

BOOK REVIEWS

Ulrich WILCKENS, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments I: Geschichte der urchristlichen Theologie. Teilband 1: Geschichte des Wirkens Jesu in Galiläa; Teilband 2: Jesu Tod und Auferstehung und die Entstehung der Kirche aus Juden und Heiden; Teilband 3: Die Briefe des Urchristentums: Paulus und seine Schüler, Theologen aus dem Bereich judenchristlicher Heidenmission; Teilband 4: Die Evangelien, die Apostelgeschichte, die Johannesbriefe, die Offenbarung und die Entstehung des Kanons, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2005.*

Als junger Professor für Neues Testament hatte Ulrich Wilckens 1970 das Neue Testament übersetzt und kommentiert herausgegeben und damit angezeigt, dass ihm der Text und das sachgemäße Verständnis des Neuen Testaments sehr am Herzen liegt, dass er aber auch bestrebt ist, seine Erkenntnisse einer breiten Bevölkerungsschicht zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Die zu besprechenden vier Teilbände sind vom Umfang her etwa die Hälfte seines auf sieben oder gar acht Teilbände angelegten Werkes zum Verständnis des Neuen Testaments, das auf drei Bände konzipiert ist, im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes ein Monumentalwerk neutestamentlicher Wissenschaft, das, wenn es fertig gestellt ist, cca 2.000 Seiten umfassen wird. Es kündigt sich ein Standardwerk zu allen wichtigen Fragen der neutestamentlichen Forschung an. Der zweite Band will sich der Theologie des Neuen Testaments als Grund kirchlicher Lehre widmen und wird zwei Teilbände umfassen, der dritte Band markiert den Standort des Verfassers: Kritik der historischen Bibelkritik durch Aufarbeitung der neueren Forschung am Neuen Testament.

Ulrich Wilckens war Lehrer des Neuen Testaments an den Universitäten Marburg, Berlin und Hamburg und von 1981-1992 Bischof der Nordelbischen Evangelischen Kirche und Catholica-Beauftragter der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Deutschland. Die Erfahrung der Praxis kirchlichen Lebens hat ihn in seiner Tendenz bestärkt, die Aussagen des Neuen Testaments den Menschen von heute nahe zu bringen. Seine vier Teilbände des ersten Bandes sind denn auch keine schwere systematisch-theologische Kost, es sind Bücher, die neben Pfarrern und Religionslehrern auch von fragenden Gemeindegliedern mit großem Gewinn gelesen werden können und als solche auch gelesen werden wollen.

Das Konzept, das U. Wilckens seiner „Theologie“ zugrunde legt, ist eine Darstellung der vom Neuen Testament erzählten Geschichte Jesu und der frühen Kirche, sowie der Inhalte der Briefe des Neuen Testaments und der Offenbarung des Johannes. Was anderorts als Bibelkunde des Neuen Testaments, als Leben Jesu und Geschichte des Urchristentums sowie als Einleitung in das Neue Testament getrennt dargestellt wird, ist hier in ein Ganzes zusammengefügt. Die Leser werden in Teilband 1 und 2 in das Leben Jesu und die frühe Geschichte der Kirche eingeführt, in Teilband 3 werden die Briefe einzeln durchgesprochen und in Teilband

4 die Evangelien, die Offenbarung und die Johannesbriefe dargestellt. Daran schließt sich eine umfassende Darstellung der Entstehung des christlichen Kanons an. Wilckens gelangt zu dieser Art der Darstellung, weil er Offenbarung innerhalb geschichtlicher Ereignisse geschehen sieht. Er nähert sich damit in diesem Band einer narrativen Theologie.

Der Stil der Darbietung ist leicht verständlich. Verfasser belastet den Leser nicht mit allzu langen Sätzen, Fachsprache und Fremdworte sind auf ein Minimum reduziert.

