

Here, he takes his argument a step further, particularly with the idea that America has replaced Israel as God's chosen nation.

Related to the idea of 'God and country', Brueggemann also points out that American secularism has merged with evangelicalism, particularly within the realms of economy and military. Naturally, he classifies this as a sort of pseudo-evangelicalism, as he argues that such ideas are contrary to scripture. Brueggemann contrasts the general area of 'empire' – all of these mentioned notions – with the Christian virtue of hospitality, what he calls 'neighborhood'. This contrasting ideal is Brueggemann's solution to the problematic reality of 'empire' in America.

By comparing Israel's fall to the Babylonians with America dealing with the tragedy of 9/11 Brueggemann frames his work around the concepts of ideology/reality, denial/grief, and despair/hope. Scripturally, he grounds reality around the words of Jeremiah, grief with those in Lamentations, and hope in Second Isaiah. In so doing, he harshly critiques American culture. According to Brueggemann, it is the ministry of the church to bring about a message of hope, but in order to get there, America must first move past the stage of denial on to grief. Perhaps unintentionally, Brueggemann, in his critique, himself plays the role of prophet. Brueggemann's goal in writing this book is to help the country move past the stage of grief and onto the stage of hope. While some may find the work disturbing, this reviewer agrees with his assertions. Christians should take his views seriously so that we might acknowledge the reality of cultural brokenness so that we may have hope in restoration and healing through the church.

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A Call to Action: Women, Religion, Violence, and Power, Jimmy Carter, Simon and Schuster, 2014 (ISBN 978-1-4767-7395-7), x + 211 pp., \$28

Former US President Jimmy Carter's new book is a litany of the abuses of power in our world, especially as they relate to women. At the same time, it is a book in Christian ethics, stubbornly hopeful in its vision of what can be accomplished with faith and perseverance. Reading this book is a roller coaster of horror and hope.

There are two things that make this book different from others: first, the clearly autobiographical standpoint from which Jimmy Carter

writes, including his avowedly Christian evangelical position. And second, the sheer scope and range of the phenomena with which Carter concerns himself and on which he has made himself an expert.

What does an ex-president of the United States do with his knowledge, time, and residual power? Some join boards of businesses and play golf. Others make their fortune speaking. Jimmy Carter has been different, from the beginning. After 'being fired by the American people', as he so delicately puts it, Jimmy Carter joined the faculty of Emory University and set up The Carter Center. Through the Center, he has adopted several causes and has pursued them with vigor: He has been influential in raising health standards in Africa, in being an observer of the voting process in developing countries and, with his wife, Rosalynn, he has worked tirelessly to uncover the terrible status in which women find themselves, at home and abroad.

Starting in the distinctly autobiographical mode, Carter recounts his life in the South as the son of a rather poor farmer. He knew African-American children and, until the age of eight, they were equals; afterward, the South asserted its social self. Still, Carter remained true to the egalitarian principles of his evangelical Christianity: to love one's neighbor is to love everyone, regardless of race, gender, religion, and culture. And, to love one's neighbor is to favor the disadvantaged. The chapter on 'The Bible and Gender Equality' sets this forth very clearly. These fundamental beliefs made Carter more open to blacks in the South and, later, to many other cultures and religions. It was this distinctly Christian concern for others that led Carter to take along to the White House an African-American woman who had helped the family since his own childhood, and that motivated him, while he was president and afterward, to a life of concern for others.

After the introductory chapters, Carter proceeds to write about the death penalty, sexual assault, war and war-related violence, the killing and mistreatment of girls, rape, slavery and prostitution, spouse abuse, honor killings, genital cutting, forced marriages, dowry deaths, and discriminatory wages and health care for women. Throughout, Carter's presentation is fearless, very informed, and it shows that violence encourages violence. He also does not spare the United States or his home state of Georgia: 'between two hundred and three hundred children are sold in Atlanta alone each month!' (p. 127).

As an academic who has dealt with some of these areas and is aware of others, I was shocked to see how little I knew: 'The World Health Organization reported in 2013 that more than a third of all women are victims of physical or sexual violence . . .' (p. 143). 'Kara estimates that those who own and operate brothels can acquire a slave prostitute for less than \$1000 in Asia and from \$2,000 to \$8,000 in Western Europe and North America . . . The annual net profit to the slave's owner is about \$29,000' (p. 127). And more.

To this litany of abuse and suffering, Carter responds with a tenacious insistence not only on studying these phenomena, but on exposing the facts. He has convened conferences, published this book, and personally intervened in many situations to combat these evils. As a result, there are some bright spots: 'an overwhelming majority of citizens in the world's three largest democracies have different religions: India (81 percent Hindu), the United States (76 percent Christian), and Indonesia (87 percent Muslim). Two of them have elected women as leaders of their governments' (p. 168). 'The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by all nations except Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga, and the United States [*sic*]' (p. 182). Some progress is being made on the control of prostitution (p. 186). And more. One can only wish Jimmy Carter a long life and the wisdom to choose those who will follow his path, though their work will not have the élan that Carter has as an ex-president of the United States.

As a Jew, I, and many others, honor Carter for his work. Nonetheless, we remain wary of the evangelical basis that also teaches that Christianity is the 'best' religion precisely because of the principle of ultimate love of the other. We, together with many other world religions and cultures among whom are many Christians, do not trust that for two reasons: first, the history of Christian persecution and Western colonialism is still vivid and, second we, others, are very untrusting of a religion that asserts the need to, or even the desire to, convert others. To us, it seems that 'ultimate love of the other' means love of us for who we are, not for who we are not but could be. Still, someone has to get out on a limb and fight this fight.

As I write these lines, a wave of Islamic violence is sweeping over the world: Islamic State is killing Christian and Yazidi men and taking their women as slaves in Iraq. Boko Haram is killing men and enslaving women in Nigeria. Hamas is using the Palestinian population as human shields and causing great suffering to its people as it executes its plan to kill as many Jews as possible. The Syrian Alawite government is continuing its systematic killing of its own citizens. Pakistan and Afghanistan are beset by a resurgence of Taliban violence. In each of these conflicts, it is largely women and children who are suffering. Carter has a lot of work to do.

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