BOOK REVIEWS / RECENSIONI

P. Mollo, *The Motif of Generational Change in the Old Testament: A Literary and Lexicographical Study* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2016).

Mollo's monograph results from her doctoral dissertation, supervised by Pier Giorgio Borbone (University of Pisa). It focuses on the literary topos of generational change in the books of Genesis to Kings, as expressed by the term *dôr*, "generation". This convention occurs at decisive narrative transitions: from the pre-diluvial to the post-diluvial period (Gen 7:1; 9:12); from the family of Jacob to the people of Israel and the generation of the Exodus (Gen 15:16; Exod 1:6); from the wilderness generation to the one that enters the promised land (Num 32:13; Deut 1:35; 2:14); and from the latter to another generation "who did not know Yhwh and the work that he had done for Israel" (Judg 2:10). Specific instances of this historiographical pattern had been analysed in previous studies. Surprisingly enough, however, this monograph is the first to address this prominent literary convention systematically in all its occurrences.

As the introduction (pp. 1-6) explains, generations are presented as "characters" with their "own particular behaviour" who perform "a particular historical action" (pp. 3-4) and thus serve as "historiographical and literary tools" (p. 5). The material that follows is structured in five chapters. The first (pp. 7-21) outlines a brief history of research on biblical historiography starting from J. Van Seters (*In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983]). Mollo's study follows N. P. Lemche's advice to concentrate – rather than on historical content – on *the way* biblical historiographers presented the past (p. 17). "The theme of generational change is a *complex* phenomenon which fits all three main features of the 'language' of biblical history writing: it is a structural-compositional tool, a literary commonplace or topos, and a strong relevant thought pattern" (p. 21). Chapter three (pp. 23-49) treats terminology. Most importantly, it distinguishes generational change (expressed by *dôr*) from the much more commonly studied genealogies (Hebrew *tôl^{e}dôt*; pp. 23-26). Moreover, generational change is discussed as "historical construct" and as "historiographical" and "literary topos".

The third chapter (pp. 49-117) provides an analytical presentation of this topos in Genesis to Judges, while the fourth (pp. 119-152) systematically explores it as a historiographical tool. Mollo distinguishes a regenerative paradigm (a sinful generation has to die a violent death, a new generation arises: flood and desert) from a degenerative paradigm (a significant generation including its head dies a natural death, an ignorant generation arises that declines into servanthood: Exodus and Judges; see the scheme on p. 125). Relevant expressions and patterns are analysed to demonstrate that "repetition in biblical history writing – as well as in Herodotus – is a compositional tool at the service of analogy" (p. 145). The final chapter (pp. 153-167) evaluates the findings and opens further perspectives.

Of particular interest is Mollo's concluding question: "Why does *dôr* suddenly disappear" (i.e., after Judg 3:2)? Her response: "In my opinion, at the beginning of the Book of the Judges the people, as initial protagonists in history – through the responsibility placed on them for historical events – begin to experience a decline in their importance, *dôr* gradually being replaced by the figure of the King. Collective responsibility is swept away for

individual responsibility, our generational change model being ousted by a narrative and historiographical model centered on the 'sacred' person of the King, which will reign for the subsequent historical books of the Old Testament" (p. 167).

Mollo's book is a pleasure to read: it is relatively short, but very systematic and deeply thought through – a rare combination of academic virtues. Nevertheless, I shall mention two areas that are open to question: the first is methodological; the second concerns content.

Mollo herself emphasizes that her approach is "*partial*, because the methodological choice I made was to focus exclusively on the literary-synchronic side" and "*introductory*, because I agree with the opinion of certain authoritative scholars, that the synchronic investigation of any literary phenomenon should be undertaken first, as this forms the basis for any subsequent study of historical perspective" (p. 153). While I fully subscribe to the latter principle, I also agree with Mollo's suggestion that the literary phenomena discussed in her book deserve diachronic reflection: are they best explained by redactional, compositional or other processes? How are the similarities in such different texts as the Noah story and the wilderness narratives to be explained?