Vorarbeiten zu diesem umfangreichen Werk hat U. Wilckens vorgelegt. Sie bestimmen teilweise seine Darstellung. In seinem dreibändigen Kommentar zum Römerbrief, EKK VI, (1978-1982) hat er sich mit der Theologie des Paulus beschäftigt, in seinem Kommentar zum Johannesevangelium, NTD 4 (1998) sich die johanneische Denkweise angeeignet, in seinem Buch über die Auferstehung (1970; ⁵1992) der Problematik der Osterberichte gestellt und in seiner Studie zu den Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte (1961) in die lukanische Berichterstattung eingelesen. Seine umfangreiche Studie zu Weisheit und Torheit (1959) hat ihn in die vielfältigen Fragen des 1. Korintherbriefes Einblick nehmen lassen. Man merkt der Darstellung in der Theologie diese Schwerpunkte an.

Diesem Umstand ist die ausführliche Diskussion aller Erscheinungsberichte des Auferstandenen (37 S.) zu verdanken, seine breite Darstellung des Römerbriefes (77 S.), den er als christlich-jüdischen Dialog versteht, seine eingehende Behandlung des Johannesevangeliums (75 S.+21 S. Zusammenfassung) bis hin zu einer Rekonstruktion eines ursprünglichen Prologes (I/4, 166-172) bei gleichzeitiger verkürzter Darstellung der Johannesbriefe (7S.), die ausführliche Besprechung der Texte der Apostelgeschichte (45 S.) bei teilweise sehr raschem Durchgang durch das Lukasevangelium (20 S.), dem Übergewicht des 1.Korintherbriefes (32 S.) gegenüber dem theologisch sehr viel aussagekräftigeren 2.Korintherbrief (19 S.). Größeres Gewicht gibt er auch dem Galaterbrief (32 S.), dem, Hebräerbrief (54 S.) und der Offenbarung des Johannes (32 S.)

U. Wilckens ist bestrebt, den Texten des NT insgesamt so gerecht wie möglich zu werden. Seine Methode ist die der Nacherzählung mit Gewichtung, an vielen Stellen mit exkursartigen Erwägungen zu den Problemen der Forschung. Die Anmerkungen sind bewusst spärlich gehalten, verraten aber eine intensive Beschäftigung mit der Fachliteratur.

In den ersten beiden Teilbänden versucht Wilckens nach einem Einleitungskapitel ein denkbare „Leben Jesu“ heraus zu stellen, wobei er immer wieder auch Gedanken zur historischen Situation einbringt. Auffallend für den Leser ist, dass er aufgrund von Lk 13,31-33 (I/2, S.2) ein fluchtartiges Verlassen Galiläas durch Jesus vermutet. Nach dem Durchgang durch das Leben Jesu mit Passion und Auferstehung folgt ein erster Teil der Geschichte der Urchristenheit (bis zum Apostelkonzil). Der zweite Teil dieser Geschichte (vom Apostelkonzil bis zum Jahre 70 n. Chr.) folgt dann zu Beginn von Teilband 3 (S. 1-24).

Im dritten Teilband gibt der Verfasser nach einer relativ kurzen Darstellung des Lebens des Paulus (S. 25-53) eine eindrucksvolle Darstellung der neutestamentlichen Briefe in der von ihm vorausgesetzten Reihenfolge, wobei sowohl die beiden Thessalonischerbriefe, als auch die beiden Korintherbriefe nacheinander näher betrachtet werden. Dem Galaterbrief und dem Römerbrief gibt er relativ viel Raum, was wegen ihrer gebündelten Theologie durchaus verständlich ist. Den harten Ton am Ende des 2. Korintherbriefes (10-13) erklärt er mit neuen Nachrichten aus Korinth, die ihm beim Diktieren des Briefes überbracht werden, den Abschnitt 2Kor 2,14-7,4, der oft als Teil eines separaten Briefes angesehen wird, versteht er von der Situation her. Die Briefe an die Philipper und an Philemon setzt er in der Gefangenschaft in Rom an, den Bruch von Phil 3,1 zu 3,2 führt er ähnlich wie beim 2. Korintherbrief auf neue Nachrichten aus Philippi zurück. Den Kolosserbrief erachtet er als von einem Sekretär (Timotheus) geschrieben, den sehr viel vergeistigteren Epheserbrief und die Pastoralbriefe von Schülern des Apostels, letztere im Sinne einer notwendigen Gestaltung der Struktur der Kirche. Dem Hebräerbrief als einem Brief des Apollos nach Rom wird eingehend nachgegangen (53 S.). Die Katholische Briefen bedenkt der Verfasser mit angemessener Sorgfalt, wobei er immer wieder erstaunliche Einsichten einbringt.

