44).

In the second step of the "analysis", HZ elucidate questions on the agenda as concerns *literary criticism*. Zenger classifies Ps 51:20-21 as a secondary appendix (from the perspective of poetry and syntax), acknowledging a tension with regard to a theology of sacrifice in v.18f. At the same time, however, he recognizes a valuable continuity of this perspective in vv.20-21.

A *classification of the structure* of the psalm comes next. Here, Zenger contests eliminations in Ps 51 (v.16) and, by and large, identifies a basic dual structure in vv.3-11 and vv.12-19. After *questions of date*, HZ deal with the *interpretation per se* of each psalm. Zenger selects the heading of Ps 51 as guideline for its reading, placing the psalm in the context of the second Davidic Psalter. Detailed comments follow the arrangement of verses. The comments accentuate aspects of poetry and theology of each psalm. Key verses are explained and lines of history of tradition are traced. The verse-by-verse interpretation precedes the section on *context, reception and implication*. In particular in this section on context, the ways of recent research on psalms become evident. Zenger considers Ps 51 "a programmatic introduction of



this Davidic Psalter" (56). Furthermore, he goes into Ps 50 as a preparation of Ps 51 (viz. theology of sacrifice as well as God's judging and saving righteousness). Having explained the reception history (Septuagint, Targum, NT), HZ finally address under the heading of "Implication" the current relevance of the psalm. The extent of this last part varies considerably per psalm. In Ps 51, Zenger stresses at length the radical way of penitence (more detailed also in Ps 84). In Ps 59, however, one sentence must do. Hossfeld at times completely omits this section on the implication of each psalm (e.g. in Psalms 54, 55, 58).

In the second volume (101-150), HZ carried out several improvements. For each psalm a pattern of structure is provided in terms of a summary. Thus the reader gets a very helpful overview before coming to the detailed interpretation. Besides, the "Septuagint version of the psalms has become much more comprehensive" (4). More extensive digressions on various groups of psalms have been added (Psalms 113-118; 120-134 etc.). Here, HZ put into practice even more consistently their original intention as to the interpretation of the Psalter. At this point, however, one may wonder as to why they make use of the tripartite structure Psalms 1-50; 51-100; 101-150. It is true that the two previous volumes that were already published never lost touch with a 'Psalter dimension', but precisely for that reason one should enquire as to whether a partition of the volumes according to the exegesis of the Psalter would not have been more adequate (e.g. corresponding to the five part structure). In my opinion the grounds for a break between Psalms 100 and 101, because Psalms 2-100 as "JHWH-king-Psalter" were already complete in the 5th century, have been provided afterwards. Although a tripartite structure may be "useful for the book and pleasant for the reader" (2008, p.18), it is more of a hindrance for the exegesis of the Psalter than of a help for this kind of commentary.

Finally, I would like to mention that (almost) all the Hebrew terms have been translated in the ongoing comments. Thus, readers who are less erudite in Hebrew are still able to benefit from all the explanations without being put off – which, for example, may have happened with the reviews by Kraus.

Both authors succeed in presenting a beneficial blend of exegesis of psalms and Psalter. The valuable results of the first volume have been further improved in the second one. Given this progress, the reader is waiting with anticipation for the next volumes. Both scholars and students of theology will study these two volumes with benefit. Both are worth their money!

*Gunnar Begerau  
Drolshagen, Germany*

*Like Fire in the Bones: Listening for the Prophetic  
Word in Jeremiah*

**Walter Brueggemann  
Patrick D. Miller (ed.)**

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006, xiii + 254 pp., h/b;  
ISBN 9780800635619

**SUMMARY**

This book is a collection of fifteen essays by Walter Brueggemann, all of which have been published elsewhere. Broadly speaking, the first five articles focus on the scholarship of the book of Jeremiah, the next five concentrate on specific passages in Jeremiah, and the final set of essays considers the impact of the book of Jeremiah on the religious community. Throughout the volume the author repeatedly emphasizes that scholars have neglected to answer how the book of Jeremiah still speaks to us today. The book is a partial answer to that call.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Dieses Buch ist eine Sammlung von 15 Artikeln aus der Feder von Walter Brueggemann, die alle bereits andernorts erschienen sind. Grob gesagt konzentrieren sich die ersten fünf Artikel auf wissenschaftliche Beiträge zu Jeremia, die nächsten fünf auf bestimmte Abschnitte bei Jeremia und die letzten fünf bedenken den Einfluss des Jeremiabuches auf die religiöse Gemeinschaft. Der Autor betont wiederholt und durchgängig, dass die Gelehrten die Antwort auf die Frage vernachlässigt haben, wie das Jeremiabuch heute noch zu uns spricht. Das Buch ist eine teilweise Antwort auf diese Aufgabe.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Cet ouvrage reprend quinze articles de Walter Brueggemann déjà publiés par le passé. Les cinq premiers sont consacrés aux travaux académiques sur le livre de Jérémie, les cinq suivants étudient des textes spécifiques de ce livre, et les cinq derniers traitent de l'influence du livre sur la communauté religieuse. Tout au long de l'ouvrage, l'auteur insiste sur le fait que les spécialistes ont négligé de chercher en quoi ce livre est pertinent pour nous aujourd'hui. Il répond partiellement à cette carence.

\* \* \* \*

This book is a collection of fifteen essays written by Walter Brueggemann, all of which have been published elsewhere. The order of the essays (edited by Patrick Miller) is intentional and the volume moves from an examination of the interpretive trends of the book, to a closer look at specific texts in Jeremiah and finally to a consideration of the relevance of Jeremiah to contemporary communities of faith (i.e. church and synagogue).

The three sections of the book are comprised of five chapters (short essays) each. In part one Brueggemann examines the prophet, the book, the scholarship, the theology and finally the future of Jeremiah studies. Here he highlights how Jeremiah studies have taken a turn over