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Torah is salvation in concrete form, its materialization, its penetration into the density of society with all that means. Because torah in the "new covenant" is the same as in the covenant of the exodus from Egypt, it can, so far as it is present in our world in two ways, ultimately be only one torah, God's world confronting the world societies structured out of sin... (p. 96).

This provocative paragraph alone is worth the cost of the book. One cannot read it without recognizing the question it poses for those who would make of Christianity something that concerns merely the individual, the interior life, and the beyond.

If there is any criticism, it is only that everything is presented in a nascent, almost naive manner without polemics. There are no footnotes, no supporting references, no complete developments. Throughout, the reader is left with a host of surprises that call for further investigation. But isn't this capacity to stimulate thought precisely what makes any theological book *good*?

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## **The Oracles Against Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51. A Horror Among the Nations**

David J. Reimer

San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993

This is a slightly revised version of Reimer's 1989 doctoral thesis at Oxford. It retains nagging features of the genre but is filled with interesting and provocative ideas.

The Preface (pp. iii–vii) summarizes the drift of the book and is worth reading. The Introduction (pp. 1–10) retraces some of the same ground to situate it in the history of research, but leaves the reader a little deflated by stressing the limitations imposed on the thesis. The thesis itself has four parts that are divided into chapters, not for any thematic reasons, but mainly, it seems, to produce segments of proportionate length.

The first part treats "Poetry and Structure in Jeremiah 50–51". The first chapter ("The Problem of Method in Hebrew Poetry", pp. 13–26) points out that, since the structure is not marked by formulaic introductions and conclusions, and since the text gives the impression of having grown by accretion, the analysis will be limited to lines and the minimal units composed of lines, where lines are defined by rhythm (sound patterns), syntax (word order) and semantics, and units by the coherence of lines. The second and third chapters are relatively detailed analyses of

the units, of which there are thirty-eight, consisting of the Hebrew text, a translation, and comments on some of the pertinent items. The conclusion, not surprisingly, is that Jeremiah 50–51 is composed of lines and smaller units, but not of stanzas or larger poems to which the units might belong, and that the chapters as a whole do not have an overall structure but are singularly amorphous. It is difficult to judge the result, however, since the poetic method is eclectic and inconclusive, and since there is no evidence that a more comprehensive structure was envisaged or investigated. The analysis, nevertheless, is intriguing and deserves further study.

The second part ("Text and Tradition: The Evidence of the Septuagint") situates the Hebrew text in the development of the Jeremiah traditions. The fourth chapter ("The Text of Jeremiah 50–51: The Evidence of the Septuagint") discusses the theories of Janzen, Tov and Soderlund and outlines the differences between the MT and the LXX (pp. 107–117). The fifth chapter ("The Text of Jeremiah 50–51") analyzes the differences in detail. From the start, the reader is supposed to assume that the LXX is a shorter, earlier and better edition, and it comes as a surprise that the LXX is not necessarily better, and that the MT is not an edition at all but the product of haphazard development. The real conclusion is that the Jeremiah tradition was "in motion" (p. 137), "a fluid rather than a frozen text" (p. 152). This is important for what follows, but the randomness seems to be assumed rather than proved and, if it were really so, would make comparison of the two texts a silly or futile exercise. As in the first part, the author has a wonderful eye for detail, but there is no evidence that the larger picture was envisaged or seriously entertained.

The third part ("The Forms and Imagery of Jeremiah 50–51") is divided into two chapters (6 and 7, pp. 159–202, 203–243) for reasons of symmetry rather than substance. It deals not with one main form, or mannerism, ("Imperative Strings", pp. 161–169), but with ten themes and images (such as, the foe from the North, the sword and the hammer, the cup of wrath and the incurable wound) which capture the spirit of the text. The interesting analysis leads to equally interesting conclusions on the creative use of motifs and images from the rest of the Jeremiah traditions, their setting in the exile, their projection of originally anti-Judaean sentiments against the lately villainous Babylon, and their expression of an inchoative theology of history.

The last part ("Jeremiah 50–51 and Related Traditions") is an ambitious attempt to situate the text in the development of the Jeremiah traditions and of late Judaean attitudes to Babylon. It is proposed that the LXX represents an earlier phase that stressed judgement against Judah, while the MT reflects a secondary and later application of the judgement against Babylon. The two attitudes, expressed paradigmatically in Jeremiah's insistence on subjection to Babylon and in the later oracles against Babylon, were not at all exclusive, but, as the other traditions attest, developed side by side.

Reimer writes with enthusiasm and with love of the subject and his approach is contagious. It is a thesis, however, and not a narrative that is easy to read. It requires study, and rewards the effort.

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## **A Theology of the New Testament**

George Eldon Ladd

Revised by Donald A. Hagner

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993 (1974)

719 pp. + Indices \$34.99 U.S. paper

In view of the erosion of scholarly consensus in biblical studies, the writing of a New Testament theology has become extremely difficult. Many regard it as an impossible undertaking, while others (notably Goppelt, Hubner, and Stuhlmacher) have courageously approached the task anew. Ladd's is the only contemporary comprehensive NT theology by a North American.

In this book the renowned former professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary does not purport to make an original contribution or to solve difficult problems. He modestly offers *a* (not *the*) NT theology. From a survey of a vast amount of scholarly research (much of it drawn from Kittel's TDNT), Ladd has compiled those scholarly conclusions which seemed most persuasive to him and to others who stand in the tradition of American Evangelicalism. Throughout the book he has attempted to face critical questions openly and to represent fairly the views of those with whom he disagrees.

The book is intended for beginners, primarily for seminary students, and it has been "especially instrumental in helping many fundamentalists to see for the first time not merely the acceptability, but the indispensability, of historical criticism" (p. 19). Since its initial publication in 1974, it has exerted immense influence, especially in conservative circles. Its merits and shortcomings are well known.

The core material has been arranged in six sections: 1) The Synoptic Gospels, 2) The Fourth Gospel, 3) The Primitive Church, 4) Paul, 5) Hebrews and the General Epistles, and 6) The Apocalypse.

Although Ladd asserts that the gospels are both history and theology, he uses the Synoptic Gospels primarily as sources for information about the life and teaching of Jesus, neglecting their own theological contribution, whereas he examines the Fourth Gospel primarily for its theological content.

The discussion of Acts (pp. 347-350) is surprisingly brief. The chief objective here appears to be a defense of the historical accuracy of the