Im vierten Teilband zeichnet er das theologische Konzept der Evangelien, wobei er zu Beginn auch auf die von der Forschung bloß postulierte Redenquelle eingeht, die er allerdings nur bis Lk 10 genauer beschreibt, und danach sehr summarisch behandelt. Es folgt die Darstellung der theologischen Voraussetzungen der vier Evangelien, der Briefe und der Offenbarung des Johannes, wobei er die Offenbarung einem Propheten und damit einem anderen Verfasser als Evangelium und Briefe zuschreibt.

Ein ausgedehnter Bericht über die Entstehung des Kanons, in dem man weniger die theologischen als die kirchengeschichtlichen Hintergründe der Bildung des Kanons erfährt, schließt den vierten Teilband und damit den ersten Band ab.

Erstaunlich ist, dass U. Wilckens im Unterschied zur Darstellung der Johannestheologie keinen zusammenfassenden Abschnitt über die Theologie des Paulus bringt, dass er entgegen seiner Darstellung der drei übrigen Evangelien bei Matthäus nicht dem Faden der Erzählung nachgeht, sondern die Besprechung des ersten Evangeliums systematisch vornimmt und dass er im Zusammenhang der sehr kurz gefassten Nacherzählung des Lukasevangeliums nicht zum Ausdruck bringt, dass Lukas eine narrative Theologie entfaltet, die als solche noch wesentliche Aussagen macht über das, was vordergründig vorliegt.

Ein Eingehen auf Einzelheiten dieser sehr massiven Darlegung der vielfältigen Aussagen des Neuen Testaments und der zahlreichen Probleme der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft mit diesen Aussagen ist in diesem Rahmen nicht möglich. U. Wilckens tritt als konservativer Neutestamentler hervor, der dem Neuen Testament und der jeweils spezifischen Schrift, aber auch der kirchlichen Überlieferung über die Apostel gerecht werden will. Seine oftmals anzutreffenden Erwägungen zu

den historischen Ereignissen helfen dem Leser, die Aussagen dieses Teiles der christlichen Bibel einzuordnen und auf diese Weise besser zu verstehen.

Das Werk entspricht in seinem ersten Band dem, was sich Verfasser vorgenommen hat: eine Darstellung des Lebens Jesu, der ersten Christenheit und ein Durchgang durch die Schriften des Neuen Testaments. Man ist gespannt auf die beiden nächsten Bände.

Hans Klein

John T. Fitzgerald, Dirk Obbink, Glenn S. Holland (eds.), *Philodemus and the New Testament World* (NovTSup 111), Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004.

The volume on Philodemus continues the series of publications addressing *topoi* in moral philosophy, edited by the Hellenistic Moral Philosophy and Early Christianity section of the SBL. It is seen by the editors as a companion to the translation of Philodemus' *On Frank Criticism* (1998), and as part of the conversation between biblical scholars and classicists, pursued by this group. The scope of the volume is somewhat broader than the title suggests, as some articles tackle with more general issues of Epicureanism. Following the introductory chapter on Philodemus and the papyri from Herculaneum by John T. Fitzgerald, the contributions are grouped in three sections: Philodemus' ethical, theological, rhetorical, aesthetic and historical works (Armstrong, Clay, Obbink, Sider, White), his thought within the context of the Greco-Roman world (Asmis, Balch, Gaines, Gordon, Holland), and Philodemus and the New Testament world (Fiore, Sampley, Winter, Fitzgerald).

