

# Editors' Foreword

The International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT) offers a multi-perspectival interpretation of the books of the Old Testament to a broad, international audience of scholars, laypeople and pastors. Biblical commentaries too often reflect the fragmented character of contemporary biblical scholarship, where different geographical or methodological sub-groups of scholars pursue specific methodologies and/or theories with little engagement of alternative approaches. This series, published in English and German editions, brings together editors and authors from North America, Europe, and Israel with multiple exegetical perspectives.

From the outset the goal has been to publish a series that was “international, ecumenical and contemporary.” The international character is reflected in the composition of an editorial board with members from six countries and commentators representing a yet broader diversity of scholarly contexts.

The ecumenical dimension is reflected in at least two ways. First, both the editorial board and the list of authors includes scholars with a variety of religious perspectives, both Christian and Jewish. Second, the commentary series not only includes volumes on books in the Jewish Tanach/Protestant Old Testament, but also other books recognized as canonical parts of the Old Testament by diverse Christian confessions (thus including the deuterocanonical Old Testament books).

When it comes to “contemporary,” one central distinguishing feature of this series is its attempt to bring together two broad families of perspectives in analysis of biblical books, perspectives often described as “synchronic” and “diachronic” and all too often understood as incompatible with each other. Historically, diachronic studies arose in Europe, while some of the better known early synchronic studies originated in North America and Israel. Nevertheless, historical studies have continued to be pursued around the world, and focused synchronic work has been done in an ever greater variety of settings. Building on these developments, we aim in this series to bring synchronic and diachronic methods into closer alignment, allowing these approaches to work in a complementary and mutually-informative rather than antagonistic manner.

Since these terms are used in varying ways within biblical studies, it makes sense to specify how they are understood in this series. Within IECOT we understand “synchronic” to embrace a variety of types of study of a biblical text *in one given stage of its development*, particularly its final stage(s) of development in existing manuscripts. “Synchronic” studies embrace non-historical narratological, reader-response and other approaches along with historically-informed exegesis of a particular stage of a biblical text. In contrast, we understand “diachronic” to embrace the full variety of modes of study of a biblical text *over time*.

This diachronic analysis may include use of manuscript evidence (where available) to identify documented pre-stages of a biblical text, judicious use of clues within the biblical text to reconstruct its formation over time, and also an examination of the ways in which a biblical text may be in dialogue with earlier biblical (and non-biblical) motifs, traditions, themes, etc. In other words, diachronic study focuses on what might be termed a “depth dimension” of a given text—how a

text (and its parts) has journeyed over time up to its present form, making the text part of a broader history of traditions, motifs and/or prior compositions. Synchronic analysis focuses on a particular moment (or moments) of that journey, with a particular focus on the final, canonized form (or forms) of the text. Together they represent, in our view, complementary ways of building a textual interpretation.

Of course, each biblical book is different, and each author or team of authors has different ideas of how to incorporate these perspectives into the commentary. The authors will present their ideas in the introduction to each volume. In addition, each author or team of authors will highlight specific contemporary methodological and hermeneutical perspectives—e.g. gender-critical, liberation-theological, reception-historical, social-historical—appropriate to their own strengths and to the biblical book being interpreted. The result, we hope and expect, will be a series of volumes that display a range of ways that various methodologies and discourses can be integrated into the interpretation of the diverse books of the Old Testament.

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# Author's Preface

This volume is the product of many years of feminist collaborative work with my esteemed colleague and cherished friend, Christl Maier, who has written the commentary on Jeremiah 1–25 in this series. Our thanks are due the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a grant that enabled us to host Jeremiah consultations at the Philipps-Universität Marburg and Yale Divinity School during the early stages of our work. We learned much from scholars who shared their expertise in those consultations: Ulrike Bail, Gerlinde Baumann, Mark Brummitt, Mary Chilton Callaway, Steed Davidson, Irmtraud Fischer, Wilda Gafney, Michaela Geiger, Alexandra Grund, Else Holt, Judith McKinlay, and Ulrike Sals. Wise counsel was offered as well by Jens Herzer and Rainer Kessler, and the consultations were facilitated by the unflagging administrative assistance of Michaela Geiger, Alexandra Grund, and Heather Vermeulen. I was inspired by those lively intellectual exchanges, which have been catalytic for my thinking about tensions generated by the traditional authority of the commentary writer over against the feminist valorizing of collaboration and the decentering of power, as well as ways in which feminist and postcolonial interpretive strategies should deepen the research questions that have shaped my work.

