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Boda, M J, Falk, D K & Werline, R (eds) 2007 – *Seeking the favor of God, Vol 2: The development of penitential prayer in second temple Judaism*

Publisher: Society of Biblical Literature. Soft cover, 281 pages. Price: £22.99

Reviewer: Prof Dr P M Venter (University of Pretoria)

Four publications dealing with the genre of the Penitential Prayer, published since 1998, led to the formation of the Penitential Prayer Consultation during the annual SBL meetings held in 2003, 2004, and 2005. The consultation was organized by a steering committee consisting of Richard Bautch, Mark Boda, Daniel Falk, Judith Newman and Rodney Werline. They agreed on three successive themes: origin, development and impact. Ten papers presented during the second consultation meeting of 2004, dealing with the theme of development of penitential prayers in the Second Temple period, were collected and published in this second volume of a trilogy.

In the "Preface" (pp xi-xv) the editors Boda, Falk and Werline, offer background information on their publication and provide a brief summary of the contents of each of the ten contributions included in the book. In the "Afterword" (pp 227-237) Eileen Schuller assesses the second consultation and points to future work that needs to be undertaken in respect of penitential prayer. She indicates three areas in respect of which the consultation expressed appreciation for the complex and diverse developments in prayer during the Second Temple Judaism: "formally, as lament, petition, penitence and praise come together in new combinations; theologically, as new apocalyptic and deterministic understandings of divine action come together with long-held covenantal paradigms; and socio-historically, as penitence becomes a daily activity that seeks to find a place within new institutions such as the synagogue" (p 237).

The publication includes a lengthy bibliography (pp 239-254), a list of contributors and their affiliations (p 255), an ancient source index (pp 257-274), an index of modern authors (pp 275-278) and a subject index (pp 279-281).

The first and last chapters present a research survey and a reflection on the study of penitential prayer respectively. The remaining papers can be divided into two subcategories. Five of them deal with literature from the second century BCE and four with the Dead Sea Scrolls. In a research survey (pp 1-15) Schuller summarizes how prayer in Second Temple Judaism had been studied in the past and also summarizes the future task of defining the parameters of the corpus of penitential prayer. In his reflections (pp 209-225) Werline tests his proposed definition of penitential prayer given during the first consultation in 2003 by analyzing prayers that border on the margin of his definition. He makes an appeal for flexibility in the definition of penitential prayers as the "enlisting of penitential prayers into a new role, [let] the prayers change and take on new elements of form and thus move further from what they were in an earlier period" (p 225).

The papers by Werline and Venter both deal with Daniel 9. Applying the theories of Geertz, Turner, and Bell to ritual, Werline, relates his contribution to the situation of the *maskilim*. Penitential prayers "are a dynamic social performance that takes place within a web of social relationships and power structures; they are a form of mediation of those relationships" (p 32). Venter (pp 33-49) indicates how Deuteronomistic theology and apocalyptic theology are juxtaposed in Daniel 9 to form a new ideological matrix for penitential prayers conducted in the synagogue.

Floyd discusses the use of penitential prayers from the perspective of the deuterocanonical book of Baruch (pp 51-81). Study of Baruch 1:1a-3:8 has major implications for the

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ongoing discussion on the genre, setting, ideology, and historical development of penitential prayers. In her contribution Flesher studies female imagery and lamentations in the book of Judith (pp 83-104). Contra Westermann, she shows that the lament was never replaced by penitential prayers, but that both forms were used. It should rather be borne in mind that the exile resulted in a shift in theological thinking and consequently “the tone and language of the prayers shifted in response to this new theological commitment” (p 103). Newman’s study of the Prayer of Manasseh (pp 105-125) analyzes the formal similarities and differences between the prayer and Psalm 51. In her paper she argues that Manasseh’s prayer “represents a counter discourse to other penitential prayers of the Second Temple period ...” (p 105). It does not have marked structural or lexical affinities with the early postexilic corporate prayers of penitence.

In the section with contributions on the relation of penitential prayers to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Falk studies the influence of scriptural motifs on the development of institutionalized penitential prayer (pp 127-157). He first studies scriptural resources for penitential prayer and then uses this information to examine the influence of these on the Dead Sea Scrolls. He concludes that penitential prayers played an essential part in a system of atonement at Qumran, which usually included sacrifice. Arnold’s study of repentance and the Qumran covenant ceremony (pp 159-175) indicates that the Qumran community used forms prominent in the penitential prayer tradition but that the ceremony itself did not precisely take on the form of a penitential prayer. The ceremony was rather a rite of passage establishing the strict boundaries of the community. Chazon depicts the *Words of the Luminaries* (pp 177-186) as a document standing at the crossroads of a new development in the history of penitential prayer. It is a “sterling example of how penitential prayer was pressed into a service of new religious practice of daily petition for ongoing needs” (p 186). In her contribution, Nitzan studies traditional and atypical motifs in penitential prayers from Qumran (pp 187-208). She indicates that common Jewish penitential prayers were brought to Qumran by men who joined the community and that a “presectarian circle of penitents close to the Qumran community” (p 207) could even be suggested.

This publication indeed showcases the complexity and diversity of the phenomenon of penitential prayers. Scholars in the field of Second Temple studies will find it an enriching experience to read this book. It is also highly recommended for those interested in prayers and their different forms in the Bible.

Bondos, D A 2007 – *Salvation and the cross*

Publisher: Fortress. 210 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof Dr D P Veldsman (University of Pretoria)

David Brandos is an ordained Lutheran minister and professor of Theology at the Theological Community of Mexico. He teaches Systematic Theology and Biblical Studies at an ecumenical consortium of seminaries in Mexico City. Since 2005, Brandos has published three monographs, namely *The Letter and the Spirit: Discerning God’s Will in a Complex World* (2005), *Paul on the cross: Reconstructing the apostle’s story of redemption* (2006) and *Salvation and the cross* (2007). The latter work is on soteriology, that is, on the meaning of being saved and therefore also of the Christian claim that Christ died for our sins.

From his vantage point that “when Christians speak of salvation, they tell a story”, Brandos poses the (descriptive) question on the what, why and how of redemption as it is