Fitzgerald's introduction summarises the studies of the last three decades reassessing in more positive terms the importance of Philodemus' writings. David Armstrong addresses Philodemus' fragmentary *De morte*, arguing for a mixed, Epicurean and non-Epicurean audience, and comparing the adaptability of Philodemus' discourse with that of Paul's. Armstrong argues that alongside the orthodox Epicurean view on the inevitability of death Philodemus introduces some non-typical motives, such as the understanding for the natural pain that may be felt even by the wise in certain circumstances of death. Diskin Clay deals with Philodemus' *Ordering of the Philosophers*, and suggests that his dispassionate treatment of Academic and Stoic philosophers (compared e.g. with his polemical *On the Stoics*) should be seen as part of an educational project that aimed at integrating Epicureanism into the history of Greek philosophy and at advancing its acceptance by Roman elites. Clay compares the treatment of certain philosophers in these histories with that from his *On Frank Criticism*, showing that the former are not only unprejudiced, but also assign Epicurean attitudes to non-Epicurean philosophers like Cleanthes and Plato. Dirk Obbink takes issue with David Sedley's suggestion that Epicureans were comparable to a Hellenistic cult, due to their

quasi-religious reverence for the founders and to their interest in orthodoxy. Obbink sustains his point with the example of Philodemus' *On Piety* and argues that Epicurus' words are authoritative not on their own, but only insofar they provide demonstrative argument for his position on Epicurean piety. Additionally a canonisation properly speaking seems to be less obvious than suggested by Sedley. David Sider distinguishes between Philodemus' poetic and prosaic self, but argues nonetheless that his epigrams should be seen as illustrations of his philosophical views. Thus epigrams 3 and 29 are seen as poetic demonstrations of his view on death (developed in *De morte*) and on frank criticism. Through the difficulties of restoring the manuscript of *On Frank Criticism* L. Michael White addresses the broader subject of ancient private libraries and that of the preservation and transmission of philosophical writings.

Elizabeth Asmis discusses the wider issue of Epicurean lifestyle, economics and attitude to wealth, focusing subsequently on Philodemus' *On Wealth* and *On Household Economics*. Asmis argues that beyond continuing Metrodorus' position and rejecting that of the Cynics, Philodemus adapts standard Epicurean teaching on wealth to Roman conditions. He thus contends that enjoyment of wealth, when paired with moderation, is a good Epicurean position. By doing so he invites Roman aristocrats to turn their estates into havens of philosophical friendship, instead of engaging in politics and military career. The contribution of David L. Balch continues the discussion on Philodemus' two economical treatises, very much in the same line, and presents a partial translation of these treatises. Subsequently Balch argues that the shift within the Jesus movement from ascetic wandering preachers to household churches is more than a sociological transition, being comparable with the confrontation between Epicurean and Cynic attitudes to wealth. Robert N. Gaines discusses Philodemus' involvement in the development of late Hellenistic rhetorical theory, against the background of first century BCE tendencies, manifest in particular in Cicero's writings. Pamela Gordon discusses the partiality of the extant sources on Epicureanism, as illustrated by the attitude to the presence of women disciples, and by the hostility to the Garden couched in gendered terms. Putting forward a critical reading of ancient polemical sources (e.g. Plutarch, Seneca), Gordon shows how, through the tendency of gendering virtue and vice, Epicurus and Epicureans are derided as effeminate due to their rejection of public roles (political and military) and their misinterpreted hedonism. The depiction of female disciples as hetairai posits a difficult question; here again Gordon's nuanced discussion is worth attention. In a detailed essay Glenn S. Holland tackles with Lucian's understanding of parrhesia, especially in his *Piscator*. His satire on philosophers, on the contradictions of their systems is compared with Philodemus' use of frank criticism and satirical attacks on adversaries, like in *On the Stoics*. A brief final note cautions the readers of Paul against taking at face value the device of satiric exaggeration, invective and irony directed at his opponents. (One could add that the same goes for the pseudonymous epistles.)

