

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!

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

Walter Brueggemann
Patrick D. Miller (ed.)

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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

the past several decades and have moved from focusing on the person of Jeremiah to the book of Jeremiah. He is critical of scholars who approach the text from a historical point of view. In the mind of Brueggemann, commentators such as Holladay or McKane, both of whom are particularly concerned with the history behind the text, have embarked on a task which, in the end, is not very rewarding. He argues that scholarship which focuses on historical questions diminishes the pertinence of the context to the contemporary writer or reader. Thus, studies with a historical bent are thick on criticism but thin on interpretation and theology. Brueggemann contends that more attention should be paid to the literary landscape of the text; when this is done properly, the theological dimension of the passage is rightly brought into focus. Commentaries should devote more space to the "continued say" of the text and should address questions such as, "How could it be that the text of Jeremiah might redescribe our human life to permit new perceptions, new actions, new compassions, new obedience, new hopes?" (37). In the final essay of the first section, Brueggemann suggests some avenues which might be fruitfully explored in future studies of Jeremiah. The path ahead lies with a synchronic interpretation of the book and should have a greater emphasis on how the book of Jeremiah can help us to rethink and reshape our lived reality.

Part two is more text-based and apparently gives the reader a taste of some of the questions Brueggemann would like to see future studies address. In chapter six he considers the place of prophetic speech and history. The synagogue and church are similar to prophets in that they have the task of proclaiming the purposes of God to a humanity that is often riddled with hurt and despair. The focus shifts to the tension between destruction and deliverance in Jeremiah in chapter seven. Simply deleting as a gloss the repeated assertion that Yahweh will not make a complete end of Judah (4:27; 5:10, 18; 30:11) does not do justice to the theological difficulties which the post-586 community was wrestling with, namely the vacillation between believing that the exile was "the end", and the refusal to believe that this is the end. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are many places in the book of Jeremiah which have a "sense of ending" (i.e. chapters 25, 45, or 52). The entire book attests to "an ending that does not end". In chapter eight Brueggemann considers the role and function of chapter 24 and argues that it is pivotal in the development of the "two-stage" trajectory of Jeremiah (i.e. tearing down and building up). In chapter nine he reflects upon the impact which the exile had on the Israelite community and examines three (what he assumes to be post-exilic) texts (Deut 4:23-31; Isa 54:7-10; Jer 31:35-37) which "explore different dimensions of the way in which God is voiced" (121). In the final chapter of this section, Brueggemann focuses on Jer 36 and outlines six points which emerge from the story of the production of the biblical scroll. He closes by saying that Christians, like Jehoiakim who burned the scroll, are also "haunted" by

the biblical text, and by the life that it fashions with the Holy One.

The essays in the third section focus on the impact of the prophetic task on the religious community. In chapter eleven Brueggemann considers the prophetic faith by focusing on the person, tradition, and the book of Jeremiah as an exemplar. He asserts that the contemporary community of faith is in a situation similar to that of Jeremiah and therefore it would do well to learn from and emulate his prophetic ministry. Various images of hope from Jeremiah and Isaiah are considered in chapter twelve and here Brueggemann reflects on the church and her commitment to the pursuit of peace. In chapter thirteen he looks at Jer 32:1-15 and 8:18-9:3 and submits that holding these two texts together "may be the most important agenda in our societal context" because they show us how a griever can be a hoper (186). He argues that Jeremiah was able to remain hopeful in such a hopeless situation because he stayed close to Yahweh by articulating his despair. The articulation of this despair is what allowed him to move beyond this to hope. And the same is true today. Chapter fourteen focuses on history and explores five theses – which the author claims to have either "read out of or into" Jeremiah – about who true history makers are: they have a profound sense of anguish which touches them personally, they believe in the moral coherence of the world, they assert the raw rule of God's sovereignty, they are capable of engaging in serious social analysis and they are relentlessly filled with hope. He concludes that history makers "are not the great public figures who get on the *Tonight Show*" (197) but are hidden and often unnoticed. The book ends with an interview with Brueggemann in which he responds to a number of questions ranging from "What does it mean to be a prophet?" to "Are preachers supposed to be prophets?" to "Can a Christian have a prophetic sense of grief and energy and hope and also have a bit stake within the structure of the predominant culture?"

Brueggemann is very much concerned with how the book of Jeremiah can still speak to us today. While his desire to move beyond a purely academic investigation of the biblical text is commendable, his points of application were often vague and abstract. Additionally, given that the book is a compilation of fifteen different articles, the volume does not hang together as tightly as one would have hoped. I found it hard to find the scarlet thread which binds the chapters together, and in reading through the book I often felt as if texts were pulled off the shelf at random, briefly discussed, and then put back. Since most of the essays do not have a conclusion or summary, the reader is frequently left "hanging" at the end of the essay, and the task of synthesizing the author's purpose and main points is left up to the reader. A large number of the articles read much like a sermon and thus the volume may be suitable for the educated clergy (especially the essays in the third section).

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