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Review of:

After the Invasion: A Reading of Jeremiah 40-44. By Keith Bodner. Pp. viii + 179. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN 978 0 19 874300 2. £50.

There are certain texts in the Book of Jeremiah which receive a lot of attention, e.g. the Confessions, and others which are rarely dealt with. Keith Bodner has chosen an often neglected section, the chapters after the first report of Jerusalem's fall (Jer 39) and before the oracle to Baruch in Jer 45. They occupy a key position as the last large section before the Oracles against the Foreign Nations. He analyses the narrative features and the intertextual links, and presents an illuminating interpretation of these chapters. Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, the book comprises seven chapters, starting with "The Imperial Voice", dealing with Jer 40:1-6, and ending with "Requiem for the Departed", a treatment of Jer 44. He follows the sequence of Jer, dedicating two chapters each for Jer 40 and 41, and one each for Jer 42 to 44.

Bodner's presentation has many merits. He pays attention to details of the text, such as the plural in the address to Jeremiah in 40:3 (p. 26) and perceives nuances of irony, satire, and sarcasm (p. 19, 68, 144). His interest in intertextuality is amply demonstrated in manifold references to parallel passages, in Jer as well as in other biblical books. The cistern of Jer 41:7, for example, calls to mind the other cisterns mentioned in Jer 38 and 2:13 (p. 73); the phrase "all the land is before you" is linked, following an article by John Hill, to patriarchal traditions in Genesis (p. 28); and the Ammonite connection of Ishmael is viewed against the background of David's dealings with them (p. 54).

Extensive references are made to other authors and their contributions are constructively inserted into his interpretations. He reflects on issues raised by literary theories, especially narrative criticism (p. 109, 128, 142,...), and perceives the "representational character" of the figures of the text, such as Gedaliah, Ishmael, and Johanan (p. 50; cf. also 54-55). His decision to stay with the Masoretic text (p. 3, note 1) enables the inner logic of the Hebrew text form in these chapters to be clearly seen, despite tensions like the double report of Jeremiah's release (p. 4 and 24).

There are several areas, however, where one would have expected more. The literature quoted or referred to is exclusively in English. The monograph by José M. Abrego, *Jeremías y el Final del Reino. Lectura sincrónica de Jer 36-45 (EstAT 3)*, Valencia 1983, offering a narrative analysis of the Jer 36-45, is largely parallel to Bodner's book and seemingly unknown to him. The study by Michael P. Maier, *Ägypten – Israels Herkunft und Geschick. Studie über einen theo-politischen Zentralbegriff im hebräischen Jeremiabuch (ÖBS 21)*, Frankfurt 2002, deals in detail with the role of Egypt in all passages of Jer and would also have enriched Bodner's interpretation, as well as the thesis of Benedetta Rossi on the prohibition of intercession (*L'intercessione nel tempo della fine. Studio dell'intercessione profetica nel libro di Geremia [AnBib 204]*, Roma 2013). The latter would have helped to explain why Jeremiah in Jer 42:4 promises to pray for what the people requested of him. Bodner adduces many parallel passages, but, on several occasions, they are not the closest ones. Jer 18:7-8 would have been more pertinent for מַח in Jer 42:11 (p. 102-103), and Jer 31:28 for the use of קָשׁ in Jer 44:27 (p. 146). Strangely absent are constant references to the base text of Jer 40-44, namely 2 Kings 25:22-26. Comparison with that would have resulted in bringing out more strongly the distinctive character of Jer.

Bodner himself acknowledges, at the end, that the role of the prophet Jeremiah in these chapters remains an open question to him (p. 159). This is partly due to his tendency to speculate beyond what the text says, as in considering the prophet as a possible "useful ally" for the Babylonians (p. 22), despite his judgement oracles against them (e.g. Jer 25:12, 26), or

in giving too much weight to Baruch in Jer 43:3 (p. 113), instead of taking the prophet's long speech in Jer 42 as a clear indication of his stance.

A last point touches the function of Jer 40-44 within the book. These chapters are a kind of anti-climax. Jer 39 has shown that Jeremiah's announcements have been fulfilled in the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem, as a result of not listening to God's word. The people could have learned to trust in the prophet's message and to take divine pronouncements seriously. However, even after the catastrophe, they continue in their unwillingness to hear, and the final dialogue between prophet and people in Jer 44 results in the latter's explicit declaration that they intend to persist in their idolatry (v. 17, even interpreted as "vow" in v. 25 by Jeremiah). This is their last word and the disastrous end product which shows that all the prophet's efforts and sufferings, intended to bring them to conversion, have been to no avail.

In spite of the weaknesses mentioned above, Bodner's book is a well-informed presentation, offering many insights into these often ignored chapters of Jer. It is a valuable tool and enriches the understanding of a very important part of a very difficult prophetic book.

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