The third part, on Philodemus and the New Testament, is introduced by the essay of Benjamin Fiore on the Pastoral Epistles in the light of Philodemus' *On frank criticism*. Fiore argues that the Pastoral Epistles may be seen to be in conversation with Epicureanism. Certainly differences outnumber similarities, as aptly detailed by Fiore, the most prominent being the assessment of ἡδονή. One may on the other hand wonder whether μὴ πλήκτης, ἐπιεικής (1 Tim 3,3), σέμνος (1 Tim 3,8.11 *passim*) and even the ἀντάρκεια (1 Tim 6,16) are specific enough to be regarded as Epicurean values also shared by the Pastorals. The application of the principle of frank criticism to promote moral improvement is indeed a practice shared by the Pastoral Epistles. J. Paul Sampley analyses Paul's frank speech in Galatians and 2 Corinthians, a criticism practised in the spirit of friendship, similarly to the employment of *parrhesia* in Philodemus. Bruce M. Winter parallels Philodemus' and Paul's criticism of orators' excessive concern with "rhetorical delivery" (ὑπόκρισις). The volume is concluded with a detailed essay by John T. Fitzgerald on Hellenistic Gadara, the native city of Philodemus.

With all the diversity of the themes and approaches proposed by the contributors, the volume is doubtless an important contribution to scholarship on Epicureanism in general, on Philodemus in particular, and offers valuable insights for New Testament studies.

Korinna Zamfir



John J. PILCH, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.

John J. Pilch, Professor of Biblical Studies at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., is recognized for outstanding contribution in the field of socio-scientific studies. Pilch is the author of numerous books on Galatians and Romans (1984), *The Cultural World of Jesus: Sunday by Sunday* (1995), *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible* (1999), *Cultural Tools for Interpreting the Good News* (2002), *The Cultural World of the Prophets: The First Reading and Responsorial Psalm: Sunday by Sunday: Year A* (2004), *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles: How the Early Believers Experienced God* (2004), *Introducing the Cultural Context of the Old Testament* (2007, [1991]), *Introducing the Cultural Context of the New Testament* (2007, [1991]), *Stephen: Paul and the Hellenist Israelites* (2008), and is editor of *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina* (2001). He is co-editor of the *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (1998, with Bruce J. Malina), and is coauthor with Bruce J. Malina of the *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (2000), the *Social Science Commentary on the Pauline Letters* (2006), and the *Social Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (2008). The author has a

special training in the direction of medical, cultural and Mediterranean anthropology. His special interest is carried out in the present book: *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*.

This book aims to provide a new paradigm in the study and interpretation of New Testament healing. Living in another culture than that of the New Testament, the modern interpreter is tempted to apply an ethnocentric interpretation to the biblical text, thus ignoring the reading of New Testament healing stories in their cultural context. Pilch proposes the perspective of medical and Mediterranean anthropology as a solution for an objective interpretation of the healing stories in the New Testament.

The book is intended as a basic guide for non-(medical)specialists, specifically for biblical scholars. The specific vocabulary of the medical anthropology is presented in a relevant form; the argument is logically presented with a conclusion and an afterword that provides new directions in research on the topic of the chapter. Thus the reader is challenged to continue research proposed by the author.

In chapter 1, “Basic Perspectives: Healing and Curing” (1-17), Pilch discusses the difference between the scientifically-oriented Western cultures and the ancient Mediterranean culture in interpreting the healing activities. To illustrate it, he introduces the anthropological distinction between “curing disease” and “healing illness”. In this context, the model presented by modern medical anthropology, through its scientific studies (proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck), is a solution for biblical scholars. In his opinion, all interpreters need a systematic theory of cultural variations in values and/or value orientations.

The second chapter, “Medical Anthropology: Sickness and Disease (19 -36) investigates a direction in which medical anthropology can contribute toward interpreting the healing stories in the New Testament. Pilch offers a list and definitions of basic terms (health, sickness, disease, illness, curing and healing) which will offer researchers of the historical Jesus a fresh perspective on sickness and healing in the first-century. He proposes a conceptual model (the health care system) with five elements (cultural hierarchies of health values; experience of illness; cognitive response; healing activities; and potential outcomes) for understanding healing and health care in any given culture and allow for more appropriate cross-cultural comparisons.