Although readers will enjoy Mollo's strict concentration on the topic, one could have wished for a slightly broader reflection on closely related motifs and themes. E.g., *dôr* appears in a prominent context towards the end of the Pentateuch in Deut 29:21: the "future generation, your children who will rise up (*qwm*) after you" are presented in dialogue with foreign nations. The catastrophe of their time – "Yhwh uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as it is today" (Deut 29:28) – is explained by the people's breaking of the covenant. Clearly, the generation of the exile (and most probably the addressees of these verses) is envisioned here, making it a highly important verse for the exilic and later phases of development of the Pentateuch. How could this pragmatically decisive reference to the "generation" of readers relate to the topos of generational change? It seems that the responsibility of Israel's *dôr* might not simply disappear with the generation after Joshua, but reappear in exile as envisioned in Moses' prophecy.

And how does generational change relate to the theme of transgenerational teaching so strongly emphasized in Deuteronomy? Or to the theme of transgenerational persecution of guilt found in so prominent a text as the Decalogue (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9; cf. Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; Deut 7:10)? One might have hoped to find issues such as these discussed, involving, e.g., the study of Bernd Biberger (*Unsere Väter und wir. Unterteilung von Geschichtsdarstellungen in Generationen und das Verhältnis der Generationen im Alten Testament* [BBB 145; Berlin: Philo, 2003]).

These questions and desiderata for further study show just how stimulating and thought-provoking Mollo's thesis is. Gently though this book weighs in one's hand, its contribution to biblical studies is weighty. We should hope to read more from Paola Mollo's pen.

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Ł. Niesiołowski-Spanò - J. West - C. Peri (eds.), *Finding Myth and History in the Bible: Scholarship, Scholars and Errors* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2016).

Maybe it is not by chance that Giovanni Garbini – a scholar of languages, history and literature of almost every corner of the Near East – sees the *Festschrift* as coming from

none other than the field of biblical studies. Despite often attracting criticism from certain biblical scholars, it is nonetheless in this very field that his inheritance is now recognized as having been most influential. As Thomas L. Thompson states, "certainly if ever there were a scholar who nearly single-handedly shifted the historical paradigm, it is he" (p. 3).

The title "Finding Myth and History in the Bible" recalls the title of one of Garbini's books published in 2003, *Mito e storia nella Bibbia*, which was translated into English in the same year. It summarizes Garbini's main lesson: separating, through historical and philological text analysis, the factual history of ancient Israel from ideological and mythical portrayals constructed by biblical literature. The subtitle, "Scholarship, Scholars and Errors", hints at the intense debate which Garbini's writings and methods, or as Thompson puts it, his "hermeneutics of suspicion" (p. 1), have aroused within biblical scholarship.

After a short editorial preface, the book comprises a compendium of nineteen papers in the alphabetical order of contributors' names. There is no division into specific topics or areas of research, and perhaps if one were to suggest a unifying framework it would be that of the figure of Garbini himself. The book starts with an "academic" profile written by Thomas L. Thompson (*Giovanni Garbini and Minimalism*), who first recalls Garbini's stances vis-à-vis traditional biblical scholarship and his influence on biblical studies. This academic profile is then complemented, at the end of the book, by a "private" profile of Giovanni Garbini, composed with great originality by Jim West (*Correspondence*), who chooses to publish the friendly exchange of letters between himself and Garbini over the last decade.

The nineteen papers are authored by leading scholars, colleagues and students of Garbini coming from the Rome school, the Copenhagen school and from other international universities. They represent different fields of research: biblical studies, early Jewish literature, semitic languages and linguistics, the history of Ancient Near East, and archaeology. Each contribution represents an original piece of research which employs, develops or reworks the Garbinian lesson in order to provide new solutions to old problems, open new perspectives and suggest new analytical tools in biblical research.

The first paper, *Giovanni Garbini and the Poetry of Leah Goldberg* by Francesco Bianchi, retraces the autobiographical dimension of Goldberg's compositions and, at the same time, reminds the reader of Garbini's sporadic yet precious incursions into the field of Modern Hebrew literature.

The contribution of Thomas M. Bolin (*"To Each His Own Job": On Job 42:1-6*) gets its title from Garbini's observation on the role of subjectivity in the interpretation of the Book of Job. Bolin, starting from philological and grammatical ambiguities in verses 42:1-6, gives his own interpretation of Job's final speech, and revives the "old idea" of the composition of the book put forward by Richard Simon in the 17th century.

Philip R. Davies (*The Siloam Tunnel Revisited*) re-examines the long-standing debate surrounding the Siloam Tunnel (better known as Hezekiah's Tunnel), by analysing the disciplines involved (archaeology, history, biblical studies, geology and palaeography) and describing the different existing academic standpoints. This important contribution, which the author defines "a modest foray into the sociology of knowledge", brings to light dynamics of scholarship which may lead to methodological errors, and encourages the attitude of those who, like Garbini, "challenge the most established facts, because these are the facts that most often escape scrutiny" (p. 31).

