

## Recensioner

FRANTIŠEK ÁBEL

*The Psalms of Solomon and the Messianic Ethics of Paul*

WUNT II/416, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016, paperback, xv + 355 pages,  
€89, ISBN: 978–316–15399–16

In his book, František Ábel explores the idea of the “last judgement” in Paul’s letters and the pseudepigraphic Psalms of Solomon. Ábel primarily investigates the preparation of Israel and the nations for the “Day of the Lord,” as it is presented in the psalms and Paul’s letters respectively. The purpose of his book is to argue that Paul depended on, or was at least influenced by, Pss. Sol. in his theologizing regarding final judgement, justification, and the Davidic messiah. Since Paul’s ethics is deeply connected with his expectation of the final judgement, which is also when the messiah returns, his ethics (as well as the ethics of Pss. Sol.) is messianic, hence the title “messianic ethics.”

In the first chapter Ábel seeks to define the role of deuterocanonical Jewish literature in the context of Second Temple Judaism. He also examines how the Torah is conceived of, and what role it plays within this literary corpus. He concludes with saying that, “[d]espite the remarkable variation between traditions of the period, the Torah was for every group the very core of life for Jewishness.... Torah always meant the source of life and the right way to final salvation, and by this, eternal life” (27). The chapters that follow give a background and define different themes of the psalms, with special focus on how the Davidic messiah is presented in Pss. Sol. 17 and 18. Besides the messianic concept in the psalms, Ábel discusses the origins of the broader idea of a Davidic messiah in the Second Temple Period and positions the psalms within this tradition.

The third chapter is the largest and main chapter of the book. Here Ábel analyses all psalms in Pss. Sol. (except Pss. 6 and 12). Before the

analysis, Ábel presents a few premises. Regarding his perspective on Paul's concept of Jesus as the messiah, he depends heavily on Pamela Eisenbaum's book *Paul Was Not a Christian*. Regarding his perspective on Paul's theology of God's mercy and grace, he depends on Christopher VanLandingham's book *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul*. With these presuppositions Ábel begins his analysis of the Psalms of Solomon and creates an overview of how the collection conceptualizes God's righteousness as expressed in his merciful judgment and his disciplining his people.

Ábel considers God's righteousness to be expressed mainly in God's mercy and grace, in his judgement over the world, and in his disciplining his people. After the analysis of the psalms, Ábel searches the Pauline letters for similar patterns and theological ideas. He shows how Protestant interpretations usually try to harmonize the concept of being judged by works and the saving grace of Jesus in Paul's letters, and that most of the time, the solutions are less than convincing. By limiting the material to passages where Paul discuss judgement, he shows that the idea that comes into view in the psalms also is visible in Paul's writings.

The main argument of Ábel is that the grace and mercy of God is best seen when he disciplines his people, which should lead to their repentance. Before Jesus' death and resurrection, non-Jews were not able to receive this mercy and grace, since they were not a part of the covenant people of God. Rather, the non-Jews were punished for their sins, and the punishment was that they were not able to venture in to the eternal life with God. Jesus thereby creates the opportunity for non-Jews to participate in the covenant, but only *as* non-Jews. However, they need to remain holy within the covenant, and Ábel argues that both the author of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul believe that people remain holy by behaving good, which is to fulfil the Torah. Evidently, all will be judged at the final judgement based on how well they followed the Torah throughout their lives.

In his final chapter Ábel places Paul's condensed verses regarding justification in Rom 3:21–26 in the context of Pss. Sol. 17–18, especially

18:5. The argument rests on the premise that Paul and other late Second Temple Period authors believed that in the end, Jews would be saved *as* Jews, and non-Jews *as* non-Jews. No one could cross the ethnic and national borders drawn, and no one should. The death and resurrection of Jesus as the messiah signaled to Paul that the end had come and that it was crucial that all the nations heard the message that now, all they had to do to begin their journey was to trust and believe in Jesus.

When humans follow the Torah, they are atoned for their sins and cleansed. In this way they could remain holy until the *parousia* of the messiah, which occurs when the final judgment would come. In the end, everyone will be judged equally and according to their conduct. No one will be favored because of something they themselves had done. This is the point Paul makes in Rom 3:21–26, according to Ábel. God reveals his righteousness in the messiah, which means that he reaches out to the non-Jews. They are saved as non-Jews when they believe in Jesus, but they have to keep themselves clean and righteous before God, which is not to be taken in a forensic way. They are righteous as in the meaning of clean from sin, not exempted from punishment. The punishment is yet to come, and everyone will be responsible for themselves.

In his concluding remarks Ábel states that since both the messianism and the ethics are similar in Pss. Sol. and Paul's letters, it is not unlikely that Paul was influenced by the former. Even more so, says Ábel, since both Paul and the author of Pss. Sol. were Pharisees. His strongest argument for this hypothesis is, however, that both Paul and the author of the psalms write about a Davidic messiah.

*The Psalms of Solomon and Paul's Messianic Ethics* is an important contribution to the discussion concerning Davidic messianism during the first century CE, and how Paul could have visualized the eschatological age he thought they were now a part of. It is unfortunate that John Barclay's book *Paul and the Gift* was published only a year before Ábel's work, since it would have been a good resource in order to nuance the image of grace and mercy in the Second Temple Period which Ábel works with. Furthermore, Ábel's perspective of the role of the messiah in

Paul's letters is heavily dependent on Pamela Eisenbaum's and is not very nuanced. The main issue is that in the Psalms of Solomon, the messiah will primarily rescue Israel from sin and destruction, and the non-Jews will be saved in the process. Ábel confirms this, but claims that Paul's main influence from the psalms was not how the messiah would rescue Israel, but how he would rescue the non-Jews.

Nevertheless, Ábel delves in to a research field which has been almost completely forgotten by New Testament scholars. Barclay only engages with Pss. Sol. in one of his appendixes, and most scholars engaged in messianism of the Second Temple Period only briefly touches upon the two final psalms. The collection not only mentions a Davidic messiah, but perhaps even more interestingly, a messiah "pure from sin" (17:36). Hopefully the present book will ignite more research on the Psalms of Solomon and especially the messianism represented in the book.

*Lukas Hagel, Lund University*

DALE ALLISON JR.

*The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus*

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, häftad, 126 sidor, SEK 202,

ISBN: 978-0-802-86262-4

Dale Allison Jr. har genom åren gjort sig känd som en ledande Jesusforskare med en mängd publikationer på sin lista. Den förhållandevis modesta boken *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* (126 sidor) tillhör definitivt inte någon av Allison's större opus, men den är inte att förringa. Scot McKnight, själv en välrenommerad bibelforskare, brister ut i följande lovord på bokens baksida:

In the last 125 years there have been five truly epochal thinkers who altered the course of Jesus research: Martin Kähler, Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Käsemann—and the fifth one is Dale Allison.

Det är stora ord. Samtidigt speglar det något av det inflytande som Dale Allison har haft och har.

Boken ifråga bygger på några föreläsningar som Allison höll vid Duke University 2008. När det gäller omfånget skulle den kunna sägas