In the next chapter (3), “Selecting the Appropriate Model: Leprosy – A Test Case” (39 -54), Pilch modified the cultural or hermeneutic model proposed by Byron and Mary Jo DelVecchio Good for application to biblical texts. The hermeneutic model urges that any analysis of healing should begin with the interpretative strategy of the healer.

The following chapters apply the analysed model to the Synoptic Gospels. In chapters 4 and 5, “Healing in Mark” (57-73) and “Healing in Matthew” (75-86), the author studies Gospels with a tripartite model of a healthcare system (the

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professional, popular and folk sectors) highlights the importance of key cultural factors in the text, such as kinship, social networks, power/authority. Pilch sees the Mediterranean people as dyadic persons. The human person was considered to be whole, healthy, and complete when the relationships function in harmony.

The chapter "Healing in Luke-Acts" (89-117) proposes a new perspective for modern readers to understand Luke's healing stories. The key lies in understanding the relation of sickness and healing to fortune and misfortune.

The most interesting chapter is "Healing in John" (119-138). For Pilch, in the first-century Mediterranean world, the physicians' approach to sickness was philosophical. The John reveals Jesus as the One who heals because he is the source of life itself. Jesus as healer restores to life and restores meaning to life.

In his conclusions, Pilch underlines that in the ancient Mediterranean world, one's state of being was more important than one's ability to act or function. Thus the healers of that world focused on restoring a person to a valued state of being rather than an ability to function. Illness is a matter of deviance from cultural norms and values and is therefore attributed to social, not physical causes. Healing in such a context is the restoration of meaning to life as medical anthropology has defined it.

The chapter "Discussion Questions" (145-150) is very useful for understanding the topic of each chapter. The "Glossary" (151-159) collects 35 key terms that the author used throughout the book. The book contains a general bibliography (161-171) and a Scripture index (173-180).

One misprint may be noted. The page numbers of the article of John J. Pilch, "Biblical Leprosy and Body Symbolism", *BTB* 11 (1981): 119-33 (p. ix.; p. 167) is an error. The correct one is: 108-13 (See Cumulative Index to Biblical Theology Bulletin: 1971–2005, <http://academic.shu.edu/btb/indexofissues.htm>).

John J. Pilch had provided an exceptional tool for the bible researcher of the New Testament. Although the book is a technical one, the reader is conquered by relevant descriptions that the author provides.

Olimpiu N. Benea



Carol MEYERS, *Households and Holiness. The Religious Culture of Israelite Women*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

This brief and concise study of Carol Meyers, Mary Grace Wilson Professor of Religion at Duke University and leading personality in biblical studies and archaeology for thirty years, is the edited version of a paper presented at the XVIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament held at Basel in 2001. The complete title of the paper is „From Household to House of Yahweh – Women's Religious Culture in Ancient Israel". As Carol Myers argues in the preface, her study is a positive answer to the question whether sociological and/or gender studies can have an impact on the study of Israel's religion. The study fills a gap, addressing the topic of the role of woman in the religious life of

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Israel. It is a guide for scholars, in a historical-biblical perspective, proposing a path to a comprehensive approach to women's religious culture. The study is well documented, as shown by the number of notes and a large bibliography (over 150 titles) at the end of the book.

The study is organized in seven main parts and a final Discussion. In the Introduction, Carol Meyers makes an excursion in modern biblical studies, pointing out the inconvenients of the two interpretative approaches of the Scriptures, the classical (represented by male clergy and male scholars) and feminist one. She refers to scholars representing the first approach, who have marginalized or ignored women and their role (Julius Wellhausen, Georg Fohrer, Yezekel Kaufmann, Franzmann etc.), and to the feminist movement (Elizabeth Cady Stanton etc.), reflecting the opposite position, although using the classical methods as well. Meyers argues that focusing on female deities as a possible path toward understanding women's religion is a mistake. Feminist biblical studies have not been successful enough in detaching their perspective from that of the biblical authors. Because of the provenience of the Scriptures' writers (elite, urban males, priests, urban or not urban prophets, members of the royal bureaucracy), because of the perspective of these authors (general, national and communal, not familial and domestic) and because some laws, narratives and prophetic diatribes condemn what women – as well as men – do, some texts, taken out of context provide a negative view of practices that may have played a very positive role in women's lives. According to Meyers, late twentieth century biblical research established that women were not much more disadvantaged in their participation in *communal* religious activity than were non-priestly males (she brings arguments from Deut 12,12; 16,11.14; 29,11; 31,12, 1 Sam 1-2, Josh 8,35; Ezra 10,1; Neh 8,2; 10,28; 12,43).

