

of the canonical approach to the Psalter which advocates the contextual interpretation of the psalms in relation to their neighbours or in linked groups. This approach comes through in Wilson's commentary where he encourages an awareness of the interpretative influence of a psalm's placement within a pairing or group. (Hossfeld and Zenger's commentary also devotes a good deal of discussion to questions of the canonical interpretation within the Book of Psalms.)

Wilson's commentary follows the usual pattern of the NIVAC series. Consideration of each psalm begins with the text from the NIV followed by a brief general comment and then discussion in three sections: 'Original Meaning', 'Bridging Contexts' and 'Contemporary Significance'. The discussion of 'Original Meaning' focuses on the exegetical examination of the text including questions of translation (although the NIV is used as the main text for discussion this does not inhibit the author's presentation of other translation options where necessary). The 'Bridging Contexts' section explains imagery, metaphors and common practices (amongst other things) that are found in the psalms but whose meaning may not be apparent to a contemporary audience. This section gives the opportunity to explain the significance of these images and practices. The 'Contemporary Significance' section goes on to suggest lines of application of the psalmic text within the realities of modern life. Obviously, such suggested application is a task that is immensely culture-bound. Although Wilson was clearly writing primarily in the American context, he does a good job of suggesting areas of relevance that are certainly applicable to most in the 'Western world' and which would probably be beneficial also to readers in the 'majority world'. Once again, this is a strong commentary that both student and Christian reader will benefit from greatly.

So, in summary, each of these commentaries is a helpful addition to the field of psalms studies. They each bring their own strengths to the table and each one makes a valuable contribution in its own way. So for close readings of the text Hossfeld and Zenger provide a great starting point; for discussion of issues of structure Terrien's commentary is great; for a more contemplative approach to the text Eaton's commentary is immensely helpful and for thorough discussion of the text and its application, at a level that is accessible to every thinking/reading Christian, Wilson's work is to be recommended.

*Jamie Grant, Highland Theological College  
Dingwall, Scotland*

## *The Personification of Wisdom*

Alice M. Sinnott

London: Ashgate, 2005

v + 208 pp., £50, hb, ISBN 0-7546-5124-x

### SUMMARY

Alice Sinnott argues that the question of theodicy is the context for the creation and development of Wisdom in order to enable Judaism to survive in its Hellenistic context. This hypothesis is based on the lack of mention of sacred spaces and the similarities of Sophia's speech with exilic literature. While the background and commentary notes are beneficial, the hypothesis concerning the creation of Sophia is speculative in that it is based on arguments from silence and comparison. This book is recommended for a reader desiring an introduction to Lady Wisdom and a survey of recent scholarship on her.

### RÉSUMÉ

La thèse d'Alice Sinnott, c'est que la question de la théodicée est à l'origine de la création et du développement de la sagesse et que celle-ci avait pour but de permettre au judaïsme de survivre dans le contexte hellénistique. Cette thèse se fonde sur l'absence de mention de lieux sacrés dans les écrits de sagesse, ainsi que sur les similitudes des discours de Sophia avec la littérature de l'exil. Les informations apportées sur l'arrière-plan et les notes explicatives sont utiles, mais l'hypothèse relative à la création de Sophia a un caractère hautement spéculatif dans la mesure où elle ne se fonde que sur des arguments tirés du silence ou sur des comparaisons. On peut recommander cet ouvrage aux lecteurs cherchant une présentation de Dame Sagesse et un survol des travaux académiques récents sur la sagesse.

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Alice Sinnott argumentiert, dass die Theodizeefrage den Kontext für die Entstehung und die Entwicklung der Weisheit darstellt, deren Zweck in der Befähigung des Judentums lag, in der hellenistischen Welt zu überleben. Diese Hypothese basiert auf der fehlenden Erwähnung heiliger Räume und der Ähnlichkeiten der Weisheitsreden mit exilischer Literatur. Obwohl der Hintergrund und die Kommentaranmerkungen hilfreich sind, ist die Hypothese in Bezug auf die Entstehung der Weisheit spekulativ, da sie auf Argumente aus dem Schweigen beruhen und Vergleiche fehlen. Das Buch ist Lesern empfohlen, die nach einer Einführung in die Figur der Weisheit und nach einem Überblick über die neuere Forschung zum Thema verlangen.

