

# EDITORIALS

## CREATIVE *Bible Reading*

BY BONNIE DWYER

Now that it's March, how far are you into reading the Bible this year? Did you start in Genesis in January and give up in Leviticus or Deuteronomy? Or, have you found a new approach to this devotional task? Have you found a way that intrigues you? That makes you want to read more? Perhaps, the real question that I would like to ask is, how has your time with the Scriptures changed?

Walter Brueggemann, the noted Old Testament scholar, told readers of the second edition of his book *The Prophetic Imagination* that much had changed between the book's original publication in 1978, and the second edition in 2001. "First, the changes in method and approach in the critical study of the Bible since then are immense," he said. While historical criticism had previously defined scripture study, Brueggemann named social-scientific criticism, rhetorical criticism, and appreciation of the imagination as adding new understanding to the text. Since 2001, many more "isms" and angles have been added for reading Scripture with a changed awareness. Feminist, ethnic, and ecotheology readings of Scripture are now common. Reader response theory has brought new significance to the reader of Scripture.

Secondly, Brueggemann noted his own changed perspective. "When one considers the issues of liberation and exploitation on the ground, then the intimate contact between biblical texts of a prophetic sort and matters of social justice, social interest, and social criticism seem to me to be incontrovertible." Do you identify in any way with this statement? Have the recent discussions of social justice impacted your life and reading?

The third change he noted was the change in the church community and its role in society, because of the long-term and deep force of secularization. No longer

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could the church confront established power like the Old Testament prophets and bring about social change. Brueggemann noted that in 2001, whatever is prophetic "must be more cunning and more nuanced and perhaps more ironic."

Here we are, twenty years after Brueggemann wrote of what had changed for him. Certainly, change has continued impacting each of us—particularly since the pandemic. We've been forced to change, and so has the church. In this issue of the journal, we discuss and explore some changes in how we read and approach Scripture. We add a new kind of theological reading—Crip Theology; Vaughn Nelson introduces us to this way of reading through the lens of disability. Artist Erica Keith shows us what it can look like when we see the people in the Bible as looking like us. Admiral Ncube asks us to reflect on what it means to literally read our community into prophetic text as the remnant. Daryll Ward shows us a new way to understand keeping the Sabbath holy.

Our hope is that in reading you will see the Bible, and our life together as a community, with fresh eyes: That the love story embedded in the Bible will comfort you anew.



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