Giovanni Deiana's paper (*Hosea 2:2 and the Dating of the Book of Hosea*) creates an argument for a revised dating of the final version of the Book of Hosea in the Hellenistic period, on the basis of certain elements in Hos 2:2 and a possible parallel between them and 2 Macc 5:22-23, and in particular with the historical context therein described.

Philippe Guillaume (*Beyond Garbini's Anti-Mosaic Pentateuch: Nehushtan as Literary Tie Between the Torah and the Historical Books*) calls into question Garbini's standpoints about the composition, dating, function and authorship of the Pentateuch and the historical books, by reinterpreting the episode of Hezekiah's destruction of Nehushtan (2 Kgs 18:4b) from the perspective of social memory. He acknowledges Garbini for his pioneering insight regarding the central role played by Alexandria in the formation of the Bible.

Ingrid Hjelm's essay (*"When Dreams Come True": Jerusalem/Hierosolyma and Jewish Nationalism in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*) reconstructs the historical period in which the motifs of Jerusalem and the Temple were relived as a symbol of national political independence. This is particularly seen in Jewish historical writings from the Hellenistic and Roman period.

There then follows an interesting reflection by Niels Peter Lemche (*The Same Old Story*) on the need to invest more in proper historical methodology within biblical studies. The starting point for this discussion are methodological mistakes made by the traditional historical-critical (or maximalist) scholarship, and Lemche uses archaeologist Amihai Mazar as an example.

Mario Liverani, in four short and precious "Riddles", provides an explanation of four ancient *lost-in-tradition* toponyms (Tahta = Akhetaten, Pi-sidqi, Atlantis and Minoa) which over time have lost a great deal of the information required to decipher them. Could there be I wonder that there is enough in these riddles, especially those on Atlantis and Minoa, to inspire future research studies in the fields of Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern history?

Caterina Moro's paper (*Dividing the Image of God: The Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis*) investigates the creation of man and woman in the image of God as described in Genesis 1 and 2 from the sometimes contrasting viewpoints of ancient interpreters and translators of the Bible.

There then follows the lexicological study of Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò entitled *Farewell to the "Blind and Lame" (2 Samuel 5:6-10)*, where the expression "blind and lame" is reinterpreted in light of its literary war context. According to the author, the correct interpretation should be "the brandishers and the protectors", two technical terms for a kind of military unit. This paper also covers another area – Hebrew lexicography – in which Garbini gave his contribution to biblical scholarship.

Étienne Nodet (*From Moses to the Essens*) draws an interesting outline in six succinct steps of the religion of Israel during the Hellenistic period, using mainly extra-biblical historical sources. Nodet provides a vivid portrayal of a "blend of local features reworked under the influence of the larger adjacent cultures" (p. 123), such as Semitic Babylon on the one hand, and Greek Alexandria on the other.

The contribution of archaeologist Ida Oggiano (*A View from the West: The Relationship Between Phoenicia and "Colonial" World in the Persian Peirod*) describes Phoenicia as a cultural bridge between the Achaemenid East and the Punic West during 6th-4th century BCE. Epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological and literary evidence provides witness to an intense melting pot of communication flows and trades, revealing a "Mediterranean cultural identity" not yet recognized enough by scholars.

The linguistic study of Fabrizio Pennacchietti (*A Couple of Stone Disks or Simply a Pair of Disks? About the Hebrew Word obnayim [Exodus 1:16; Jeremiah 18:3]*) sheds new light on the "quasi-hapax" *obnayim*, which occurs only twice in the Bible. Pennacchietti suggests that it stems from a root which until today has never been taken into consideration, more specifically, /'PN/ "to turn round, to rotate". Accordingly, *obnayim* would mean "a pair of revolving disks (presumably made of wood)".

Chiara Peri, in her *Jonah and the Triffid: A Suggestion for the Qiqayon*, starts with the old querelle regarding the translation of the term *qiqayon* in the Book of Jonah, to then arrive at general literary considerations on the entire work. Employing intertextuality, she not only detects several biblical references within the book (for this reason defined "a recycling of scripts"), but also pinpoints its key message thanks to parallels she makes with the Book of Amos.

