OUDE TESTAMENT

BLENKINSOPP, J. — David Remembered. Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 2013. (23 cm, XII, 219). ISBN 978-0-8028-6958-6. $ 26.00, £ 17.99

Blenkinsopp introduces this book as a supplement to his much-appreciated earlier work on *Judaism, The First Phase* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). There, this acknowledged master of the history, literature, and religion of Judah in the Persian Period gathered together into a synthesis the fruits of his many previous more detailed studies in order to show in particular how Judaism emerged from the earlier national religion of the states of Israel and Judah. The fall of Judah to the Babylonians in 587 BCE inevitably saw the removal from power of the long-lasting Davidic monarchy. As is well known, however, hopes for a future restoration of the monarchy survived and surfaced from time to time in various guises and the memory of David himself lived on in an almost unprecedented manner over many centuries: ‘once an iconic personality or event from the past enters the realm of legend and myth, becomes lodged in the collective memory of a society, and is reinforced by repetitive ritual action, lack of historical credibility becomes irrelevant’ (p. 9). Perhaps because of its more political orientation, this theme was not discussed in the previous book. Here that gap is well and truly plugged, with a survey that stretches all the way down to the Bar Kokhba revolt in the second century of the Common Era.

The plan of the book is straightforwardly chronological with an introduction and nine chapters. Given that there are only 180 pages of text, it is inevitable that the coverage is sometimes selective and is at all times economical. The marvel is that Blenkinsopp manages to pack in so much sound common sense in relation to topics which are not always familiar and which are frequently controversial. Perhaps his greatest gift is an ability to gather diverse snippets of evidence and to put them together into a meaningful narrative. He is always careful to sketch out what is known of the historical vicissitudes of Judah's political life, and this is of particular relevance as his main 'thesis', if it may be so termed, is that 'from beginning to end, attempts to restore the Davidic dynasty, or predictions of its future or its eschatological restoration, were without exception protests against imperial rule' (p. 161). His sketch of the influential Shaphan family in chapter 3, for instance, is a marvel of presentation, and indeed Blenkinsopp's discussion of the brief Neo-Babylonian period is more detailed than all that follows and is all the more helpful for that.

The first chapter recounts the events leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and what Blenkinsopp calls the eclipse of the House of David as told in both Kings and Chronicles with their differing emphases. Each has what may be an added appendix, the former hinting at a future via the exiled king Jehoiachin and the latter by way of God's election of Cyrus the Persian to permit the rebuilding of the temple.

The second chapter sketches Blenkinsopp's take on what has recently become a lively topic of discussion, namely the role of the tribe of Benjamin in, but not always of, Judah. There is no hint, however, that anyone anticipated a revival of the very much earlier monarchy of the Benjamite Saul. This is followed (ch. 3) by a good discussion of affairs in Judah after the exile of the leadership to Babylon, though this does not seem directly to add much to his major topic.

With chapter 4 we reach the first major treatment of David in the post-fall period, namely the central chapters of the book of Isaiah (chapters 40–55). Interestingly the results are somewhat counter-intuitive (though entirely correct) in terms of the main theme of the book: the dynastic promise is transferred to the people as a whole (Isa. 55:3) and it is Cyrus who emerges as God's real 'messianic' agent (45:1). Surprisingly, Blenkinsopp nowhere addresses the question of the audience of these chapters. It has generally been considered to be the exiled community in Babylon (and that has been Blenkinsopp's opinion in previous publications), but in recent years a case has been mounted for seeing it rather as the Judean community. Uncharacteristically, he does not here relate his exegesis to its immediate political context, though arguably it would make a great difference to its intended 'impact'.

With chapter 5 we finally reach a more positive early expression of Davidic hopes, namely the aspirations which circled round the immediately post-exilic Davidic leader Zerubbabel. Alongside his historical setting in the turbulent first few years of the reign of Darius when all sorts of hopes of future liberation might briefly have been aroused, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah both include some rather allusive prophecies in relation to him which Blenkinsopp sorts out nicely. I am less certain, however, that he is right to deduce from silence about Zerubbabel's participation in the rededication of the temple in 515 BCE that he had therefore been removed by the Persian authorities under some form of suspicion. The narrative in question (Ezra 6:19–22) was certainly written very much later and there is no evidence whatever that the author at this point had access to any independent source. He does not mention the high priest either (though nobody has ever doubted his involvement), and the argument from silence at this point is weakened by the narrator's obvious concern to focus on the status of the lay population, not their leadership.

The next period covered is made (perhaps optimistically) to include the composition of Chronicles, and here again we note a reinterpretation of the figure of David away from future hope and more towards his role in the establishment of temple worship, with its Levites, music, and psalms. While that is certainly well said, I have myself argued more than once elsewhere that the Chronicler also harboured what I should prefer to call a 'royalist' rather than a 'messianic' hope in the sense that he indicates in several passages an expectation that the Davidic family will rule again; but this receives no attention from Blenkinsopp here.

