

John R. LEVISON, *The Holy Spirit Before Christianity*. Waco TX, Baylor University Press, 2019, 15,5 × 23,5 cm, xiii-258 p., ISBN 978-1-4813-1003-1

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de l'eschatologie apocalyptique. Troisièmement, cette interprétation suppose que le monologue de Qohélet a été rédigé afin d'inciter l'auditoire à réagir face à la mort capricieuse et aux injustices et ainsi à accepter le vrai message du narrateur. Une fois de plus, ce chapitre en laissera plus d'un perplexe, notamment Jerome N. Douglas, dont le livre est étonnamment absent de la bibliographie de Takeuchi (cf. *A Polemical Preacher of Joy: An Anti-apocalyptic Genre for Qoheleth's Message of Joy*, Eugene OR, Pickwick, 2014).

En définitive, bien que Takeuchi ignore d'importants travaux sur la mort et le jugement dans le livre de Qohélet et qu'il ne soit pas convaincant dans la manière dont il propose ses thèses, son ouvrage devra figurer dans les bibliographies de ceux et celles qui vont, à leur tour, tenter de décrypter ce petit livre énigmatique, qui se termine par un avertissement que trop peu d'exégètes prennent au sérieux: «mais plus qu'eux, mon fils, sache: faire des livres, beaucoup, n'a pas de fin(alité) et étudier beaucoup fatigue le corps» (Qo 12,12).

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John R. LEVISON, **The Holy Spirit Before Christianity**. Waco TX, Baylor University Press, 2019, 15,5 × 23,5 cm, xiii-258 p., ISBN 978-1-4813-1003-1.

The aim of the author, John R. Levison (henceforth: JRL), is to argue for the origin of pneumatology from a world that existed before the flourish of the Hellenistic culture and before the Jews populated the Greco-Roman world. He specifically traces and links this origin (the birth of the holy spirit) to Isaiah 63:7-14 and Haggai 2:4-5, which in turn go back to the exodus tradition. He believes that the agents of exodus – angel, pillars of cloud and fire, presence/face/*pānim* of God – are fused in the spirit of these two Old Testament (OT) passages. However, he recognizes that the term spirit is not mentioned among the agencies of the exodus tradition.

Due to the experiences of the Israelites in exile and the coming back after their liberation, the need to motivate them to realize the vision to restore the temple leads to this innovation of the spirit taking the place of the agents of the exodus. In order to make the divine agent felt in the communities, these prophets speak of the spirit in the same manner as the agents of the exodus tradition: the spirit stands in their midst; do not anger the spirit. JRL, therefore, concludes that pneumatology emerges from the communities in crises who are trying to fortify themselves with the divine agent as it was during the exodus. In light of the two passages, the spirit is an agent of the exodus: “The emergence of the spirit as an agent, which took place with the metamorphosis of Israel's traditions, occurred under the intense heat and pressure of historic crises, when prophets fused two grand convictions – the presence and promise of *rūah* and the unassailable datum of liberation of a coterie of divine agents” (p. 111). He then suggests that Christians begin to “regard pneumatology as a collaborative enterprise, whose richness should be explored in the company of Jews and their reserve of ancient texts” (p. 5).

He believes that the spirit as an agent owns its existence to the angel and pillar(s) of the exodus tradition. He claims that the angel of the exodus does not show to be speaking on behalf of God but on his own behalf; therefore, the spirit in Isaiah and Haggai becomes an independent agent (p. 20). By employing Isa 63:10 and Ps 51:11 in connection with Ex 23:22, JRL submits that the lament (Isaiah 63) "suggests that the holy spirit is none other than the angel of God's presence" (p. 47). He is blunt by stating that "Angel and spirit are one and the same" (p. 48).

One may now engage JRL's arguments and discussion: The discussion would have been clearer from the outset if some definitions of pneumatology both from the general and restricted point of views are given. Would the concept of pneumatology include the study of spirits or just the concern about the holy spirit as an agent? However, on page 107, one of the last pages of the discussion, JRL seems to state what this concept means to him: "The goal of pneumatology is principally to understand the relationship of the holy spirit to father and son. Pneumatology, in essence, is an intra-trinitarian affair." But in the course of his discussion, he does not demonstrate this relationship especially from the two texts on which he bases the origin of pneumatology. He goes on immediately to state that "this study mandates a recalibration of that approach – not a dismissal of Trinitarian discussion among Christians, but an assessment of origins and the implication of origins for the development of pneumatology" (p. 107).

