



*Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2013.03.04*

**L. Stephen Cook, *On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 145* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011. € 79. ISBN: 978-3161509209.**

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This book is based on a doctoral dissertation supervised by Christopher Begg at The Catholic University of America (2009). L. Stephen Cook provides a comprehensive account of the belief in the "cessation of prophecy" in ancient Judaism and of its modern interpretation. The rabbinic corpus expressed in various ways the conviction that, after Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, there have been no more prophets who speak to Israel in God's name. The present scholarly debate pivots on whether this idea was widely accepted in Second Temple Judaism (the traditional view) or was instead a development of Rabbinic Judaism, one that was foreign to other streams like the Qumran community or early Christianity (the prevailing trend today).

The work is divided into three parts. In the first part (pp. 3–45), Cook reviews the opinions of modern scholars from the nineteenth century to the present. In the second and most extensive part, ("Did Second Temple Jews Believe Prophecy Had Ceased?"; pp. 47–177), Cook discusses all of the relevant ancient texts wherein the idea of the cessation of prophecy appears, from certain passages in the Hebrew Bible to Rabbinic literature. In the final section ("The 'Cessation of Prophecy' in the Modern Debate"; pp. 179–94), Cook summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the two main positions and presents his conclusion: "Second Temple Jews did, on the whole, tend to believe that prophecy had ceased in the Persian period" (p. 192). Each of the major sections concludes with a summary, which contributes to the clarity of presentation, even if it results in some repetition. The book ends with indices of modern authors, sources, and subjects.

The author is to be commended for presenting a complex theme in a clear and orderly manner. Both the first part and the bibliography are particularly helpful. Cook's contribution, moreover, represents the first major analysis of this issue since R. Then's monograph ("*Gibt es denn keinen mehr unter den Propheten?*": *Zum Fortgang der alttestamentlichen Prophetie in frühjüdischer Zeit*, Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1990). In particular, I found his analysis of 1 Maccabees (pp. 66–74) and Philo of Alexandria (pp. 88–103) to be especially insightful, particularly his argument that Philo did not consider himself a prophet. The chapter on Rabbinic literature (pp. 149–73) likewise contains useful insights on the texts that speak about the Holy Spirit's departure (pp.

153–59) and the significance of the *Bat Qol* (pp. 159–64). Overall, Cook has successfully demonstrated the need to clarify the terms of the discussion, namely, what was meant and what is meant by prophecy. On this issue in particular the third part is highly recommended.

However, at the end of the book one is left with a sense of disappointment, because Cook has systematically avoided the question of why prophecy was thought to have ceased, an issue to which he reserves only an appendix reporting some scholarly proposals (pp. 195–96). It is true that a clear explanation is lacking in ancient sources, but there are some hints that could have been explored. For example, Cook never touches the subject of the canonization of Scriptures, nor does he explore the development of the idea of a closed revelation.

In such a wide-ranging work there are inevitably issues on which one might take a different view. The chapter on Pseudepigrapha (pp. 83–87) and his treatment of Ben Sira (pp. 76–78) are too synthetic. Moreover, Cook seems to ignore the problem that the reference to the expected return of Elijah in Ben Sira 48:10–11 does not fit well with the rest of the theology of this book, given the absence of eschatological concerns in Ben Sira's thought. In his discussion of Josephus (pp. 122–48), he does not take into account the connotations of the term "succession" in Greco-Roman culture (see for example L. Troiani, "I profeti e la tradizione nell'età greco-romana" in A. Vivian (ed.), *Biblische und judaistische Studien. Festschrift für Paolo Sacchi*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1990, pp. 245–55), an omission that weakens his interpretation of the end of prophecy in *Against Apion*.

Notwithstanding my disagreements with the author, this volume is a welcomed contribution to research on Jewish antiquity. Although not the final word on the subject, scholars and graduate students alike will certainly want to consider carefully Cook's insightful analysis.