In chapter 7 we have a splendid and lucid survey of the addition of passages relating to the dynastic theme to many of the previous prophets (e.g. Amos 9:11–15; Hos. 2:1–3 [ET, 1:10–2:1] and 3:4–5; Mic. 5:1–4, as well as parts of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel). These have often been noted by commentators as likely additions in their present contexts, and Blenkinsopp reaffirms that case in a fully persuasive manner and then adds the advantage of showing how they all reflect a similar outlook from a roughly similar period.

This is continued in the next chapter with a discussion of one of the most obscure sections of the whole Hebrew Bible, namely Zechariah 9–14. In the first part (Zech. 9–11), following an outline of the history of the early Hellenistic period in which it is likely that most of this material was written, a strong expression of Davidic hope is detected in three main passages and the way in which they draw on and develop earlier written prophecy is elucidated in a fresh manner. The second half, chapters 12–14, is even more obscure, however, and here the relevant passages are far more sombre and seem to anticipate the violent death of the Davidic figure. With that the chapter just stops, however, leaving this reader, at least, rather confused. There is no summary or conclusions, as most of the earlier chapters have, so that we are left wondering what might be the significance of this turn in the trajectory. Nobody can deny that the passages are resistant in the extreme to confident exegesis, and no possible identification with known historical personages commands any sort of agreement, so that caution is certainly in order. But given Blenkinsopp's overall aim and theme it was disappointing not to receive any kind of speculation about what is going on here.

The last chapter is certainly tacked on loosely as it moves us forward to 'Resistance to Imperial Rome'. It would be surprising if there were no upsurge of Davidic hope during the Antiochene period, for instance, but this is passed over in silence. Resistance to Rome is analysed briefly in three arenas: the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Bar Kokhba revolt much later, and then in the person of Jesus the Son of David (the one case where a strict chronological sequence is abandoned, no doubt for rhetorical effect). As so often in this book, the comments made are thoughtful and illuminating, but inevitably there is great deal that is left unsaid.

What we have, then, is a straightforward and almost uniformly 'positive' explanation of Blenkinsopp's preferred story about this topic, so that one could conclude with a simple assessment of *multum in parvo*. For those coming to this topic for the first time it will be a helpful guide and certainly more sobre and based on a much greater depth of scholarship than others of its ilk. Is it therefore churlish to express a slight disappointment at how much is left unsaid? For the most part this would comprise some interaction with recent scholarship which takes a very different view on matters of detail or indeed of the project as a whole, as I shall illustrate with a couple of examples below. But elsewhere there seem to me to be some gaps where even a uniformly positive presentation might have included a bit more. I have already mentioned the Antiochene period as an example, but in fact that could be extended to the whole of the latter part of the Hellenistic period. Included here, among other things, might be mentioned as one obvious source to examine the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in the Septuagint. As William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), among others, has shown, this could be a fruitful source to exploit.

In terms of the earlier periods, the kind of detail that I was surprised to find lacking is the suggestion which several scholars have advanced recently that the Davidic dynasty continued to rule as vassal kings until at least the generation after Zerubbabel. Given the greater attention to detail that Blenkinsopp shows for this earlier part of the period he covers, a reference to a suggestion of such obvious relevance to his topic would have been welcome, if only (as I would say in agreement with N. Na'aman, *Henoch* 22 [2000], 35–44) to dismiss it as exaggerated.

On a very much larger scale, Blenkinsopp makes no reference at all to those who effectively deny that there was a continuous or dominant expectation of a Davidic messiah throughout most of the centuries that he covers. Of course, as my summary should have already made clear, Blenkinsopp himself does not present the picture as uniform; he attends equally to those with more advanced hopes and to those who reinterpret the Davidic promise in alternative ways. Even so, however, his dominant narrative tracks the path of future hopes and expectations. For a very different appraisal, however, I might mention especially, alongside other shorter treatments, such as J. Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980), the major study of K. E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism. Its History and Significance for Messianism* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995), among whose major findings are that in the early post-exilic period the anticipation of a restored Davidic king is far less common than is generally recognized, that there is no future Davidic hope expressed in Zech. 12:2—13:1, where the house of David is presented as a prominent social group in post-exilic Judah, and that only with the Psalms of Solomon 17 (*c.* 60 BCE) do we first encounter a genuinely Davidic messianic hope as popularly understood. The stimulus to the development of this hope was the desire to oppose Hasmonean claims to kingship, so that the writer need not have drawn on a widespread tradition so much as revisited the biblical material to seek ammunition for his polemical stance. The conclusions are clear: there never was a 'continuous, widespread, or dominant expectation for a davidic messiah' (p. 270). Reference might also be made to the reservations expressed with regard to post-exilic prophecy by Rex Mason in an essay in a volume to which Blenkinsopp refers once elsewhere, J. Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (JSOTSup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 338–64.