Emanuel Pfoh's *On Finding Myth and History in the Bible: Epistemological and Methodological Observations* is a theoretical contribution written with a good deal of clarity on how "to investigate whether history can be found behind (or inside) mythical evocations in the Bible or not" (p. 197). Pfoh suggests not to try to distinguish myth from history, as in the biblical mindset they were not distinct nor distinguishable, but rather to adopt an ethnographical and anthropological approach to biblical narratives in order to use them as "cultural sources".

Gian Luigi Prato deals with identity and ethnicity (*"Historical" Israel and "Biblical" Israel: or Ethnicity as a Symbol*). Biblical identity is considered here as a national self-conception produced during the Greek-Roman period, which the four prayers in Sirach, Tobit, Judith and Esther and the fragments of Judeo-Hellenistic historiographical works analysed by the author are witness to. This identity is above all symbolic and lends itself to be "reformulated and applied to different historical contexts" (p. 217), among which Christianity.

In a final fascinating historical paper, Thomas L. Thompson (*Ethnicity and the Bible: Multiple Judaisms*) examines the lack of geographical, ethnical and political unity within the Southern Levant. Ethnicity is thus considered as a key concept for those who want to write the history (or better, the many *histories*) of that region, for those who want to understand the ethnic ideology intrinsic to biblical writings, and finally for those who want to assess the weight which this ideology has had on modern understanding of ancient Israel and early Judaism.

The decision to bring these papers together in a very liberal fashion, with no predetermined structure, offering a variety of viewpoints, approaches and topics, on the one hand leaves to the reader with an impression of not being able to fully grasp the content and detail of the different papers of the book in the same way, while on the other hand, certainly stimulates interdisciplinary curiosity and provides specialists from different backgrounds with something of interest which, in most cases, is also innovative. With this collection of authoritative papers, Garbini's critical lesson and multifaceted inheritance is undoubtedly represented in a very efficient and effective manner.

Paola Mollo, University of Pisa

F. Wilk (ed.), *Das Vaterunser in seinen antiken Kontexten. Zum Gedenken an Eduard Lohse* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

Il libro presenta sei interventi sul Padre Nostro pronunciati al Simposio indetto dalla Facoltà dell'Università di Gottinga insieme con la chiesa evangelica-luterana di Hannover, in occasione dei 90 anni di Eduard Lohse nel 2014.

Jörg Frey, nel primo articolo proposto, valuta il Padre Nostro soprattutto in base ai testi liturgici aramaici della comunità di Qumran, le cui preghiere private presentano una spiccata affinità con la preghiera di Gesù (per es. il vocativo "Padre"). Attraverso questo parallelismo si possono comprendere meglio le singole richieste e il loro collocamento nel

Padre Nostro. Pur essendo l'Autore un esperto del mondo di Qumran, pecca come altri di limitatezza, soprattutto nella scelta della bibliografia, che esclude importanti studi recenti sulla preghiera e liturgia ebraiche, svolti da studiosi di ambito ebraico, rendendo così, come spesso accade nel mondo accademico cristiano, la ricerca teologica scientifica un' infruttuosa "autocitazione" all'interno della Chiesa stessa.

Più interessante, invece, il contributo di Reinhard Feldmeier che studia il Padre Nostro nel contesto della preghiera "gesuana" e delle preghiere pagane dell'antichità. Partendo da testi di preghiere greco-romani, l'Autore sottolinea non solo le differenze previste ma anche le analogie nell'occasione, forma, contenuto e soggetto delle preghiere quotidiane, non da ultimo nell'espressione della santità del Nome divino. L'analisi della critica filosofica greca alla preghiera popolare illumina sulla necessità di dare un nuovo orientamento alla stessa, la quale, in quanto espressione, attuazione del legame con la divinità, determina l'essere e l'agire dell'orante, fenomeno che si riscontra anche in certi atteggiamenti in ambito ebraico al tempo di Gesù. Anche l'analisi delle differenze è interessante, là dove, per es., nella preghiera di Gesù non compare la sottomissione al pre-determinato, ma Dio può cambiare il corso delle cose ("Padre allontana da me questo calice"), né l'aspirazione al divino del singolo ma della comunità ("Padre nostro"). Il climax della ricerca di Feldmeier è nella differenza fondamentale causata dall'escatologia evangelica: il cosmo dei filosofi greco-romani è sottoposto alle leggi divine e deve essere così accettato, per Gesù, invece, con l'arrivo della signoria di Dio c'è l'attesa di una radicale nuova creazione della realtà. Nel pensiero ebraico Dio non è esponente dell'*Ens* ma la realtà (creazione) è diventata *Ens* attraverso la sua Parola (volontà), la realtà non è emanazione dell'*Ens* di Dio ma espressione della sua volontà.