JRL does not see the difference between the presence of the spirit in the OT and NT. He considers the distinction often made between the intermittent presence of the spirit in OT and the permanent presence in the NT as "a nonsensical distinction in light of Haggai's" (p. 4). Can one really deny the fact that the conception of *pneuma* in the OT and the NT is not the same? In the OT, the spirit is given to individuals for specific activities (e.g. 1 Sam 10:5-13; 16:13-14; 18:10; Ps 51:11); while in the NT, the spirit is given to everyone irrespective of gender and race or culture, it does not only "stand" in the community but all believers irrespective of their status are transformed, sanctified and justified by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:11; 12:13). The passage which JRL explores (Haggai 2) states that the spirit "stands" in Israel's midst. This is not the same as the spirit giving to everyone or indwells every believer in the NT.

As per seeing the angel of the exodus equal the spirit, and therefore an independent agent, needs more evidence. It is pertinent to state that the term *rûah* (*pneuma*) was never mentioned in exodus tradition, as agreed also by JRL. The argument of JRL is that the angel speaks on his own behalf; he states that "the angel does not give the slightest hint that he is speaking on God's behalf" (p. 20). He draws his submission from the exodus passage (Ex 23:22): "If you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes." The possessive pronoun "his" here refers to the angel and the personal pronoun "I" stands for God. How does this passage show that the voice of the angel is independent? Better still, how can one interpret this passage to mean that "the angel speaks on his own behalf," and then transport it to the independent agency of the spirit? It is through the voice of the angel that God speaks! "If you listen attentively to *his voice* and do all that *I say*" (emphasis is mine). First, the angel does not speak on his own behalf (see for example the cross references to this passage: Ex 15:26; Gn 12:3). Second, it

does not portray an independent agent. JRL overemphasizes the functions of the agents of the exodus tradition as if equal to God.

JRL's interpretation of some Pauline passages (Rom 8:14-17, 23, 26; Gal 4:1-7) in connection with Israel's exodus needs more clarification. On page 117 for example, he sees the "spirit of slavery" of Rom 8 the same way as the slavery in exodus. One would expect that the two senses of slavery be distinguished before making an interpretative connection. After the quotation from Rom 8 and its seeming connection with the themes of the exodus, JRL jumps the order and concludes that "to this exodus story must be added the spirit" (p. 117). This appears anachronistic! It is like forcing these Pauline texts on the exodus texts.

In his engagement with the synoptic gospels, JRL makes some nice connections. In his analysis of unpardonable offence against the Holy Spirit in connection with the angel of the exodus, he logically explains how the warning against the disobedience of the angel in the lament of Isaiah is transferred to the Holy Spirit. The gospels show how Jesus reemphasizes this warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit (e.g. Matt 12:31-32; Mk 3:28-30; Lk 12:10).

In conclusion, why not simply see the mention of *rûah* (*pneuma*) in Isaiah and Haggai as divine presence (indwelling divine presence) not detached from YHWH? In this way, this divine presence lies at the foundation of pneumatology. One may suggest, therefore, that instead of arguing for the independent agency of the holy spirit from Isaiah and Haggai, these texts should rather serve as portraying the divine presence serving as the bedrock of pneumatology understood from the general perspective. The pillar, pillars of cloud, angel, and presence/face of God or *pānim* of the exodus demonstrate *how* God was present among his people (divine accompaniment). It is the same emphasis brought about in Isaiah and Haggai with regard to the spirit. This is far different from the Holy Spirit as an agent in the NT. It may be fruitful to go in the direction of Moltmann who sees the spirit in that era (OT) as "divine energy of life," "creative power of God," and "space of freedom in which the living being can unfold" (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress, 1992, p. 40-43). The Hebrew Scriptures describe the spirit as a power and not as a person; they ascribe to the spirit activity and not agency.

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Jean DESCLOS, **L'aide médicale à bien mourir. Les grands enjeux.** Montréal-Paris, Médiaspaul, 2020, 13,9 × 21 cm, 330 p., ISBN 978-2-89760-285-7.

Le propos du livre est d'approfondir les enjeux éthiques autour de l'Aide Médicale à Mourir (AMM) qui est légale depuis 2015 au Québec et depuis 2016 au Canada. L'A., prêtre et bioéthicien, ambitionne de mieux comprendre les fondements de la décision d'aider quelqu'un à mourir. Il cherche à démontrer qu'il serait périlleux de condamner sans précaution le geste d'aider quelqu'un à mourir. Il reconnaît