Now, in my opinion Pomykala overlooks a number of important features and exaggerates others, but his thesis has attracted some support and I, for one, should have welcomed the wisdom of Blenkinsopp's consideration. Although the virtue of his chosen style of presentation is straightforward clarity, it detracts from its persuasiveness if all along the reader is left without some clear steerage in regard to other and even opposing views.

It looks, therefore, as though this book may have been written in somewhat of a hurry with the aim of making a single main point. In this it succeeds. So let my last word not be one of criticism for what, perhaps idiosyncratically, I should like to have seen added, but gratitude for the fine collection of observations that we are glad to find here.

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LABOUVIE, S. — Gottesknecht und neuer David. Der Heilsmittler für Zion und seine Frohbotschaft nach Jesaja 60–62. (Forschung zur Bibel, 129). Echter Verlag GmbH, Würzburg, 2013. (23 cm, X, 402). ISBN 978-3-429-03641-6. € 42,-.

This study is the author's slightly revised doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of professor dr. Renate Brandscheidt and accepted by the University of Trier in the winter of 2012/13. The main question addressed in this study is who is speaking at the beginning of Isaiah 61. Can the speaker be identified as the author of this chapter, usually called 'Trito-Isaiah'? Is it Zion/Jerusalem who is speaking here? Can the speaker in Isaiah 61 be identified with the Servant of the Lord who is portrayed in several passages in Isaiah 40–55? The answers to these questions are not only relevant for interpreting Isaiah 60–62, but also for understanding why Jesus identified himself with the speaker in Isaiah 61 when he explained this passage in the synagogue of Nazareth, as we read in Luke 4:18.

In order to answer these questions, Sandra Labouvie closely examines the Hebrew text and unity of Isaiah 60–62 (chapter 1), the genre and the structure of the text (chapter 2), and the tradition history of these chapters (chapter 3). In doing so, she aims to shed light on the development of Isaiah 60–62 within the Isaianic tradition. She is especially interested in the relationship between Isaiah 40–55 and Isaiah 60–62. Though these two literary units have several close parallels, exegetes have observed that there are differences between them as well.

The first chapter of the book (15-82) is devoted to text-critical and literary critical analyses of Isaiah 60–62. Labouvie offers various comments on text-critical problems related to the Masoretic text of Isaiah 60–62. In most cases, she defends the Masoretic reading of the Hebrew text. She accepts only a few emendations proposed by the critical apparatus of the BHS or by biblical scholars in current exegetical literature. At the same time, Labouvie is very critical of the literary unity of the current composition. She makes a distinction between three layers within the text of Isaiah 60–62 in its present form. Some verses she regards as being part of the original text ('Grundschicht'), other verses she ascribes to an editor who reworked the original text ('Bearbeitung'), and a few passages she considers to be secondary additions ('Glossen') which were inserted by a later editor to make the message of text more explicit to the readers (17, note 46).

In discussing the development of Isaiah 60–62, Labouvie frequently refers to the work of other biblical scholars, mostly Germans (e.g., Berges, Koenen, Lau, Steck, Westermann). In addition, she brings forward a mixture of arguments that support her division of the text: use of particular lexemes, use of tenses, imitation, tensions and repetitions in the text, lines of thought, parallels to other passages, etc. The mixture of arguments makes it hard to understand which criteria she uses to distinguish one literary layer from the other. Furthermore, she does not make clear how her observations relate to the work of other authors, such as, for example, the 1995 study of Paul A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56–66*. With regard to his study, Labouvie only remarks that Smith comes to 'a similar conclusion' regarding the distinction between an original composition of Isaiah 60–62 and a revision of the original text by a later editor (7, note 25). At the end of chapter 1, she arrives at the conclusion that the original text of Isaiah 60–62 was a clear literary composition. Isaiah 61:1, in which an anonymous speaker in first person singular announces good news for Zion, was part of the original text. The immediate cause to write the first version of Isaiah 60–62 was probably the rebuilding of the temple in 515 BCE.

The second chapter (83-102) offers a form-critical analysis of Isaiah 60–62 and an analysis of its literary structure. According to Labouvie, the genre of the original composition is an oracle of salvation. It consists of three strophes and has a concentric structure. The speech of the anonymous speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61 is at the center of the composition. The central position of the announcement of good tidings indicates that it was probably used as 'prophetic liturgy' in the temple service to encourage the people of God in Jerusalem.

She argues that the editor of the original text did not change the three-fold structure of the original composition. The aim of the revision was to clarify and to strengthen the message of the original text. For that reason, the revised liturgical composition can still be regarded as a 'prophetic liturgy' that was used together with other texts in the service of the second temple. Within the revised literary composition, the anonymous speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61 still holds a central position.