La domanda che si pone Florian Wilk nel terzo contributo è quale sia la realtà della vita che si rispecchia nella preghiera di Gesù, a chi e perché essa sia stata originariamente trasmessa. Nella prospettiva della tradizione sinottica dei racconti e delle disposizioni di Gesù sulla preghiera privata individuale, il Padre Nostro appare come una preghiera che conduce non solo i discepoli ma tutti gli ascoltatori a seguire, ognuno per sé, le istruzioni e il modello di Gesù, così da partecipare al Regno di Dio ed entrare nel campo di forza del perdono, non solo di Dio, ma nella quotidianità tra esseri umani. Una delle tante interpretazioni, quella di Wilk, scaturita dall'analisi del Padre Nostro nel contesto della preghiera "gesuana" trattata nei Sinottici.

Più mirata è l'analisi condotta da Peter von der Osten-Sacken, che considera la richiesta del perdono del Padre Nostro come accesso al vangelo di Matteo. L'Autore inserisce la preghiera del Gesù matteano nel quadro di tre questioni legali fondamentali riguardanti Mammona, la bocca e lo stomaco: come attuare le opere di bene, la preghiera e il digiuno. Attraverso il *Qaddish* (preghiera contemporanea analoga), la *Tefillah* (raccolta di benedizioni e richieste contemporanea) e testi liturgici di Qumran, Osten-Sacken sottolinea l'unità di Dio come giudice e misericordioso ed evidenzia la visione casuistica del comportamento umano corrispondente a quello divino, che mira ad un nuovo inizio senza debiti (peccati). Dall'analisi comparata di questi testi con quelli matteani, l'Autore rileva l'evidente parallelismo con il pensiero ebraico tradizionale: l'esistenza umana si basa sulla misericordia di Dio, indotta dalla conversione (confessione dei peccati). L'azione perdonatrice di Dio si realizzerebbe, per Matteo, attraverso il Messia, e nella comunità post-pasquale l'impegno di Gesù Cristo per il perdono dei peccati suscita la coscienza della misericordia di Dio "con tutte le conseguenze per le proprie azioni".

Estremamente rilevante di questo articolo è la critica dell'Autore alla tendenza antigiudaica e anti-semita sviluppatasi e cresciuta nell'esegesi e nella liturgia cristiane, do-

vute anche all'interpretazione di M. Lutero, soprattutto per quel che riguarda la figura di Giuda. Dietro suggerimento di G. Heinrici, commentatore tedesco neotestamentario (1896), e contro la più diffusa esegesi cristiana, che vuole Giuda il delatore di Gesù, Osten-Sacken ripropone all'attenzione il significato del verbo greco *paradidónai*, da tradurre con "consegnare" (in questo caso da parte di Dio) piuttosto che con "tradire" (1Cor 11). L'Autore mette in guardia, infine, dal pericolo di demonizzazione di Giuda, e attraverso di lui degli ebrei, in conseguenza ad una errata interpretazione, e propone la modifica di alcune parti delle liturgie cristiane in corso, in particolare partendo proprio dal significato del perdono nel vangelo di Matteo, che fa di Giuda un peccatore pentito e, dunque, perdonato.

Nel contributo di Michael Wolter l'Autore analizza la collocazione della preghiera di Gesù nel quadro del vangelo di Luca. Sulle orme di Lohse, Wolter evidenzia come Luca abbia inserito il Padre Nostro in quello che lo studioso aveva definito un "catechismo di preghiera", costituito dalle tre parti della pericope 11,5-13. L'Autore sostiene di individuare il *Sitz im Leben* della preghiera di Gesù in culti a cui avrebbero partecipato i due evangelisti e in cui la preghiera sarebbe stata trasmessa; sostiene, inoltre, la paternità lucana della stessa, escluse le richieste del pane e del perdono, attribuite invece a Matteo e ricerca il motivo della variazione. L'intenzione dell'evangelista sarebbe quella di rendere il Padre Nostro, originariamente inserito in una realtà di carismatici itineranti, una preghiera per la quotidianità delle comunità cristiane. Per Wolter, tutte le richieste della preghiera si riassumono nella richiesta dello Spirito (11,13), che i discepoli ricevono, in assenza della persona di Gesù, dopo Pasqua (24,49).