In the second part (*Women's Religious Culture*), Meyers proposes some sociological and historical definitions about basic concepts like culture, religious culture, women's religious culture and Israelite religion. Subsequently Meyers discusses the risks inherent to woman's life in the biblical antiquity, related to birth giving, infant caring, preparing of food, etc. In her view women's religious practices can be seen as strategies to intervene with the divine forces believed to forward the well-being of mother and child, and to influence them in order to assure their benevolent and protective presence, or to avert their destructive powers (e.g. Lev 12,2-8; 15,18-33; 18,9; 20,18).

In the third part of the book (*An Anthropological Approach*), Meyers demonstrates the inclusion of magic as a legitimate and efficacious aspect of religious behavior. Research shows that ancient "health care system" was intimately related to religious culture and the role of the magical practices in biblical antiquity was to replace medicine, psychology, economics and political science. The anthropological approach of this topic is also useful in that it involves the use of several different kinds of data: *archaeological* (artifacts discovered in the Syro-

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Palestinian sites), *textual* (the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern texts), *ethnographic*; these make up the complex discipline of *ethnohistory*. The locus for this investigation must be the *family household*, consisting of persons, material culture and activities. The *household* is fundamental to any premodern human society. In the Hebrew Bible the 'bet ab' ('house of the father') represents ancient Israel's male-dominated sociopolitical structure and the male perspective. An alternative expression, the 'bet'em' ('house of the mother') represents the internal dynamics of household life and the female perspective.

The fourth part, *The Archaeological Evidence*, describes the material part of women's religious activity (figurines of female deities, eye images, bed miniatures, small lamps, knife blades, jewelry amulets, shells etc.), symbols and good indicators that certain household areas were sites of the religious culture of women.

In the fifth part, *Textual Sources*, the author points out the most important literary resources: documents from ancient Israel, specifically the Hebrew Bible, and documents from surrounding ancient cultures. The Bible speaks of the purification rituals (in Lev), the petitionary prayers for fertility and conception or activities, with their material symbols, relative to the children and to life protection (Gen 15,2; 20,17-18; 25,21; 31,14,17; 38,28-30; Exod 4,24-26; 1 Sam 1,10,11; Judge 13,3; Ezek 16,4; 31,21, Lev 2,13; Num 18,19; 2 Kgs 2,21-22; 8,19; Prov 6,20-23; 31,18; Job 18,5-6 or the Talmudic texts); many of these passages attack women's illicit magical practices, but not all (e.g. Ezek 16,4). Other sources named in this study - with similar symbolism - are the Babylonian, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Anatolian and Hittite texts and iconography.

The sixth part, *Ethnographic Data*, discusses the ritual behavior (a combination of magical and medical practices), prescribed in written documents and in oral tradition, who establishes that women were especially skilled in invoking the dead in service of the living (e.g. Gen 29,31; 30,1-24; 35,16-21).

In the final *Discussion*, Meyers mentions the female experts for religious ritual, on the example of biblical texts: the *midwives* (Gen 32,38; 35,17, 1 Sam 4,20; Exod 1,15-21), *necromancers* (the Hebrew 'terapim', Gen. 31,19,34; 1 Sam 19,13; 28,7-25, Lev 19,31; 20,6,27; Deut 18,11), *sorcerers* (the Hebrew 'mekkasepa', Exod 22,18; Deut 18,10-12; Isa 57,3), *diviners* (Ezek 13,17-23). Women occasionally participated in extra-household community cultic events: at local shrines or even at the Jerusalem temple, but in their daily existence, they were officiants and practitioners of household praxis.

Gheorghe Mircea Covaci