The third chapter, which is the biggest part of the study (103-335), pays attention to the tradition history of Isaiah 60–62. Its first part offers a semantic analysis of the two layers in chapters 60–62. In my view, this discussion is the weakest part of the book. First of all, it is overwhelmingly long. It contains a lot of information that is not relevant for understanding the current composition of Isaiah 60–62 or the development of these chapters. For example, Labouvie dedicates four pages, including a footnote of almost one page, to the expressions 'the year of the Lord's favor' and 'the year of vengeance of our God' in Isaiah 61:2. Her main conclusion is that the two expressions can be related to the theological notions of the mercy and the wrath of God in the Old Testament.

Furthermore, she does not make a clear distinction between semantic observations and theological considerations. Though James Barr in his 1961 study, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, already argued that one should not look for theology in single words, Labouvie concentrates on 'significant theological words' in discussing the Hebrew text of Isaiah 60–62 (106, 139).

Finally, Labouvie's semantic analysis does not provide a solid basis for interpreting the text of Isaiah 60–62 and for revealing the identity of the anonymous speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61. This is illustrated by the semantic analysis of Isaiah 61:1, which is a key verse in her study. In discussing the expression רוח אדני יהוה ('the spirit of the sovereign Lord Yhwh') in Isaiah 61:1, Labouvie points out that the epithet אדני ('sovereign Lord') has a special meaning and probably stems from the Jerusalem tradition (141). In her view, the combination of the names אדני ('sovereign Lord') and יהוה ('Yhwh') is used here (and in v. 11) to refer to Yhwh as 'the God of Zion'. Labouvie, however, does not mention that the epithet אדני ('sovereign Lord') is missing both in 1QIsa^{a}, which reads רוח יהוה ('spirit of Yhwh'), and in 1QIsa^{b}, which reads רוח יהוה אלהים ('spirit of Yhwh God'). The conclusion that Isaiah 61:1 refers to the 'God of Zion' thus lacks a solid basis because it is mainly based on a single word which does not even occur in all the textual traditions of the Book of Isaiah.

The second part of the third chapter is called theological synthesis and examines the relationship between Isaiah 60–62 and other texts within the Zion-David-tradition. Particularly, it examines the reorientation of the David-Zion-tradition in Psalm 89 and in the Servant Songs in Isaiah 40–55 (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13–53:12). She argues that the capture of King Jehoiachin by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar probably caused the author of the first version of Psalm 89 to reconsider the promises regarding the kingship of David. In the same way, the downfall of the Judean monarchy probably caused the writer of the first composition of the Servant Songs to rethink the image of the founder of the Davidic dynasty. The author of the original text of Isaiah 60–62 belongs to the same tradition. He depicts the anonymous speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61 as 'new David' who announces good news for Zion. This David is not portrayed as a theocratic ruler who reigns as king, but instead as the Lord's anointed who personifies the nearness of God's salvation (322-323). In the New Testament, the idealized image of David is applied to Jesus, who is depicted as the one who opens up the entrance to the glory of the new Zion (334).

At the beginning of Labouvie's study, the reader is already directed towards the conclusion of her search for the identity of the speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61. Although the name of David is not mentioned in Isaiah 60–62, the title of her study associates the Servant of the Lord, who announces a message of salvation for Zion, with the 'new David'. Furthermore, in the introduction, Labouvie emphasizes that the anonymous speaker in Isaiah 61 has 'not only prophetic but also royal features' (3, 5). Finally, she links the interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2 to its reception in Luke 4:18 where Jesus of Nazareth identifies himself with the speaker in Isaiah 61. In her view, the connection between Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 is worth examining because the Old and the New Testament constitute a unity in the Christian tradition.

In light of these observations, it is not surprising that Labouvie comes to the conclusion that the anonymous speaker is an idealized image of David. The question, however, remains whether the arguments on which this conclusion is based are convincing. In order to answer that question, it is worth discussing how Labouvie deals with the following three points: the development of Isaiah 60–62, the relationship between Isaiah 40–55 and 60–62, and the historical background of chapters 60–62.

Labouvie distinguishes three literary layers within the text of Isaiah 60–62: original text ('Grundschicht'), revision of the original text ('Bearbeitung'), and secondary additions ('Glossen'). She identifies the exact layer to which each clause belongs. The division of Isaiah 60–62 into literary layers, however, is based on a mixture of arguments. As a consequence, it is not entirely clear which criteria she uses to distinguish one literary layer from the other. Furthermore, Labouvie suggests that both the author of the original text and the editor who was responsible for the revision of the original text were influenced by Isaiah 40–55. It is unclear to me how she nevertheless is able to make a sharp distinction between passages that were written by the first author and passages that should be ascribed to the editor of the text. Finally, Labouvie does not consider the work of authors who have emphasized the unity of Isaiah 60–62. Referring to the 1995 study of Paul A. Smith, she even claims that he comes to 'a similar conclusion' regarding the distinction between an original composition of Isaiah 60–62 and a revision of the original text by a later editor (7, note 25). Smith, however, emphasizes in his study that Isaiah 60–62 forms an original unity: 'On the basis of the observations presented above, we must conclude that insufficient grounds have been offered for removing any substantial portions of the material in chs. 60–62 and ascribing them to later redactional hands' (Smith 1995, 38).