\* \* \* \*

Alice Sinnott devotes her study to the subject of personified Wisdom in the OT and Deuterocanonical books in order to examine and provide explanations of why Lady Wisdom was created and how she developed. Sinnott begins by discussing possible antecedents for Wisdom, especially in Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources. The author surveys different approaches concerning such antecedents; whereas some see Wisdom as an original



ANE goddess made subordinate to Israel's God, others argue that Sophia developed from the example of holy women in the nation. To these conjectures, Sinnott posits her own – 'the question of theodicy is the context for the literary creation and development of the Wisdom figure.' Wisdom was created from Mesopotamian materials by writers in a 'strong monotheistic system' following the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE in order to address the crises of the event, particularly the role of YHWH. Later, to counteract the danger of losing their identity, these writers drew on the broader idea that God created the world through wisdom rather than on traditions restricted to the land of Israel. No longer did the Jews have to rely on 'covenantal presuppositions,' now they had Wisdom as a 'personal mediator,' giving Judaism what it needed 'to survive in its Hellenistic context.' Sinnott derives this hypothesis from the lack of mention of sacred spaces: 'Wisdom's speaking in public places is a strong indication that the Temple does not exist.' Sinnott also founds her thesis on the similarities of Sophia's speech with motifs and styles found in the 'Priestly account' in Genesis and in the exilic prophets. Next, Sinnott discusses the elusive nature and the role of Wisdom in Job. According to the author, Wisdom demonstrates that the solution to Job's problem is not found in the answers of his friends. In Baruch, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon, Sophia is developed as a new identity marker for post-exilic Jews in unstable times. Ben Sira identifies Wisdom with the Torah, Baruch stresses her as a unique gift to the Jews and the Wisdom of Solomon exalts her above the Egyptian goddess, Isis.

This monograph will serve as an invaluable resource for the study of personified Wisdom – a resource which gives one a view of both the forest and the trees. The background notes, commentary, and survey of the history of research are beneficial; however, the hypothesis concerning the creation of Sophia is speculative. Does the lack of mention of sacred spaces really point to their destruction? Even if, Sophia's speech intentionally excludes mention of the Temple, could their not be other explanations for why this is the case? As tenuous as an argument from silence is, so also is an argument from comparison, since one could find a number of differences between the speech of Wisdom and the 'Priestly account' or exilic prophets as well. Do parallels in texts necessarily suggest the works are contemporary? Much stronger is the thesis that Wisdom assists the audiences of the Deuterocanonical works in keeping their identity and faith in the midst of Hellenistic pressures; however, an identity crisis does not have to be related to theodicy.

A clearer definition of and hermeneutic for personification is also needed. Sinnott gives the phrase 'Wine is a mocker' as an example of other biblical personifications like Wisdom, but surely this phrase (even if one concedes this as a personification) is vastly different from Wisdom, besides in length alone. She comments that Wisdom is a mere personification 'rather than a person, or hypostasis;' but, no reason is given why Wisdom

could not be a personification of a person or hypostasis (nor does she define what she means by person or hypostasis). Moreover, Sinnott concludes that Sophia's depiction is 'clearly in no sense intended as 'other than' or equal to YHWH,' and that in all of Jewish Wisdom literature, Lady Wisdom is never 'envisaged as a second god in a theological sense.' Is this really 'clear'? Can we say with certainty what an author intended or how Wisdom would be envisaged by an author or audience in a world full of the belief in suprahuman powers? Furthermore, rather than modern theories alone, a survey of ancient rhetorical theory concerning the definition and role of personification would have been helpful. Despite these comments and numerous, distracting printing errors, this book is recommended for a reader desiring an introduction to Lady Wisdom and a survey of recent scholarship on her.

J.R. Dodson  
Tübingen, German

### *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and its Environment*

Peter Balla

WUNT 155; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2003  
xii + 279 pp., hb, € 69, ISBN 3-16-148006-6

#### SUMMARY

In this monograph Hungarian scholar Peter Balla examines the child-parent as it is expressed in the New Testament. He aims to wrestle with the question of how, on the one hand, Jesus makes some radical commands about abandoning one's parents in order to follow him. But on the other hand, the rest of the New Testament is overwhelming in favour of the command to honour one's parents. The way that Balla approaches this tension is by surveying the relevant portions of Greek, Latin and Jewish literature as well as the New Testament writings. He concludes that Jesus' teachings were exceptional rather than paradigmatic and that New Testament authors affirmed the standard view of their day that children should honour their parents.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In dieser Monographie untersucht der ungarische Gelehrte Peter Balla die Beziehung zwischen Kind und Eltern, wie sie im Neuen Testament dargestellt ist. Er beabsichtigt mit der Frage zu kämpfen, dass Jesus einerseits einige radikale Gebote zum Verlassen der Eltern um seiner Nachfolge willen gibt, das Neue Testament aber andererseits stark das Gebot des Ehrens der Eltern unterstützt. Dazu sieht Balla die relevanten Abschnitte sowohl der griechischen, lateinischen und jüdischen Literatur als auch der neutestamentlichen Schriften durch. Er schließt, dass Jesu Lehren an diesem Punkt die Ausnahme, nicht das Paradigma darstellen und dass die neutestamentlichen Autoren die Standardansicht ihrer Zeit bestätigten, dass Kinder ihre Eltern ehren sollen.