

Isaac Kalimi / Tobias Nicklas / Géza G. Xeravits (eds.), *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity (DCL.St 16)*, 389 S., € 100,95, Berlin / New York: De Gruyter 2013, ISBN 978-311029-548-1.

The sixteen studies that compose this volume (most in English, some in German) were presented at the International Conference with theme: “The Concept of Authority in Early Judaism” (Sapientia College of Budapest, May 18-21, 2010). The

volume includes an index of references and subjects, but lacks one of authors. The volume also lacks a proper introduction. However, interesting insights emerge from the various contributions. Although both Judaism and Christianity recognize the authority of biblical writings, the issues regarding the *Torah* during Hellenistic and Roman times show that its authority grows hand in hand with the prevailing of certain textual forms, as in the case of Qumran and Samaritan tradition (S. Schorch). Scripture's authority serves at times to confirm, directly or indirectly, the authority of a certain author's writing, in its use of Scripture. In the case of the *Letter of Aristeas*, the fictional author is a gentile, confirming thus, in a singular manner, the authority of Greek *Torah* for the Jews living in Alexandria (B. Wright).

Authority attributed to Scripture goes also hand in hand with efforts of its actualization in favor of the target audience a certain author directs himself to: that is for instance the case of the Book of Baruch, which S.A. Adams describes as a "reframing Scripture" (p. 79). That seems also the case of the book of Tobit (K. Schöpflin), in which actualization of Scripture seems to pass through the book's use of Scriptures themselves, but also the ancestor's examples as in old Tobit's intrusion (see Tob 4). On that regard, however, it could be asked whether the author's use of irony would not have an impact also in the sense of the author's statements in Tob 4.

The study of B.C. Gregory on Ben Sira (as also the lengthy and dense contribution of F.V. Reiterer) shows how its author does not see a contradiction between sacred Scripture's authority and his own, as a teacher of wisdom. Such observation is particularly interesting, for it manifests that the concept of authority regarding Scripture, should not be understood in a dogmatic sense, but leaving intact the freedom of the authors, who also considered themselves Scripture's interpreters. That is also the case of the Book of Wisdom (A.T. Glicksman), whose author feels himself extremely free before Scriptures, which he reworks for the benefit of Alexandria's Jewish community. Similar situation is found in the Testament of Job (R. Kugler). Special cases seem to constitute the Book of Jubilees (J.C. Endres) and 2 Baruch (B. Tamas). Although in different manners, both writings appeal more directly to a divine authority, whereas 4 Ezra seems to evoke more a human authority, even if its author does not offer a clear explanation for his point (P. Metzger).

The volume devotes its last four studies to the New Testament. Scripture's authority is evoked also to confirm the authority of an author, as in Paul's use of Psalms and David's figure in the letter to the Romans (L.B. Marcos). H. Höttinger's contribution on the use of Scriptures in Acts 6:1-8:3 confirms that faith in Scripture's authority goes hand in hand with the effort for its actualization. Yet, the use of Scriptures in Q (P. Foster) shows that Jesus and his saying's authority appear superior to the one attributed to Scriptures. That however, does not imply conflictive views between Judaism and Christianity (see T. Nicklas' concluding study), inasmuch as Scriptures are seen as bearers of an authority that comes from the God of Israel, which is also Jesus' God.

I have purposefully overlooked until now the study of J. Crenshaw, on the authority of Scriptures in Qohelet (p. 19-41). The fact that Qohelet tends to minimize in his use of Scriptures, its "divine" aspect, is for Crenshaw an illustration

of a general principle: “the idea of authority of sacred texts is often a convenient tool for those who are interested in power above everything else” (p. 30).

Crenshaw addresses twelve statements proposed by those who try to defend Scripture’s authority and God’s action (p. 20-28). Such polemic aspect Crenshaw had already brought to light in a preceding volume: *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil*, Oxford / New York 2005.

Nevertheless, several studies of the present volume (see for instance that of Gregory regarding Ben Sira), show how, in ancient Judaism – and Qohelet is no exception – the idea of Scripture’s authority could be used with an apologetic intent, to confirm a writer’s authority (and / or of the group he represented) or to highlight his identity. Moreover, faith in Scripture’s authority does not necessary in conflict with authors’ freedom in their particular use of them and in their ability to render them up to date for their target audience.

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