

David Lincicum, **Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy**, Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Review Part Two
Chapters Six-Nine

Lincicum's volume is a revision of his Oxford dissertation and is comprised of nine chapters. In part one of this review, I looked at chapters one through five. Part two is comprised of chapters six through nine.

Chapter six is really the heart of the book, and in it the author attempts to demonstrate how Paul understood and used Deuteronomy. 'Paul was convinced that in holding to both Deuteronomy and to Jesus, he was serving not two masters but one' (p. 117). Is L. able to demonstrate the truth of this claim in what follows? Yes.

L. considers such things here as how Paul referred to Deuteronomy and how Paul deemed Dtr an ethical authority. L. opines in this connection 'Deuteronomy is thus... construed by Paul as a legal authority with an ad-hoc character and an immediacy imparted to it by the eschatological situation at hand' (p. 137). He proves this by meticulous exegetical examination of passages from Dtr. in Paul's authentic letters. L. also asserts that, for Paul, Dtr. is a source of theological authority and a lens of Israel's history (and this is perhaps the most interesting section of the chapter- pp. 142ff).

But Paul doesn't simply use Dtr., according to L., he rewrites it.

In Rom 10:6-8 Paul performs another striking act of rewriting Deuteronomy with profound Christological consequences (p. 153).

Rewriting Dtr. is not unusual – as the preceding chapters of L's volume have proven. So here Paul is shown to be very 'traditional' and very Jewish in his utilization of Scripture. But rewriting isn't defacing. Or defiling. It is a legitimate means by which to communicate the message of the Sacred Text for the present circumstance. L. has a fine phrase describing this Pauline method- he calls it an 'apocalyptic interventionist reading' (particularly and specifically in connection with Paul's use of Dt 32)(p. 166). That is, in the Song of Moses

Paul finds history told in advance... [and] That restoration is nowhere dependent upon a prior human act. Rather, the Song describes such restoration in terms of unilateral divine action on behalf of Israel. This apocalyptic interventionist reading of Deut 32, understood in light of God's action in Christ, controls the reading of Deut 27-30, where Christ now fulfills the condition of the covenant... (Ibid.)

It's an insight worth noting and L. may well have put his finger on exactly the right spot to find the pulse of the use of the Old Testament by the writers of the New.

L. continues, though, with a bit of a warning lest we think Paul has gone overboard with his Christological reading:

Paul's is not a crass Christological hermeneutic that seeks to find Jesus hidden behind every verse of Deuteronomy (p. 168).

Well said indeed!

Still, the purpose of L.'s book isn't to simply describe Paul's use of Dtr., it is to set Paul in a context of interpreters. So in the next chapter L. looks at Josephus' use of that ancient text. But not being a fan of Josephus (who I think nothing more than a mere self-serving politico and propagandist), I'll move quickly past him. That's not to say the reader of L.'s work should ignore the chapter, it does indeed contain some intriguing remarks about Josephus' exegetical method.

Chapter Eight, the penultimate chapter, is titled 'Later Trajectories of Interpretation: Sifre and Targums'. The word 'trajectory' is striking because it suggests, at least to me, that L. does here, in this book, the same thing – *mutatis mutandis* – that Helmut Koester did decades ago in his *Trajectories Through Early Christianity*. That is, he strives not to homogenize the way Jewish interpreters have understood Dtr, but instead follows the various trajectories launched by Dtr. itself. How Josephus and Paul and the Targums and Philo followed parallel paths (essentially), and yet different paths, from the one starting point of the last book of the Torah.

A problem arises, though, on page 185, where L. writes on the 6th line from the top – '...1 Clement refers Deuteronomy to the Corinthians...' This is a bit confusing. Did L. mean instead that 1 Clement referred the Corinthians to the book of Deuteronomy? Because the book of Deuteronomy simply could never be referred to the Corinthians. The book of Dtr. didn't know who the Corinthians were.

And again, I'm puzzled by L.'s use of the word 'singleton' on p. 186 on the 9th line down. He's quoting Neusner, who apparently wrote 'Out of that book's singleton cases and ad hoc rules...' Did Neusner mean 'singular' or is 'singleton' the British equivalent of 'singular'? I do not know and I cannot determine the meaning of the sentence.

At any rate, L.'s conclusion concerning the Targums and Sifre is surely correct – '... both Sifre and the Targums offer a fascinating glimpse into Deuteronomy's reception in the synagogue and school' (p. 192).

The ninth and concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the study, with focus, of course, on Paul's Deuteronomy and the influence Deuteronomy exerted on Paul.

Clearly there is no single Jewish response to Deuteronomy, and the fidelity of a Jewish response cannot simply be judged by appeal to a parallel strategy elsewhere. If we can speak of a family resemblance, clearly we are not examining sets of identical twins. This investigation, then, has provided at least a rough map of the field of reception which Deuteronomy has created, a ground survey of the impact crater caused by end of the Pentateuch' (p. 197)(and 'the' probably needs to be inserted before 'Pentateuch').

An appendix follows – a table of biblical passages in Tefillin, Mezuzot and Excerpted texts. Then a bibliography and indices.

L.'s work is exceptional. Absolutely exceptional. His careful, painstaking, and meticulous exegesis is a model to be emulated and his clear sightedness and unwillingness to eisegete characteristics much needed in academic biblical studies. If you can, buy this book. If you can't, get your library to buy it. If they won't, get it on interlibrary loan and read it. You will learn from it and you will return to it in the future. It's not only a fine volume, it's a very fine reference tool.