The IECOT/IEKAT commentary series is not intended primarily as a reception-history series. Entire volumes have been devoted to reception of motifs and passages in Jeremiah in particular historical periods. The space constraints confronting me have been acute, given the complexity of Jer 26–52 and the fact that feminist, postcolonial, and queer engagements needed articulation in these pages, something core to the purpose of this commentary. Thus I am grateful to four experts whose labors have made possible the glimpses into reception of Jeremiah texts that I could afford here: Mary Chilton Callaway, Joy Schroeder, Seth Tarrer, and J. Jeffery Tyler.

Warm thanks are due to Harold Attridge, dean of Yale Divinity School during the inception of this project, who generously supported our research. That support has been vital for nine years of transatlantic collaborative meetings in Marburg, in New Haven, and at annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature. I offer my gratitude as well to the current Henry L. Slack Dean of Yale Divinity School, Gregory Sterling, whose unstinting support of faculty research and generosity regarding a new trajectory in my professional formation have been enormously important to me.

I am grateful for the scholarship fostered by the Israelite Prophetic Literature section and the Writing/Reading Jeremiah section of the Society of Biblical Literature, two professional groups with which I first became involved early in my career. Thanks go to Jeremiah scholars who have been special mentors and friends for many years: Walter Brueggemann, Julie Claassens, Else Holt, and Louis Stulman. Other Jeremiah scholars who have inspired me include Mark Brummitt, Corrine Carvalho, Georg Fischer, Rhiannon Graybill, Amy Kalmanofsky, Mark Leuchter, Jack Lundbom, William McKane, Kathleen O'Connor, Hermann-Josef Stipp, and Robert Wilson. I honor the memory of Leo Perdue, whom I never met, for his lifegiving candor about oppressive dimensions of the book of Jeremiah. I learned

much from a Jeremiah conference in Ascona, Switzerland in June 2014 and thank the colleagues who hosted that gathering, Hindy Najman and Konrad Schmid. The wisdom and patience of our excellent editors, Walter Dietrich and David Carr, have been indispensable to this commentary work. I am grateful as well for the superb technical assistance and unfailing kindness of Florian Specker, and for outstanding copy-editing by Jonathan Miles Robker.

In North American universities, land acknowledgement statements have become important to keep us mindful of indigenous peoples whose ancestors were harassed, forcibly displaced, tortured, and killed in militarized colonization processes initiated by settlers of European heritage. The persistent economic, social, and political challenges with which Native groups have contended to the present day are due in no small part to that history of injustice and cultural trauma, and to the failure of governmental and other agencies to make meaningful reparations. Yale University acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, Quinnipiac, and other Algonquian-speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now Connecticut. My offices, the Yale libraries that support my research, and the classrooms in which I teach are located on unceded land of the Quinnipiac and Niantic peoples.

I have been emboldened in the writing of this commentary by the conviction of homiletician Frank Thomas that writing can be an act of resistance. I heard Dr. Thomas insist on this at the biennial meeting of the *Societas Homiletica* in Durham, North Carolina in 2018: "Writing is resistance!" Writing unquestionably constituted resistance for some in the scribal circles of ancient Judah, as for other poets, novelists, essayists, and scholarly writers through the centuries. Writing remains a powerful mode of resistance for feminist writers, queer theorists, and others who craft insights aimed at dismantling patriarchy and white supremacy, cis-hetero violence and the erasure of queer realities, economic injustice, and other terrors. Such writing can be prophetic indeed. Among those who have helped me to understand the creative power of writing as resistance are feminist writers and artists who gather regularly at the Trinity Center in Salter Path, North Carolina under the auspices of a remarkable grassroots organization, the Resource Center for Women & Ministry in the South. I offer my warm thanks to the women of Pelican House, especially Jeanette Stokes, Cathy Hasty, Marcy Litle, Joyce Ann Mercer, Beverly Mitchell, Mary Clark Moschella, Márcia Rego, Marion Thullbery, Rebecca Wall, and Rachael Wooten.

Words cannot express my debt to Christl Maier, whose friendship means the world to me. Working collaboratively with her has been beautiful and instructive in ways I have only begun to measure. Our analytical and constructive feminist work unfolds in differing ways in our two volumes, as is entirely appropriate for feminist discourse. Our deployment of differing hermeneutical models, different ways of probing the significance of history, and different varieties of feminist analysis speaks authentically to our lived experience and to the audiences, scholarly and other, that we aim to engage. Christl's brilliant work on this Jeremiah project and her guild leadership as a feminist scholar have provided continual inspiration and renewed energy in my intellectual life.

My family has been stalwart in supporting me, observing with amusement my spates of joyous productivity and sustaining me during difficult moments

when I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work. Our offspring, Dinah and Jake, have been loving and sardonic in just the right measure to help me maintain perspective during this arduous process. Nothing would have been possible, on this commentary or anything else, without the love and counsel of my beloved life partner, Leo Lensing. It is to Leo that I dedicate this volume.

CJS

Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist

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