The relationship between Isaiah 40–55 and 60–62 is important in examining the identity of the anonymous speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61 because of the various literary parallels between the two textual units. Labouvie does not deal with those parallels systematically, but she refers to them in her literary critical analysis and her semantic analysis of Isaiah 60–62. As a consequence, the literary parallels between Isaiah 40–55 and 60–62 are understood by her within the framework of the literary critical analysis and the semantic analysis of Isaiah 60–62. This becomes clear when she deals with the parallel between Isaiah 42:1 ('I have put my spirit upon him') and 61:1 ('the spirit of the Lord Yhwh is upon me'). Although Labouvie acknowledges the clear parallel between the two verses, she argues that the speaker in Isaiah 61:1 cannot be identified with the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1, because this identification is not supported by the semantic analysis (143). The semantic analysis of Isaiah 61:1 offered by Labouvie, however, does not offer a solid basis for interpreting this verse. In my view, a systematic analysis of the literary parallels between Isaiah 40–55 and 60–62 would have been a better starting-point for examining the relationship between the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42 and the anonymous speaker in Isaiah 61.

Labouvie leaves little doubt about her understanding of the historical background of chapters 60–62. According to her, the original composition underlying the current text of Isaiah 60–62 probably was written down shortly after the dedication of the second temple in 515 BCE (91, 111). In dating Isaiah 60–62, Labouvie follows the traditional division of the Book of Isaiah into Isaiah 1–39 (pre-exilic), Isaiah 40–55 (exilic), and Isaiah 56–66 (post-exilic). More and more exegetes, however, have come to the conclusion that Isaiah 40–55 was probably written in the post-exilic period (cf., e.g., K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Jesaja*, 1999, 37). As a consequence, Isaiah 60–62 should not be dated shortly after the rebuilding of the second temple but much later in the Persian period. Labouvie does not mention this shift in dating in her study, but instead holds to the traditional dating of Isaiah 60–62 without much discussion.

In my view, this neglect regarding the other ways in how Isaiah 60–62 is seen, is exemplary for Labouvie's study. In revealing the identity of the speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61, she follows a clear route from text-critical and literary critical analyses via form-critical analysis to the tradition history of Isaiah 60–62. Following this route, she is guided by the publications of various biblical scholars, mostly German. For example, one finds 33 references to books and articles of Ernst Haag in the bibliography at the end of her study. Though she follows a clear route, the outcome of her study is of limited value, because she ignores or even misunderstands the work of other biblical scholars. In addition, the semantic analysis of Isaiah 60–62 does not provide a solid basis for concluding that the anonymous speaker at the beginning of Isaiah 61 is depicted as a new David. Though this conclusion may be attractive because Jesus of Nazareth, who is designated as 'son of David' (cf., e.g., Luke 18:38), identifies himself with the speaker in Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:18), it can hardly be based on the Hebrew text of Isaiah 60–62.

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June 2014

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WAHL, H.M. — Das Buch Esther. Übersetzung und Kommentar. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin & New York, 2009. (23,5 cm, XII, 249). ISBN 978-3-11-020504-6. € 74,-.

In the preface, the author states that with the publishing of this volume he wants to fill the gap of German scholarship, which for a long time did not produce any commentary or contribution on the Esther scroll. And the book, indeed, is nice compilation of current scholarship. The commentary is intended to be read not only by scholars, but also by teachers of religion and ministers. Indeed, one finds from time to time a remark that is useful in for instance liturgical contexts. For instance, on p. 3, fn. 7 the author reminds the reader that in the German-speaking Evangelical Church, on the 10th Sunday after Holy Trinity, the Book of Esther can be read in the service.

The volume consists of two parts: first there is an introduction and second there is the commentary.

The introduction contains the following sections: the place of the Book of Esther in canon, the redaction and transmission of the Book, the tradition and composition, the form, the style and language, the historicity of the book and how Purim needs to be put in the debate about historicity, the reception history, the theology and finally the historical place of origin of the Book.

