

Weeping in Anguish yet Buoyed in Hope:

Reading the Book of Joel with the Eyes of the Rejected

Paper Proposal for BISAM Study Group

Professional exegetes discern at least two periods and therefore two very different authors of the Book of Joel. The earlier Joel proclaims the devastating Day of the Lord and imminent destruction envisioned as a plague of locust. A later Joel raises his voice in hope and thanksgiving at an outpouring of the Spirit. However, when a dozen vulnerable and wounded souls infected with the HIV virus reflected individually and then shared animatedly the Book of Joel, chapter by chapter, section by section, none of them had any difficulty in identifying both with the destruction of the Lord's Day while at the very same time rejoicing in the vision of buoyant hope. This paper attempts to show the value of reading the Scriptures with the eyes of the vulnerable as they are challenged by the powers, inequalities and stigma of the world we have created. Not only does the Book of Joel as a whole and in each section come alive to those wounded by the HIV virus, it also opens our eyes to exegetical possibilities largely unnoticed by professional scholars: like HIV carriers today, the wounded Judeans might well have been simultaneously weeping at the destruction of their world, while being buoyed in hope up at an outpouring of the Spirit. The deep faith of the wounded gives rise to unfathomable hope. There is no need for dichotomy nor to distinguish periods either in the text or in the lives of the readers.

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