Conclude questa rassegna di articoli un contributo di Jürgen Wehnert, che getta una luce su un campo ancora poco esplorato, o troppo poco considerato, nella ricerca cosiddetta "Third Quest", che si occupa dell'analisi della continuità storico-spirituale di Gesù con l'ebraismo del suo tempo. L'analisi dell'Autore si fonda sulla trasmissione del Padre Nostro nella *Didaché*, in modo particolare, e negli scritti della proto-chiesa (né sinagoga, né chiesa). Egli sostiene un'unica fonte proto-cristiana, risalente alla fine del I sec., a cui avrebbero attinto indipendentemente l'autore del trattato proto-cristiano e Matteo.

Viene poi analizzato il collocamento della preghiera di Gesù all'interno della struttura della *Didaché*, con particolare riferimento alla legislazione dei rituali, per le cui controversie il trattato fungerebbe da canone, atto a definire e a fornire un'identità collettiva alla proto-chiesa, verso l'esterno (ebraismo e paganesimo) e verso l'interno (elementi dell'*ekklesìa*).

Wehnert propone addirittura un'influenza della *Didaché* sul vangelo di Matteo, ne sottolinea la collocazione del Padre Nostro nel trattato, tra battesimo e eucarestia, e rileva un'analogia con i rituali di iniziazione, in particolare della comunità di Qumran. Sulla base dei rituali di ammissione dei proseliti nell'ebraismo, la *Didaché* avrebbe riproposto lo stesso modello: battesimo – preghiera – pasto comunitario, in cui il novizio doveva, dopo un corso di istruzione religiosa, immergersi in un bagno purificatore e attraverso una preghiera, che simboleggiava la sua nuova esistenza, poteva accedere al pasto comunitario con i fratelli nella stessa fede. Nella *Didaché* il Padre Nostro diventa, così, un elemento del rito eucaristico, per raggiungere il quale è necessaria una purificazione "morale", fornita dalla richiesta del perdono. Per il trattato proto-cristiano il battesimo e l'eucarestia fungerebbero da simboli di "differenza", che distinguono i fedeli delle comunità della *Didaché* dai pagani e dagli ebrei non credenti nel Cristo, e per questo si sarebbe creata una diversa prassi di preghiera aggregante, che rinforzasse la coscienza religiosa.

Come in ogni raccolta di contributi, si incontrano i più e i meno interessanti. Ciò che rincresce ancora sempre notare è che, malgrado il vigoroso impatto della Third Quest

sulla ricerca teologica, che ha modificato in modo importante la procedura nell'analisi dei testi e nella loro interpretazione, ci siano studiosi "refrattari" all'apertura su nuovi orizzonti, causando così la stagnazione della ricerca, che potrebbe invece apportare netti miglioramenti sia nell'interpretazione biblica che nel dialogo interreligioso.

Milena Beux, Einsiedeln

J. Unsok Ro, *Poverty, Law, and Divine Justice in Persian and Hellenistic Judah* (Ancient Israel and its Literature 32; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018)

Johannes Unsok Ro's recent book on the language of poverty, law, and divine justice in Persian and Hellenistic Judah offers a thought-provoking contribution to the field of biblical and Second Temple studies. The book consists of seven chapters and an epilogue, as well as a bibliography, an ancient sources index, and an index of modern authors. The book, Ro notes in the opening chapter, "does not intend to develop a single thesis but to highlight some major issues in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine" (1). Each chapter, therefore, offers a separate excurse contributing to the author's overarching goal of "portraying Yehud from various angles through theological as well as socioeconomic lenses" (1). Ro introduces his book by situating it in conversation with a series of studies on the socio-economic circumstance of Persian and Hellenistic Judah, including Joel Weinberg's theory of "citizen-temple community" as the key structural feature of post-restoration Judah. Ro also uses the socio-economic theories developed by Max Weber and Gerhard Lenski to frame his own analysis of conditions in Persian Judah.