Some comments on the first introductory part: although this part is very useful, sometimes the reader is left hanging. For instance, in the section on redaction, the author writes that the second Greek text ends with chapter 8 [p. 3]—this statement could have benefited from further clarification: for instance, that the number of the final chapter is indeed 8, but that the contents of this chapter is parallel, albeit shorter, to the contents of chapters 8, 9 and 10. Occasionally, the book would have benefitted from some more precision with regard to scholarly perspectives (for instance the view of Tov, Hanhart and De Troyer on the second Greek text are not mentioned). The section on text tradition and composition has a nice description of the different narrative and compositional sections as suggested by the author; in the section on the genre of the book the author skilfully combines genre, function, and redactional stages of the book; in the section on style and language the author provides a sharp summary of all the stylistic figures used in the text (p. 17-18) and a list of the 21 most often used words in the scroll accompanied by a good elaboration of the words and their function in the narrative; in the section on the historicity and Purim, there is a wonderful discussion about what the author has provided as 'facts,' what one can figure out about the time of origins using language and presentation, what extra-biblical sources can provide as data, and what the words Purim can contribute; the section on the reception history has a questionable statement that Hellenistic-Roman Jewry has ignored the book of Esther—which in the present reviewer's opinion is impossible since there is precisely the presence of the second Greek text in the Hellenistic Roman period and since it has been demonstrated that there are at least a couple quotations of the Hebrew book of Esther in material from Quman (see De Troyer in RevQ 75/19 [2000] 401-422), but contains a truly good survey of rabbinic and christian reception; in the theology section, the author starts with a note about the absence of the name of God, but then points to all the elements that could be interpreted as religious, such as Mordecai's refusal of proskynesis, 'allusions' to God and the Law—a bit farfetched in my opinion—, motifs (such as the use of the word 'rest,' or 'come together,' 'the fear of …'), themes and concepts (with again a bit farfetched links such as seeing a connection between the three verbs used to indicate the destruction, destroy, massacre and annihilate and the three possible interpretations of the word יהודי, as Jewish, Jew, and Judahite etc., and the Greek interpretation with its clear religious elements); in the last section, there is a paragraph about the place in which the Book of Esther originated (I always find this sort of statement remarkable, for if we are dealing with Jeremiah for instance, no one doubts that Mr Jeremiah is somehow linked as author of at least an 'original' piece of Jeremiah—but for Ms Esther, even if it says so in the text that she wrote, her authorship seems impossible) and the linguistic, thematic, and historical elements in the narrative which seem, according to Wahl, to point to an eastern point of origin, maybe even Susa; a precise date is impossible but the author points to a period between Ahasueros (say 465) and the late second century BCE (with the day of Mordecai) being mentioned in 2Macc 15:36. Wahl then specifies that a date between late Persian time and early Hellenistic period is likely, thus fourth century BCE, with the later section of the book, 9:1-10:3, stemming from the late Seleucid period. It needs to be said that over and over again, these short introductory sections are to the point and full of information.

Then, the commentary starts. The commentary is divided into fourteen chapters: 1:1-22 (fame of the king and fall of the queen); 2:1-20 (Esther becomes queen); 2:21-23 (assassination plot); 3:1-6 (Haman's Promotion and Arrogance); 3:7-15 (the Pogrom); 4:1-17 (Mordecai's Penitence and Esther's Insight); 5:1-8 (Esther prepares a petition for the king); 5:9-14 (Haman's fame and plan against Mordecai); 6:1-14 (Mordecai's glorification and Haman's spite); 7:1-10 (Esther's petition and Haman's decline); 8:1-17 (the pogrom averted); 9:1-19 (the revenge of the Jews); 9:20:32 (the beginnings of Purim); 10:1-3 (the fame of King Ahasveros and his second-in-command, Mordecai). In every chapter, there is first a translation of the section—with a lot of notes on the stylistic and rhetoric devices used in the text—and then a commentary. In the commentary *per se* there are first comments on the entire section and then comments that are organized per subsection. Although there is also a German translation of the Additions (following the excellent translation of Ingo Kottsieper), there are no comments on the Additions (except for a longer footnote attached to Addition D, see p. 124, fn. 331). Occasionally, the author also offers information from one of the Targumim, the Old Greek text and Josephus. Interesting were also the references to Herodotos, as they clarified some of the court customs. Wahl also points to intriguing parallels. For instance, when commenting on the two verbs used for the proskynesis, כרע וחוה, he remarks that this combination only appears four times in the Hebrew Bible, two times in Esther (3:2,5), once in the Psalms (Ps 95:6) and once in 2Chron 29:29, thus used in the context of honoring God or a king—thus indicating a truly crucial element in the narrative and theology of the text.

The commentary is written in a beautiful style. In a sense, Wahl is following the style of the author of the Book of Esther who truly can keep her audience on their feet. I especially admired the 'Ausblick(e)' at each end of a section: often the author would use short sentences to precisely capture the tension or the topic of that particular section of the text, for instance on p. 145: "Die Zeit steht still" (= 'time has come to a standstill,' translation KDT), or "Wer wird fallen?" (= 'Who is going to fall?' translation KDT) or on p. 189: "Endlich kehrt die Ruhe ein," (= 'peace at last,' translation KDT).

Additionally, there are many excursi offered in commentary: 1. Xerxes 1; 2. the servants at the court (סריס); 3. the provinces of the empire (מדינה); 4. tax cut and presents (הנחה, משאת); 5. the people (עם); 6. Command and Law (דת); 7. the Jewish rite of penitence; 8. a banquet (משתה); 9. hanging on the wood (לה על־העץ); 10. the concept of Jewish, Jew and Judean (הודי); 11. the lot, Pur (פור) and the feast, Purim (פורים). These excursi are totally practical, well defined and excellent.

