

half a century. In providing access to the Western reader to the amazing world not only of the Ethiopian liturgy but through it to its theology, spirituality and life, it offers without doubt a very valuable resource.

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DITOMMASO, Lorenzo, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature*, «*Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha*» 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), xx+547 pp. ISBN: 90 04 14412 9

The biblical figure of Daniel and his powerful prophetic visions have fascinated East and West through the times. They had also an enormous impact on the literary production of Late Antiquity and of the Middle Ages, as the recent publication *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature* by Lorenzo DiTommaso effortlessly demonstrates.

As DiTommaso correctly points out “with the sole exception of Adam no other figure of the Hebrew Bible had attributed to or was associated with it more ancient and mediaeval apocryphal literature”. (p. 12).

Considering the enormous popularity of this biblical hero the undertaking of presenting a comprehensive overview of the complete material dedicated to Daniel appears to be a Herculean task.

DiTommaso has already presented before a work of a similar ambition, with his bibliographical volume of pseudepigraphical writings (*Bibliography of Pseudepigrapha Research 1850-1999*, Sheffield 2001). However, according to the author: “this study (*on Daniel*) is meant to be considerably more than either an *Einleitung* or a bibliography” (p. 15).

The chronological range of the study covers the period from the 2nd cent. BCE to the end of the 15th cent. CE. DiTommaso classifies this huge amount of material in three main categories: the Daniel legenda, the apocryphal Daniel apocalypses and the Daniel prognostica. Significantly, as he notes, recounting all the different facets of Daniel literature: “there are Daniel apocalypses and apocalyptic oracles, Daniel astronomical and geomantic texts, Daniel mystery plays and Daniel dream manuals” (p. 12).

The work which comprises over 500 pages begins with a general introduction to the apocryphal Daniel Literature. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two is dedicated to the biblical Book of Daniel and to the legendary material revolving around the person of Daniel. The legends that provide primarily information on the life and times of Daniel as a person, do not deal with the political aspects of the story of Daniel as expressed particularly in the prophetic visions. It is characteristic that this legendary material has been popular in Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions.

Chapter Three of the book is dedicated to the apocalyptic literature that is pseudepigraphically attributed to Daniel. This body of literature is primarily concerned with the political history against the background of an apocalyptic prophecy. This literature follows the Danielic pattern of world history, which is defined according to the succession of four eschatological kingdoms. According to the author, he is primarily interested to know why a text would be ‘pseudonymously attributed to Daniel specifically’, and “if this apocalyptic literature was a response to a distinctive type of historical situation” (p. 17). DiTommaso argues convincingly that the apocryphal Daniel apocalypses originated in a Byzantine Greek environment probably in the 4th or 5th centuries, challenging thus scholarly opinions, which favour a Syriac provenance. He also rejects a direct relation of these writing to the Second Temple Judaism (p. 9, n. 31). DiTommaso admits, though, that: “the Byzantine Daniel compositions represent a particularly knotty problem” (p. 95).

In this chapter the twenty-four extant apocalyptic Daniel texts are first presented in a roster. The texts are then described and discussed according to their provenance and date of composition and classified according to a tentative chronological order. As DiTommaso, however, acknowledges: “although this roster is meant to represent the latest word on the identification and understanding of the Daniel apocalypsa, in many ways it remains a prolegomenon. I have not had access to every manuscript copy of each text, nor can I read languages such as Armenian or Syriac” (p. 95). These confessed weaknesses become definitely obvious for this part of the study. The presentation and discussion of the texts is based primarily on secondary literature. DiTommaso gives a very unbalanced and uneven picture of the texts in an often unnecessarily wordy presentation. So, on the one hand, DiTommaso dedicates numerous pages to lengthy discussions on single texts that have been the object of extensive scholarly study so far, presenting in detail the text and its *Forschungsgeschichte* and challenging occasionally in extenso the opinions of the scholars he refers to. On the other hand, it is characteristic that for less known or unedited texts, we just find remarks, such as: “This text requires more study” (p. 126) or: “More work is required in this area” (p. 151), where the author refrains in general from expressing his own judgment on critical questions such as the dating or the provenance of the texts.

Chapter Four presents the so-called Daniel prognostica and more specifically the *Somniale* and *Lunationes Daniel*, that have been popular especially in the West. The discussion of the Daniel Prognostica texts upon which not much research work has been conducted is one of the most interesting parts of the volume. Both the *Somniale* and *Lunationes Danielis* were probably composed in Greek in Late Antiquity and they belong generally

to the divination literature. DiTommaso considers this part of literature as 'scientific' and he states that 'Daniel here operated as an empirical scientist' (p. 301). So, it is perhaps not surprising that in the analysis of this literature, he uses quotations of 'star scientists', such as Stephen Hawking or Richard Dawkins, in order to explain parts of the Daniel corpus. Characteristically, he applies the 'memes'-theory of R. Dawkins for the understanding of the oracular literature. The applicability and usefulness of such scientific models for the study of pseudepigraphical literature has to be questioned, however, as they do not appear to offer for the present volume any new insights.

Chapter Five of the volume is dedicated to general observations and conclusions, while Chapter Six lists in nearly 200 pages a comprehensive inventory and bibliography of the Daniel texts.

This impressive collection of material demonstrates without doubt the profound dedication and fascination of the author with the Danielic literature. Unfortunately though, the unbalanced and often wordy presentation of the material makes the book difficult to read and it does not reach the standard of works of a similar outlook such as Georg Graf's *Geschichte der Christlich-Arabischen Literatur*, Città del Vaticano, 1944 or more recently Robert Hoyland's *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, Princeton, N.J., 1997. The presentation of the literature primarily on the basis of the already existing secondary literature and the apparent lack of sufficient study of the primary sources is a major shortcoming of this book. Additionally, the volume would have needed a considerably more careful proof-reading, as there are numerous typographical errors remaining.

This volume remains, in spite of its shortcomings, an impressive collection of material that might serve as a useful –albeit under reserve – work of reference.

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DRAKE, H. A. (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perceptions and Practices* (Ashgate, NH: Variorum, 2006), 418 pp, 6 b&w illustrations. ISBN: 13: 978-0-7546-5498-8

Esta obra, resultado de los trabajos presentados al quinto encuentro bianual *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity* celebrado en Santa Bárbara en 2003, ha logrado reunir y presentar de una forma coherente los resultados de las investigaciones de casi una treintena de historiadores y filólogos de nueve países distintos cuyos estudios se centran en la Antigüedad Tardía –de la Europa occidental, oriental o bizantina, y araboislámica-. Estructurada en cuatro grandes capítulos (I: Assessing Violence in Late Antiquity; II: