

liturgical music and every composer is to write music worthy of our communal celebrations of the mystery of salvation.

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*The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word.* By Walter Brueggemann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007. Pages, xi + 212. Cloth, \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-8006-6277-6.

The present reviewer was in the fifth grade and Alfred E. Smith was the Democratic candidate for the presidency. "If that man gets in, the Pope will be over on the next boat," Miss Hines was overheard assuring Mrs Capen and Miss Munsing. This was dutifully reported to a bemused parent who had grown up in Protestant America. On another occasion in the same Free Public Library, where little pitchers had big ears, in tones of regret: "He has no message." That editorial comment was on the performance of the pulpit incumbent in the Methodist Episcopal Church across the street from the Library where Broad and Monmouth met. Walter Brueggemann, a professor of Old Testament Emeritus at South Carolina's Columbia Theological Seminary, has collected eleven of his articles on preaching that appeared in a variety of journals from 1990 to the present, in which he tries to ensure that the preacher will have a message.

He has no illusions as to the cultural condition of congregations likely to hear such preaching. Calling them "Christian exiles" in a secular culture created by thinkers like Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and the Enlightenment establishment generally, he cites Michael Buckley's *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* more than once on the practical disregard of Deity in our age and Robert Bellah and others in *Habits of the Heart* on the individualism dominant in society, to establish that a world which a certain type of preaching once befitted — if it ever did — is no longer. Brueggemann's formula for attacking the evils of the present era, big business, big money, and other American idols, is to preach not only in the manner of the sixth-century prophets but the very "word of the LORD" they proclaimed, along with commentary upon it, from the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Calling their invective the poetry that it is, he wants it delivered straight, not softened by New Testament texts or phrasing not masked by historical-critical lectures under the guise of preaching. One wonders at times if the targets of such pulpit declamation are to be found at regular Sunday worship.

Brueggemann does not care. He wants the culture militantly attacked, not necessarily the hearers. In one anecdote that shows him as the realist

that he is he tells of his vigorous biblical critique of capitalism in a funded lectureship before two sons of the original donor, "enterprising gracious businessmen." He need not have worried. All they noted afterward was that he had quoted lots of Bible. The rest was happily lost on them. But his comment on the event that follows immediately is not unlike the watchword of an evangelist at the end of a parable of Jesus: "I understand the moment of preaching, in the designated place of preaching, to be a *freeing and primitive* act that flies in the face of all our accepted certitudes, conservative and liberal."

These are lectures, not sermons, in the rich vocabulary of a professor to journal readers similarly gifted. The writer's reading habits as disclosed by copious end-notes are daunting, yet tracking the citations may be for some the real richness of the book. All readers, however, stand to profit as the writer hopes will be the case by becoming convinced anew or for the first time that Judah's condition before, during, and after the exile in Chaldea was remarkably close to that of modern America. He is convinced that it is desperately in need of God's chastising and condemning word to it and not only the consoling and comforting one represented by compromise with the false values of the age.

For homilists and hearers of lectionary preaching this suggestion may be of some use: on coming upon either a Brueggemann word or a militant or decentering word of the LORD in a prophetic passage, scan the lectionary to see if it occurs on any Sunday or seasonal weekday of your familiarity: *The Revised Common Lectionary*, Abingdon Press, 1992; *Lectionary for Mass*, *The New American Bible*, Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1991; *The Lectionary*, *The Book of Common Prayer*, Church Publishing, Inc., 1979. The search will be well worth the candle. It will also ensure that Professor Brueggemann's love's labor, wringing the sap from divinely and humanly inspired writing, will not be lost.

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*The Sacramental Life: Gregory Dix and His Writings.* Edited by Simon Jones. Norwich, U.K.: Canterbury Press 2007. Pages, xxiv + 161. Paper, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-717-6.

As the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, says in his Foreword to this book, Gregory Dix is mostly known as "the author of a long book on the liturgy," and yet there was so much more to him than that. What Simon Jones, Chaplain of Merton College, Oxford, which as it happens