At the end of the volume the author has provided the reader with a list of abbreviations used in the volume and a selected bibliography organized in six different sections—characteristic for German scholarship, but not always practical. Wahl has at times annotated the material using the following labels: introduction, fundamental commentary, fundamental study, scholarly commentary, general reading, rich in material sources, books without one can't live, etc. For one volume only, Wahl has reserved the following nice description: "Obligatorische Lektüre für jede gründliche Beschäftigung" (= 'required reading useful in all scholarly engagement,' translation KDT). This acclamation is given to the 1908 commentary on Esther by L.B. Paton. I think that Wahl's commentary is not yet of the level of Paton, but I would certainly characterize it as a fundamental commentary! There is also a timetable of both the Persian kings and the events of Judea in a parallel column, some maps, and a double index.

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HIMBAZA, I., et A. SCHENKER (eds.) — Un carrefour dans l'histoire de la Bible. Du texte à la théologie au IIe siècle avant J.-C. (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 233). Academic Press Fribourg, Fribourg, 2007. (23,5 cm, X, 158). ISBN 978-3-7278-1614-7. € 32,-.

This book contains some of the proceedings of a conference organized in 2004, which attempted to answer the question of the importance of the second century BCE for the Bible.

The first contribution stems from the hand of Stefan Schorch and takes on the formation of the Samaritan community in the 2nd c. BCE and how the Jewish culture of 'reading' played a role in it. It neatly summarizes the discussion about the origins of the Samaritans (Gaster & Nodet vs Kaufmann; but also about the dating of the origins). Schorch positions himself, albeit with questions, in the first camp and dating the breaking off of the community in the 2nd c. BCE. Schorch then points to the developing culture of reading, which not only went hand in hand with, but lies at the core of the establishment of the community.

The second contribution is written by Innocent Himbaza; this is a good demonstration of how the author works with texts. He finely describes his focus: Malachi 3:23-24, the two verses at the end of the book (Note that in some translations, these verses are labelled chapter 4). Himbaza sets out to demonstrate that these two verses not only add new elements to the text of the Book of Malachi, but also that they modify the theological Tendenz of the book. He also—and he would not be a student of Adrian Schenker if he hadn't — proposes to relabel these two verses: not as an appendix to the Book but as the grand finale to the book. He offers three main arguments to date the finale in the 2nd c. BCE: philological arguments—syntactically there are formulae in these two verses which are not typical of the rest of the Book—and internal literary critical arguments—the theme of the returning of the prophet Elijah does not appear anywhere else in the Book—and finally, that Sirach knows the 12 minor prophets and alludes to the second coming of Elijah in 48:10. Himbaza then argues that the return of prophecy needs to be seen within the context of eschatology and the prophet preparing the people for that era. Himbaza then analyses the Book of Malachi with and without the finale on Elijah and discusses how the messenger has changed identities—the messenger is no longer the author of the Book, but the person who the Book announces—and then how the nature of the Day of the Lord has changed—the book no longer ends with a positive note, but with an emphasis on the devastating effects of the Day of the Lord. Himbaza then summarizes how "Elie redivivus" appears in Jewish literature from later than the finale of Malachi. An excellent bibliography accompanies this contribution.

The third contribution is again from Innocent Himbaza; this time he analyses the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Habacuc 1:5a and re-evaluates all the textual witnesses. His conclusion is that the text of the Septuagint reflects the older version of Habacuc 1:5a. Himbaza can be seen here not as a student of Adrian Schenker but of Dominique Barthélemy, using the Greek text of the Minor Prophets Scroll of Nahal Hever as well as the Pesher Habacuc.

Then there is a contribution from Adrian Schenker. He asks an important question: how can the existence of multiple texts of the Book of Jeremiah coincide with the idea of a single editing of the Bible? He immediately starts with his idea that there may have been two editions: one for private use and one for public and illustrates this idea with the text of Jer 36, in which the prophet dictates a text to Baruch and then, after the Jehoiakim incident, the prophet rewrites the scroll—the latter edition being augmented. Schenker points to similar dual editions and labels 2Maccabees a "reader's digest" edition of the longer work of Jason of Cyrene (2Macc 2:23-31) and to the two forms of the Book of Jeremiah among the Qumran scrolls. He then asks two questions: how to explain two editions in the context of a single word of God? And how does one explain the transition from multiple manuscripts to two editions? (in this context, Schenker also uses the word 'master copy' or archetype: "it is of utmost importance to define the authorized edition which was destined to serve as the master copy or archetype …" [translation KDT]—I note that this idea of a possible master copy contradicts a bit with a remark on 4QSam^a which Schenker hesitates to call an edition, as there is only one manuscript available and according to Schenker's own criteria, one manuscript is not enough to talk about an edition.) Following these questions, Schenker formulates his criteria in order to identify an edition (an edition is visible in more than one manuscript; specific literary characteristics can help identify a family of witnesses; coherence of the aforementioned characteristics; the historical plausibility of specific characteristics) and then applies this to LXX and MT Jeremiah. Schenker concludes that MT Jeremiah is the revised edition of the Hebrew text underlying the LXX of Jeremiah. The revision of the text fits well with the religious conviction of the 2nd c. BCE in which the Teacher of Righteousness not only received the word of God, but was also permitted to interpret it. Schenker finally emphasizes that the MT version is a genealogical later edition of the Hebrew text underlying the LXX of Jeremiah. The (proto-)MT of the Book of Jeremiah never existed in an autonomous form alongside the (Hebrew text underlying the) LXX form; it was the edition which succeeded the earlier edition.

