

demise of the library must be sought not in a sensational single event, but in a cultural and sociological shift, that is the lack of interest in cultural institutions in the Roman period. It is difficult to decide what is more depressing in B.'s exercise, whether his removing the library as an object of modern dreams or the potential similarities between the cultural and sociological shift he ascribes to Roman times and current processes. Fortunately this unsettling effect is swept away in the last two paragraphs, in which the importance of the Alexandrian library for Western intellectual history is re-affirmed in a new and truly inspiring way.

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Caroline Carlier, *La Cité de Moïse. Le peuple juif chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2008. 520 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-52426-9.

This book investigates Philo's notion of the Jewish people by studying the semantic field of 'the city of Moses' as well as its correlatives, such as *politeia*. While the place of Judaism in Philo's thought as well as his Jewish identity have recently been studied from various perspectives, Carlier (henceforth C.) presents a new and exhaustive study of the political terminology which Philo uses in the context of the Jewish people.¹ She stresses the complexity of the subject, which at first sight may look straightforward, but turns out to have unexpected dimensions of depth that echo a wealth of Hellenistic and Classical connotations.

Apart from the introduction the book has five chapters, which analyse political terminology as found in the sources she studied, according to their chronological order. C. begins with a general introduction to the central terms, progressing from the non-Jewish authors to the Jewish writers of Ptolemaic Alexandria, and then reaches Philo, to whom three central chapters are devoted. C. relies on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, which include, among others, studies by Israeli scholars in Hebrew. She provides a thorough analysis, quoting extensively the original Greek formulations and stressing the historical development of the meaning of words from the Classical to the Hellenistic period.

The book does not make easy reading, however, because it is written with a strong focus on philological aspects, the individual chapters being organised according to key-words, while the author also approaches larger issues. The very opening of the book may serve as an example: 'Le vocabulaire de la cité en grec concerne tous les termes formés sur le substantif πόλις. Πόλις est un nom primaire féminin dont le sens originel signifie la forteresse où se trouvent les sanctuaires au coeur de la ville et en haut de la ville.'

Does the book nevertheless make a substantial contribution to the study of Hellenistic Judaism? In my view, C. offers two conclusions of overall interest. First, she alerts the reader to the wide range of meanings attached to the central term *politeia*, which is often taken to mean 'right of citizenship'. Her analysis shows that in the Hellenistic period the term is primarily used in connection with the Jews as a reference to their way of life and ancestral constitution. This insight shifts the focus of the discussion from the question of the Jews' political status to their inner organization within Gentile society.

Secondly, C. points to a significant development from the early Jewish writers to Philo: while the former frequently refer to Jewish *politai* in the sense of fellow-citizens, Philo revives the Classical notion of the city. Philo's approach becomes visible in the very terminology he uses (various forms of *polis*) as well as in the specific connotations he implies. In this context, C. takes

¹ See esp. E. Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought. Israel, Jews, and Proselytes* (Atlanta 1996); M.R. Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen 2001); M. Hadas-Label, *Philon d'Alexandrie: Un Penseur en Diaspora* (Fayard 2003).

issue with two prevalent approaches to Philo's notion of the city, one locating him in a Stoic, the other in a Platonic context. She argues that Philo mentions central ideas, such as the cosmos as a city, which are absent in the *Timaeus* and can thus not be explained by reference to his proximity to the Platonic school. Since David Runia's seminal work, the Platonic school has often been identified as Philo's immediate context, especially of his treatise *On the Creation of the World*.² But C. also argues that Philo often uses Stoic terminology without actually adopting the ideas of this school. Instead, she identifies many classical Aristotelian ideas in Philo's thought on 'the city of Moses'.

C. is certainly right to stress (as does Runia) that the *Timaeus* cannot explain everything in Philo's thought. At the same time, however, Philo's overall allegiance to the Platonic tradition is significant and needs to be studied in the context of his time and the Alexandrian environment. The Stoic element, on the other hand, seems to be a little underrated in C.'s analysis. While she correctly links the spread of Stoic ideas to the rise of Rome and frequently refers to a unique connection between Philo and Arius Didymus (319-341), she ultimately argues for significant differences between Philo's ideas in the *Exposition* and the Stoics. Her main point, repeated several times, is that Arius assumes a fellow-citizenship between humans and gods, while Philo does not. Even if we accept this difference as real, it is relatively small in comparison to the significant similarities between the two writers, to which C. herself points. Indeed, it would be interesting to continue her analysis and investigate how Philo's *Exposition* fits into the synthesis of Alexandrian philosophical traditions and the new orientation of Roman thought towards an increasingly orthodox Stoicism, which is visible in Arius and reaches a climax in Philo's contemporary Seneca.

C.'s emphasis on classical, especially Aristotelian notions is rather more convincing in the chapters dealing with community and the mutual love of the citizens (219-311). In this context, she points out notions, which have, to the best of my knowledge, not been discussed before in connection with Philo's notions of the Jewish people. It would have been helpful to show that these notions did not resurface in other contemporary discussions of the city. Philo's loyalty to classical notions, however, is exaggerated when his idea of universal citizenship, based on the law of nature, is described as conforming to classical rather than Stoic approaches. This is said to be case, because Philo's world-city allegedly still retains the classical connotation of a city-state linked to a specific territory. To my mind, however, a territory of cosmic dimension has lost any connection to the local city-state of the classical age and closely corresponds to Stoic ideas of a universal city of the righteous.

In summary, C.'s book helps the reader to recognize the extreme importance of Philo at a historical juncture, where classical, Hellenistic and Jewish traditions met to form a new synthesis of seminal importance for subsequent generations. C. moreover contributes to the field by questioning accepted assumptions of Stoic influence on Philo and by offering new insights into his dependence on the Aristotelian tradition. It is hoped that despite its cumbersome style this book will have an impact on the scholarly discourse on Philo's works.

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² D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden 1986); and more recently, D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria. On the Creation of the Cosmos. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden 2001).