

Baumann, Gerlinde: *Gottes Gewalt im Wandel: Traditionsgeschichtliche und intertextuelle Studien zu Nahum 1,2-8*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2005. X, 285 S. = Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 108. Geb. EUR 39,90. ISBN 3-7887-2107-3.

In this revised version of her Habilitationsschrift (guided by Rainer Kessler and Jörg Jeremias) presented in 2004 in Marburg, the authoress offers the reader no less than four things: 1. A biblical theological discussion of the problem of God being related to violence, including the humiliation of women; 2. A discussion of different exegetical approaches (historical-critical and intertextual) and how they can be combined; 3. A very detailed exegesis of the first verses from the book of Nahum; 4. A contribution to the ongoing debate about the formation of the book of the Minor Prophets. The result is a book that shows great technical skill in very detailed and careful exegetical discussions, but it also impresses the reader by its many interesting and sometimes daring observations on the literary and theological level.

The first part of the book discusses the problem of violence as illustrated by the book of Nahum with its orgy of hatred. Baumann indicates that a possible way to manage this is to focus on God's violence: what does it mean that the vision of the violent downfall of Niniveh is introduced by the 'Psalm' about YHWH as avenger in the beginning of the book? As she tries to demonstrate in the rest of her study these first verses can be regarded as an interpretative framework, added as part of the redaction of the book of the Minor Prophets.

Before going to business she accounts for the methods used: a combination of a synchronic (intertextual) and a diachronic approach. Although a lot of sound information is given about recent views concerning intertextuality, this part of the study looks like an obligatory scholarly exercise. The attempt to build a bridge between the different methods fails, because in the end the choice is made to stick to the diachronic perspective. This is also apparent in the rest of the book which in fact offers a (good!) example of a redaction critical study. The so-called intertextual approach helps to map all connections between the texts, but only as the starting point for placing them in the right chronological order.

The main part of the book (pp. 39-178) is devoted to the seven verses of the Psalm of Nahum. Nearly all secondary literature of the last decades is discussed and probably all possible interpretations and connections with other biblical texts pass in review. So even those who do not agree with the given conclusions can be thankful for this 'Fundgrube'. However, not all information is correct. The article 'Vormasoretische Randnotizen in Nahum 1' is attributed to both Klaus Seybold and Klaas Spronk (p. 275), but only the first deserves the honor.

Surprisingly, the generally accepted view that Nahum 1 contains a partial acrostic is turned down. Baumann assumes with Michael Floyd that the fact that in some lines the initial letters happen to occur in alphabetic order is no more than coincidence (p. 59). Although the publications of the present reviewer trying to demonstrate otherwise are mentioned, the discovery described there of a complete and regular acrostic in the first lines with the initial and final letters of lines forming the well known phrase 'I am YHWH', is not taken into account. Apparently it also falls under the ironic verdict: 'interessant sind die Beobachtungen Spronks allemal' (p. 59). A new argument in this ongoing discussion may be derived from ancient textual witnesses. According to Baumann these give no indication of an acrostic (p. 56), but (as is demonstrated in a forthcoming volume of the journal *Perikope*) both the Codex Alexandrinus and the Codex Marchalianus show traces of a similar play with the name of YHWH/Kyrios in the textual transmission of the Septuagint Version. An important contribution to the exegesis of Nahum 1:2-3 and its place within the book of the Twelve is the extensive discussion of the 'Gnadenformel' ('the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness) from Exodus 34:6, in the many different forms it is used in Nahum, Micah and other places (pp. 82-100).

The elaborate exegesis sometimes leads to new suggestions for the translation. For instance, verse 5b is translated 'die Erde wird vernichtet durch sein Angesicht' (p. 103; explanation on pp. 130-136), instead of the usual 'the earth trembles at his presence' or something like that. In the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*, published in 2006, Baumann was responsible for the translation of Nahum (and Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Proverbs). But there we read: 'Vor Gottes Angesicht wird die Welt aus den Angeln gehoben'. This looks, although presented in more poetical language, more like the traditional interpretation. Apparently, the new interpretation was judged as being too bold to make it into a Bible translation for the general public. Another remarkable difference with the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* concerns the division of the lines in verse 3. In the monograph the second occurrence of the name YHWH is regarded – following the Masoretic division of the text – as the beginning of the second line, the Bible translation follows the division of the text as suggested in the BHS reading it as the last word of the first line.

As a conclusion it is stated that the Psalm of Nahum is a formally and theologically self-contained unit, in which even the three parts of the canon can be recognized: the first verses refer to YHWH as he presented himself on mount Sinai, the second part reminds of the prophetic announcements of divine judgment, the third part has most connections with the way YHWH is described in the Psalms. This is almost too beautiful to be true and Baumann will probably not deny that it is a generalization, because she herself has pointed to many Biblical connections not fitting into this scheme.

In the final part of the book the connections between Nahum 1:2-8 and 1:9-3:19, and between Nahum and the other Minor Prophets are listed and discussed (pp. 179-242). Coming from the preceding, very detailed study of the Psalm of Nahum the reader has to accustom oneself to the more superficial approach. One misses, for instance, a discussion of the structure of the rest of the book of Nahum. Nevertheless, Baumann comes to a number of interesting and well-considered conclusions regarding the formation of the book of the Twelve and the way in which these redaction-critical observations can be of help with regard to the theological problems concerning God and violence. The Psalm of Nahum can be regarded as a theological introduction turning the following violence into retribution and describing YHWH not as using violence himself but sending a third party. Within the recent discussions about the process of growth eventually leading to the one book of the Minor Prophets she takes sides with the views of Kessler in taking as a starting point the close relation of the books of Nahum and Habakkuk. She assumes a common redaction of earlier forms of the book of Nahum, Habakkuk and also Micah, at the moment when the books of Nahum and Habakkuk were incorporated into the already existing collection of Hosea, Amos, Micah and Zephaniah. From a theological point of view this redaction work strengthened the line of thought of the added Psalm of Nahum: the violence by YHWH should be seen and can only be rightly understood as part of his mercy. That is a nice thought and well defended in this profound study.

Kampen

Klaas Spronk