Jean-Daniel Macchi offers a contribution on the different texts of the Book of Esther within the context of Judaism between the 3rd and the 1st c. BCE. He first summarizes the contents of the MT of the Book of Esther and explains its theological tendencies—I honestly do not see a reference to any theological Tendenz in the three sentences that are under this heading—, the parallelism with the Joseph story, the problem with the absence of God and other typical Jewish customs, the ambiguity of a possible dysfunctional empire, and the date, milieu and historical context of the book. Then, Macchi turns to the LXX edition of the Book (including the Additions). He clearly states that the LXX Esther is a faithful translation of the MT version. He then explains the theological tendencies of the additions (A&F, and C—and makes a note that B and E in as far as they make clear that the Jewish laws do not constitute a threat to the empire), puts the different additions within different contexts (3rd-2nd c. BCE, surely not later than the 1st c. BCE, with a somewhat related but not understandable reference to the presence of the Additions in the work of Josephus). Then, the second Greek text is analysed, the positions of De Troyer and Jobes rejected (labelling both—even if these are in my humble opinion quite different--as “cette thèse classique, longtemps abandonee”, p. 85) on the basis of the so-called longer ending in the MT and LXX version of the Book, the fact that conclusions can’t be based on the analysis of the ending of a book (but that is precisely where the rubber hits the road! KDT), and the fact that it is easier to understand the Second Greek text as an abbreviation of the MT. The theological tendencies of the text are explained—but the paragraph is about the Joseph story—and the second text of Esther is explained as a book with lesser problems regarding the relationship between Judaism and a pagan kingdom. Then the author addresses the functioning of the empire in the second Greek text with the usual remark about it having no reference to the irrevocability of the Persian laws. Given the hypothesis, Macchi positions the AT within the Hellenistic period, with options to see Alexandria or any one of the larger Syrian cities as the place where the story was elaborated, most likely before 250 BCE. What the author fails to do is to explain how he sees the development from the Hebrew text underlying the second Greek text to the current Massoretic text of the Book of Esther.

The next two articles deal with the Psalter. Ariane Cordes reflects on the use of the words ‘against the law’ and ‘without the law’ in the Septuagint of the Psalter. Cordes starts off with a clear statement about the translation character of the Psalter: it is semantically and syntactically an exact copy of its Hebrew model. And although the Greek translation of the Psalter seems wooden at first, Cordes argues that the translator is not “servile” but makes distinctive word choices and skilfully employs the linguistic possibilities of Greek words. Moreover, even the translation of the Hebrew tense system has given the Greek translator space to specify and interpret the text. Finally, the translator has also used an array of stylistic techniques. It is precisely on the level of the use of words and clusters of word that one can see most sharply the interpretation and new structure of the Greek psalm. And hence, according to Cordes, the translator of the Psalter is neither a faithful translation nor a careless one—if one is allowed to translate “irréfléchie” with careless. Cordes then takes on the translation of the Hebrew word תורה, taking a lead from L. Monsegno Pasinya, but focuses on the Greek cluster of words formed with νόμος and an *alpha privativum* and the prefix παρα-. Cordes then embarks on a careful analysis of the instances where these clusters are used in the Psalter and points to their different usages—they are certainly not synonyms—and their different meanings, with ἄνομος being used in description of general state of sin and absence of law and παράνομος in cases of specific transgressions.

The second article on the Psalms is written by Adrian Schenker and deals with the borderline between text criticism and literary criticism using the most difficult verse, Ps 110 (109):3—after all, what does “from the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you” (NRSV) mean, and analysing the Septuagint and the MT, following their evolution at the end of the 3rd or in the 2nd c BCE, starting from the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX, which Schenker carefully has reconstructed, then moving to the interpretation as found in the LXX, and finally discussing the MT text, in which the typology of Gideon plays a crucial role, which leads Schenker to believe that this MT text dates to the Maccabean times—when the parallelism between the actions against the pagan altar at Modein reflect the actions of Gideon against the Baal sanctuary at Ophrah.

The last contribution of this nice volume is not only a summary of the “table ronde” at the end of the conference but also integrates the perspectives on the relationship between text and theology of the two editors.

A nice volume in which the importance of the 2nd c. BCE for Biblical Literature is clearly demonstrated!

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