The book's second chapter deals with the spread of literacy in the Persian- and Hellenistic-era province of Yehud. The chapter represents a critique of Rainer Albertz's argument that a "piety of the poor" in postexilic Israel originated among "poor peasants, shepherds, laborers" and other lower-class groups (13). By contrast, Ro argues that the language of poverty does not necessarily presuppose that those who use it are poor themselves. In postexilic Judah, the lowest strata of the society were most likely illiterate and thus could not have produced a highly elaborate "theology of the poor" characteristic of postexilic biblical literature. "In agrarian societies," Ro notes, "literacy was a highly sophisticated skill and an extremely rare privilege that only a well-educated minority of 6 or 7 percent in an urban area was able to possess" (19). Literacy, moreover, came in degrees, which Ro, following earlier literature, identifies as "reading," "copier's or craftsman's writing," and "composer's writing" (21). The ability to compose complex texts presupposes the highest degree of literacy and thus an advanced authorial group. Ro draws a list of criteria to identify a hypothetical group behind the "piety of the poor" and suggests that "a priestly class such as the Levites or the forerunner of the group that was later called Hasidim naturally attracts our attention because this group reflects a socioeconomic stratum that fulfills the aforementioned requirements" (26). Ro distinguishes this group from the illiterate majority of postexilic Judean populace, on the one hand, and "a new upper class, whose ideal was subservient devotion to the foreign superpower without any consideration for whether their own brothers and sisters were exploited by the colonial economic system," on the other (24). He uses the term "theological group" to characterize people behind the piety of the poor and describes them as "excellent theologians who were able to satisfy the criterion of the highest level of theological literacy" (27).

I find the construction of Ro's argument in this chapter both thought-provoking and problematic on a number of different levels. The word "theology" in various conjunctions is

one of the most frequently used categories throughout the book. In addition to "theological group" and "theological literacy" already mentioned, Ro talks about "theological rivalry" (28), "the theology of the poor" (30), "theological subgroups" (65), the "theological profile" of particular biblical works (66), "the temple's theological value or salvific function" (94), "Deuteronomistic theology" (98), "a theologically reflected awareness of lowliness" (99), "conflicting theological perspectives," "theological conflicts," "a theological standpoint" (100), and so on. In my opinion, the use of the category "theology" to describe life in Persian and early Hellenistic Judah is very problematic. Making this category a key epistemic feature in one's discourse on the subject is even more so.

Initially attested in the works of Plato and Aristotle, the Greek *theologia* becomes central to Christian epistemologies from the Patristic period onwards. I do not see anything in Judean or Samaritan texts composed between the sixth and third centuries BCE that would resemble this category and any of the connotations it entails. When used to understand the worldviews and practices of populace inhabiting the Persian and early Hellenistic region of Yehud, the term "theology" appears to be alien and out of place. Because the category is external to the culture it describes, the category's persistent invocation throughout the book inhibits our ability to understand the symbolic universe of either Judeans or Samaritans in that universe's *own terms*. At the very minimum, the use of theology as a key epistemic category that punctuates the author's analysis calls for an extensive methodological introduction that would explain author's reasons for this particular word choice. There is no such introduction in the monograph.

For example, when talking about confrontation between the Qumran community and temple leadership later in the book, Ro characterizes it as "theological confrontation" (186). Yet, one of the earliest lists of disagreements between the Qumran community and its opponents, 4QMMT, concerns normative differences of practice rather than theological debates. I am not proposing that "halakhic confrontation" would be any better, a category shaped by later rabbinic considerations. We have to look for alternative and more adequate terminology to describe the symbolic horizons of postexilic Yehud and not to project onto it ideologically loaded terminology from other time periods. Earlier in the book, Ro introduces the category of *religionness* to describe "a nexus of core values and meanings that was an essential part of the religious world of Judean society in the Persian and Hellenistic periods" (4). The term is a bit unwieldy and linguistically infelicitous, but, in my opinion, it opens up much better epistemic prospects than the term "theology" does. Unfortunately, while Ro occasionally comes back to *religionness*, theology appears much more frequently in his work.

Another somewhat baffling feature of chapter 2 (and the book in general) is the author's choice *not* to engage in conversation with some of the main studies in the field. In a chapter dealing with the issue of literacy in the postexilic Judean society, one would expect at least some interaction with Seth Schwartz's "Language, Power, and Identity in Ancient Palestine," and Catherine Hezser's *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, to name just two.[1] Engaging Schwartz's article, in particular, might have helped develop certain aspects of Ro's own argument on the distribution and function of literacy in Yehud.

