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BOOK REVIEW

JEREMIA, PROFEET VAN OORDEEL EN HOOP

Peels, H.G.L & De Waard, H. (eds), (Apeldoorn, Nederland: Drukkerij Holland, 2020), 119 pp. ISBN: 978-90-75847-54-3

This book is a valuable contribution to the study of the Book of Jeremiah with regard to prophecy. It is well structured. The editors, H.G.L Peels and H. De Waard, offer valuable contributions by ex-students: Lourens Heres, Jelle Hoefnagel, Derk-Jan Hoogenboom, Jelle Knol, Bert Koopman, Jeroen van Limbeek, Jonard Roukens, Albert Verhoeff, and Henk De Waard. The articles give insight into the function of visions for prophecy and their reliability in the Book of Jeremiah. All the articles in the book highlight the statement that YHWH is breaking down and rebuilding (Jer. 46:13-26), brings forgiveness in the new covenant (Jer. 31), explores the function of Jeremiah 26 in the second part of the Book of Jeremiah. Moreover, it adds to the discourse on the Rechabites (Jer. 35), the expression “standing in the counsel of YHWH” (Jer. 23), Nebuchadnezzar, the rivers of Babylon, and the content function of Jeremiah 44.

In their introduction, Peels and De Waard characterise this book as

a fascinating book that takes the reader to the depths of terrifying judgment and disaster, as well as the depths of joyful hope and prospect.

It is a prophetic book on the cutting edge between life and death.

Now let us turn to the actual content for a further analysis. What does it mean to speak of the *theology* of a biblical book such as Jeremiah within the prophetic framework? This is outlined in the articles by Lourens Heres and Jelle Hoefnagel in *Jeremia, profeet van oordeel en hoop*. The book's obvious answer directs the reader towards "what it says about God". Jesse Knol's students offer comments on Jeremiah's "message" under the themes of God, Israel, sin and hope (pp. 40-41), after having first warned that this risks "systematising" Jeremiah's thoughts in ways he would never have dreamed of (p. 45). Derk-Jan Hoogenboom does much the same, using *Jeremiah* as a source book for observations about sin, judgement, repentance, grace and salvation (pp. 48-54). Lundbom (1999) comments on this approach: "We do not get from Jeremiah anything approaching a systematic theology". However, in his article, Hoogenboom discusses Yahweh's word; sin and judgement; grace and salvation from a more careful and nuanced perspective. He distinguishes the theology of Jeremiah (as above) from the theology of the book (pp. 43-44).

One of the more impressive attempts to distil "what the book says about God and prophecy" is that of Bert Koopman when he deals with Jeremiah 34:

Gods belofte aan de Rechabieten heft kenmerken van een special soort verbond, een 'covenant of grant'. Dit is een verbond waarbij een sterkere partij zich verbindt aan een zwakkere partij, als belonging voor bewezen trouw en goede daden. Die HEERE beloont de trouw van de Rechabieten, door hun eeuwig voortbestaan te beloven (p. 66).

Koopman emphasises God's treatment of the Rechabites as a way to avoid selectivity, but to take seriously the images and metaphors of covenant used to speak of God and all God's activity in relation to his [all] people. He argues that the main theological claims that inform Jeremiah are God as creator; God as passionate; God's moral order as something that can be and is violated, leading to sin and judgement; God's willingness to use violent means; God's entering into an interactive relationship with his agent, Jeremiah, and God's everlasting love as the grounds for ultimate hope (pp. 65-69).

By contrast, Jeroen van Limbeek generates a new set of captivating headings under which to discuss Jeremiah's prophetic theology (pp. 71-81). These headings are rightly generated by the directions scholarship has taken over the past 25 years. These include theology as a social construct; a renewed interest in creation; feminism, and narrative theology. The latter raises the question of the degree to which theology can be constructed out of the fabric of a story through creative imagination.

Jonard Roukens, Albert Verhoeff and Henk de Waard's contribution on the *Theology of Jeremiah* (pp. 83-117) begins with an account of the book's

contents; its literary location within Old Testament literature; its social location within 6th-century Judah, and its scribal production:

De deportatie van Judeers naar Babel vond plaats aan het begin van de zesde eeuw v.Chr., toen Nebukadnezar II (605-562 v.Chr.) heerste over het Nieuw-Babylonische rijk. Deze koning had in 604 v.Chr. het koninkrijk Juda aan zich onderworpen, maar trok in 598 v.Chr. opnieuw naar Jeruzalem, omdat koning Jojakim in opstand was gekomen. In het voorjaar van 597 v.Chr. nam Nebukadnezars leger de stad in, waarna een flinke groep Judeers samen met koning Jojachin (die Jokakim was opgevolgd) in ballingschap werd gevoerd (p. 84).

From these, they identify what they would regard as the main thrust of Jeremiah as the prophet, and from this emerges what, for them, is the controlling theological idea of the book, namely the sovereignty of God that brings ultimate hope. They divide this theological idea into sovereignty through prophecy; sovereignty through judgement, and sovereignty through promise. This God of *severe sovereignty* and *guarded access* wills a covenantal relationship with restored Israel. That possibility, however, is clearly and only at the behest of YHWH and on YHWH's own terms.

Lastly, I would like to think that all these contributions are being faithful to the contours of the text, theology and reception of the book, and prophet Jeremiah within the discourse of judgement, disaster and the prospect of hope framed from the time of Egypt to the time of Jeremiah's call. They state this claim as follows:

Binnen het boek Jeremia hangt dit negatieve beeld van die Judeers in Egypte en de aankondiging van hun ondergang samen met de lijn dat de toekomst van Juda primair bij de ballingen in Babel ligt. Met hen zal JHWH een nieuw begin maken (p. 117).

The task of the Jeremian tradition in this work, from the earliest summons of the prophet to the derivative traditions that constitute the book, is to articulate and enact the reality of YHWH in a complex, difficult world crisis that traumatised reputable "public order and that jeopardized the community of Israel". The multicoloured efforts of that institution to uphold the connection of YHWH and crisis necessitate "imagination" in both exegetical study and reading. However, all this rich variety comes to fruition in a single principle in the book: the future is held firmly in the hands of a faithful God who practices sovereignty with the aim of delivering hope through the mouth of Jeremiah.

To end this review, I would highly recommend this book, because the kind of work under review will continue to "shape and influence" the Book of Jeremiah as one of the most challenging to interpret in the Old Testament,

but it pays rich theological dividends to those who persist in engaging works such as these. This book not only introduces one to the theology and contents of the Book of Jeremiah, but also to the various methods and approaches that can be applied to Jeremiah within an academic study of the Old Testament nowadays. In doing so, this will equip one not only to understand, preach and teach Jeremiah, but also to learn methods that can be applied to other Old Testament prophetic material.