

women gave the rabbis a sense of superiority. This attitude, however, should not cloud our vision on this issue or induce us to adopt a similar stance.

It is important to emphasise that the criticism voiced here should not be viewed as a petty devaluation of an important study. It is not petty precisely because this study deals with magic. If it had dealt with rabbinic academies, from which women were barred, the claim that they are absent from a scholarly work dealing with them would have been petty indeed. However, to belittle the role played by women in magic and medicine seems reminiscent of study of historical phenomena in the last century and a half, which not only claimed that the history of mankind is the history of humankind, but also usurped the limited areas where women had a say for the benefit of men.

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M. Kiley (ed.), *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine, A critical anthology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, xx + 332 pp., ISBN 0-415-13234-7.

This critical anthology comprises a diverse selection of prayers chosen by nearly fifty historians, covering a span of some 650 years (from 325 BCE to 325 CE). The samples, of Jewish, Greco-Roman and Christian provenance, include individual essays by the scholars in their respective areas. A historical-theological approach to the phenomenon of prayer is shared by the different critical introductions and notes that accompany the corpus. At first sight, a collection of prayers covering such a length of time, from different cultures and places, appears to be a monumental work which could not be encompassed in one volume, still more so if one takes into consideration the vast material available to us. The definition of prayer given by the editor, Mark Kiley, 'an address to or celebration of a deity', is also a very comprehensive criterion that lets prayers of all stripes into the corpus. All this however does not represent a disadvantage; on the contrary, this diversity is precisely what gives purpose to the anthology. This is to enable the reader to gain a comparative insight into the formal and thematic similarities of prayer in the Greco-Roman period. The collection is intended for the general reader and the undergraduate student but the critical notes on the different texts and the bibliography suggested can also be very helpful for the specialist.

The individual essays in the volume cannot be discussed at length in this review. Therefore I shall refer to the three main sections in general: Judaica, Greeks and Romans, and Christian tradition.

The first section, Judaica, is divided into two subsections: the Qumran writings, which give us an insight into the unique role of Jewish liturgical prayer as a 'substitute for sacrifice' within the life of a religious community, and the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, where prayer appears embedded in a literary context. The introduction to this part by Esther G. Chazon and Moshe J. Bernstein consists in a descriptive summary and a formal classification of Qumranic prayers as a liturgical equivalent to the Temple worship, a phenomenon observable later in rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Randall D. Chesnutt and Judith Newman in their introductory comment to apocrypha and pseudepigrapha emphasize the function of prayer as embellishment of the various overlapping literary genres in which it appears. They point out as

well the pervasive use of biblical motifs, language and imagery in these liturgical pieces incorporated in the various writings as an intent of 'scripturalization'.

The articles of the second part dedicated to Greece and Rome emphasize the more formulaic nature of prayer as shown in its taut structure and fossilized diction illustrated in the examples of Cato's *De Agri Cultura* and Catullus' hymn to Diana (to mention two illustrations of strict attachment to a liturgical pattern, the first one from an authentic oral tradition and the last one a literary conscious reworking of such material). Just as in the first section on the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, here too the use of prayer as a literary device occupies several scholars, among whose discussions I found specially interesting the treatment of Aeneas' oath in the *Aeneid* and a prayer of Scipio Africanus transmitted by Livy, both of these by Frances Hickson-Hahn, with incisive remarks on aspects of language and style. High readable I found as well Christopher A. Faraone's comments on a hymn to Selene-Hecate-Artemis from a Greek magical handbook, comments which stress the main feature that distinguishes Greco-Roman prayer: its 'magical intention', in the belief that the word contains an efficacious power capable of granting the petitioner a favorable answer.

The third section is dedicated to New Testament and early Christian prayer. The New Testament prayers although very well-known represent an unavoidable step between Jewish and Christian tradition to which the anthology dedicates several interesting essays. In the last part, spanning the period from the late first century to the mid-third century CE particular praise is due to the introduction section by Barbara E. Bowe and John Clabeaux, who present a clear classification of the prayers selected according to their affiliation to either Jewish or Greco-Roman tradition, and characterize accurately the process undergone by these prayers as a 'continual departure from Jewish prayer forms and an increasing acceptance of features from Greco-Roman classics'. In the first group, full of resonances from the Hebrew Bible, an essay by James H. Charlesworth about the Ode of Solomon 5 as an example of close attachment to Jewish tradition should be mentioned. As representative of the second group I found very enriching the analysis by Anniewies van den Hoek of a Hymn of Clement of Alexandria bearing heavy influence of Greek and Roman tradition. In my opinion, this anthology succeeds admirably in displaying a range of representative samples from three different religions in the period of their narrowest convergence, while pointing out their common features as well as the distinctive traits belonging exclusively to each one.

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Veronika E. Grimm, *From Fasting to Feasting, The Evolution of a Sin. Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 304 pp.

'Hospitality, loving kindness, and cheerful conviviality on the one hand and on the other ... mortification of the flesh, weeping and groaning ... as ideal patterns of Christian behaviour' (1) — it is this apparent paradox and its evolution over the first three hundred years of Christendom that Veronika Grimm's passionate book attempts to trace, if not resolve. Deeply influenced by her experiences as a psychologist, Dr. Grimm is particularly drawn to the metaphorical and practical role played by food — and the rationale for