John J. Collins' *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* and Schwartz's *Imperialism and Jewish Society* are two further works that could help better situate Ro's analysis of social underpinnings of the "piety of the poor."[2] Ro's argument that "Levites and Hasidim" formed a group socially different from and ideologically opposed to the priests (26) is,

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[1] See S. Schwartz, "Language, Power, and Identity in Ancient Palestine," *Past and Present* 148 (1995), 3-47, and C. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

[2] See J.J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox,

in my opinion, insufficiently nuanced. The simple transfer of biblical group-names, such as Hasidim, to the realm of socioeconomic analysis is problematic in its own right. Such a transfer implies that biblical authors coined their terminology with socio-economic considerations in mind, which is far from certain. There is an anachronistic tendency here to imagine biblical narratives as inhabiting fundamentally the same symbolic universe as Marx, Weber, or Lenski did, posing the same kinds of questions, and structuring their language in accordance with the same norms and meanings.

Chapter 3 of the book attempts to identify "the authorial groups behind the biblical law codes such as the Covenant Code (CC), the Deuteronomic Code (DC), and the Holiness Code (HC) in their socioeconomic and theological location" (33). The chapter argues that each of these compositions originated with a specific interest-group in postexilic Yehud, and therefore reflects that group's ideology and agenda. The groups "dwelled side by side within the same territorial area but belonged to different communal networks connected to the respective law codes" (62). Ro identifies the groups as "the descendants of the דלת הארץ and Samaritans" (CC), "the lay returnees" (DC), and "the priestly returnees" (HC) (73). Chapter 4 focuses on the postexilic construction of the prophetic figure of Jeremiah. The chapter deals specifically with Jer 7:1-12 and 20:7-13. It argues that the two sections were written "by the same theological group in the postexilic period." The author identifies "the members of this theological group" with "the members of the piety-of-the-poor movement." This group "intended to correct the theological direction of the Deuteronomistic redaction in the book of Jeremiah" (100).

Chapter 5 traces the evolution of the concept of YHWH's punitive justice in the Hebrew Bible from the pre-exilic to the postexilic period. The chapter identifies three types of retributive justice in biblical texts. The first type views the cosmos inhabited by the Israelite community as being fundamentally flawless. "This cosmos could only be preserved if sins and flaws were eliminated by offering sacrifices or performing rituals" (123). If the sin was too grave, the person who committed it was to be eliminated from society. An entire community could be destroyed by God in order to maintain the divine cosmos, if the community was found to be sinful beyond repair. Ro associates this approach with the pre-exilic period in the history of Israel. In the wake of the Babylonian conquest of 587 BCE, the belief in the flawless cosmos was broken. Instead, "an individualized theology of retribution" gradually became "the primary approach to human sin and divine punishment" (123). The third approach also developed in the postexilic period and was eschatological in nature. This approach argued that "the goodness and soundness of current society is partial and even exceptional" (119) and, therefore, emphasized "the salvific function of the righteous few" (124). I find this chapter to be one of the most interesting in the book, though the term "purity" would probably be better than the term "sin" as a category to describe a worldview in pre-exilic and postexilic Israel. At least there needs to be a discussion of the relationship between these two terms and their respective merits as epistemic categories for understanding Israelite cultures before and after the Babylonian conquest.

Chapter 6 focuses on "the group of psalms in which the suppliants call themselves 'poor of God' (the psalms of the poor)" and attempts to identify intellectual and social characteristics of the group behind the psalms. Ro notes that in the psalms "the terminology relating to the poor is used as a self-description by the respective authors or their followers," and this terminology "is employed as a synonym of the persecuted righteous." There are also indications that the psalms reflect "an internal Judean conflict" (185). In

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1997), and S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

sum, the language of the poor in the psalms comes very close to language associated with some of the sectarian compositions in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Chapter 7 takes a closer look at the piety of the poor in the Qumran community. The chapter convincingly reiterates the argument that there is continuity between the language of some of the sectarian compositions, such as the *Hodayot*, and the language of poverty in biblical texts. The language of the piety of the poor as it appears in the Hodayot argues the author, is not unique to the Qumran community, but rather "should be sought in the internal Judean sectarianism found throughout the Persian period" (209). I find this part of the book to be well-argued and overall convincing, although methodological and terminological issues noted earlier in the review persist in these chapters as well.

My disagreement with Ro over methodology in no way detracts from my appreciation for the book's overall value. Ro's work is an important resource for anyone interested in the history of the Hebrew Bible and, more broadly, the history of Jewish cultures during the Persian and early Hellenistic eras.

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