

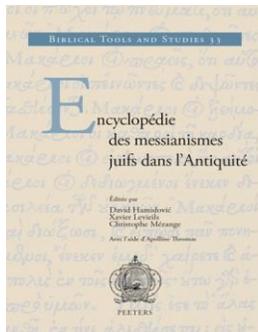


Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2019.11.11

David Hamidović, Xavier Levieils, Christophe Mézange, eds. *Encyclopédie des messianismes juifs dans l'Antiquité*. Biblical Tools and Studies 33. Leuven: Peeters, 2017. ISBN: 9789042935549. Pp. 527. 94 €. Hardcover.

Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism. An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780190255022. Pp. 384. \$82.00. Hardcover.

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The following review addresses two different books: a collective work written in French; a monograph written in English. The two volumes focus on the same theme: Jewish messianism. Published the same year (2017), but on each side of the pond, they largely ignore each other. Matthew Novenson refers to none of the authors of the *Encyclopédie*, except Patrick Pouchelle, quoted in two footnotes as one of the editors of the Psalms of Solomon. The *Encyclopédie* only refers to two different articles of Novenson, published in 2009. The two volumes will be considered separately but a short conclusion will aim at comparing their respective approaches, methodology, and main outcomes.

An introduction and a conclusion written by Hamidović, Levieils, and Mézange bracket the *Encyclopédie*. Beyond the usual overview of each contribution of the volume, the introduction provides a working definition of messianism. It comes from Henri Desroche's sociological understanding of messianism:

Messianism represents the common fund of doctrines that promise perfect happiness on earth, under the leadership of a person, a people, a party, collective movements, in which both ecclesiastical and political, economic or social reforms are presented in the form of orders or norms identified with divine "missions" or even "emissions" (1).¹

¹ H. Desroches and Roland Goetschel, "Messianisme," in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, vol. XV (Paris, Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2008), 874: "le messianisme représente le fonds commun des doctrines qui promettent le bonheur parfait sur terre, sous la direction d'une personne, d'un peuple, d'un parti, de mouvements collectifs, au sein desquels les réformes tant ecclésiastiques que politiques, économiques ou sociales sont présentées sous la forme d'ordres ou de normes identifiés à des 'missions', voire à des 'émissions' divines."

The aim of the *Encyclopédie* is clearly stated: “to identify the origins of the messianic phenomenon and perceive its main evolutions and representations throughout Antiquity” (3).² The last sentence of the introduction sets the tone of the publication, and functions at the same time as a taster and a teaser: “The multifaceted figure of the messiah, whether proclaimed, marginalized or institutionalized, constantly appears as a knot connecting together a sublimated past, a frustrating present, and a future full of promise” (11).³

The first chapter, “Royal Utopias and Origins of Messianism in the Hebrew Bible” (13–82) is written by Christophe Nihan (Institut romand des sciences bibliques, University of Lausanne, Switzerland).⁴ Nihan first offers a short *status quaestionis* of the scholarship on messianism. He notes that during the nineteenth and still in the twentieth century, the aim of many scholars was to enlighten Jesus’s messianism and to trace a historical development from ancient Israel to early Christianity. In short, Jesus’s messianism was in continuation with the Old Testament messianism. But scholars such as G. Fohrer asserted that messianism was not a core and central theme in the OT. The discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls complicated the issue. Their diversity made it quite difficult to isolate a coherent development from the Hebrew Bible to the NT.

Broadly speaking, the messiah is an eschatological figure, in charge of the divine judgment at the end of time, and in charge of the restoration of the Jewish people (17). But even the most “eschatological” passages of the OT, such as Isa 65–66, Ezek 38–39, and Zech 14 ignore a messianic figure and present the deliverance of God’s people as the sole performance of YHWH. With Steven James Schweitzer, John J. Collins, and others, Nihan prefers the term utopia to the traditional word messianism. Utopian scenarios describe an alternative reality, generally presented as preferable to the current reality (19). The utopian scenarios presented in the Hebrew Bible focus on kingship, but with significant variations. Isa 9 introduces a Davidic king, whose reign corresponds to a period of peace and prosperity; Isa 42 and 45 indicate that kingship has been bestowed to a foreign king; Isa 55 points to a kingship given to the whole people; Isa 56–66 describe YHWH as being the king.

Where does this royal utopia then come from? Nihan asserts that it developed after the consecutive sieges of Jerusalem between 597 and 587. But regarding the prophecies of Isa 7 and 9, “they are typically *ex eventu* prophecies: they do not (yet) announce the coming of an undetermined king in the future, but aim to legitimize *a posteriori* the reign of a king already in place on the throne of Judah” (28).⁵ After the exile, Nihan notes that the royal utopias found in the prophetic texts as well as in the Psalms compensate for the absence of a royal indigenous king. They also express the aspirations for a political and cultural autonomy. But, most importantly, these aspirations reaffirm God’s kingship as the patron-god. From this, Nihan concludes: “There is no earthly royalty without heavenly, or divine, royalty, and it is the reaffirmation of this divine royalty in Israel that is actually at the center of post-monarchical royal utopias” (29).⁶ This God-centered royalty sometimes allows for what Nihan calls a “transfer of sovereignty” (38). For example, in Hab 3:13, the “anointed of YHWH” designates the people rather than the king. This is also the case in Deuteronomy 14, but, overall, this collective rereading is marginal within the OT (40).

² “repérer les origines du phénomène messianique et en percevoir les principales évolutions et représentations tout au long de la période antique.”

³ “La figure multiforme du messie, que celui-ci soit proclamé, marginalisé ou institutionnalisé, apparaît constamment comme un nœud reliant ensemble un passé sublimé, un présent frustrant et un avenir rempli de promesses.”

⁴ “Utopies royales et origines du messianisme.”

⁵ “les oracles d’Es 7 et 9 sont typiquement des prophéties *ex eventu*: elles n’annoncent pas (encore) la venue d’un roi indéterminé dans le futur, mais visent à légitimer *a posteriori* le règne d’un roi déjà en place sur le trône de Juda.”

⁶ “il n’y a pas de royauté terrestre sans royauté céleste, ou divine, et c’est la réaffirmation de cette royauté divine en Israël qui est en réalité au centre des utopies royales post-monarchiques.”

Would Zorobabel have been at the center of expectations for a restoration of the Davidic lineage at the beginning of the Persian era? Nihan does not want to ignore this common understanding. But after considering Hag 2:20-23, Za 4:6-10, and Zech 6:9-15, he concludes that the messianic understanding of Zorobabel is “probably inadequate” (50).

As a general conclusion, Nihan acknowledges “the internal complexity of royal utopias in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the limitations of approaches to understanding these representations using categories inherited from later Jewish and Christian traditions” (72).⁷

This first chapter is exegetically balanced. Nihan does not fall into the trap of oversimplification which would have been counterproductive for the first chapter of this *Encyclopédie*. He has chosen to focus on royal utopias, which is an unescapable and unavoidable choice. But what about other utopias, such as prophetic or priestly? Excellent for what it says, this chapter should be followed by a consideration of the other utopias. It is hoped that the following chapters will fill this gap.

The second chapter, “The Issue of Messianism in the Septuagint” (83-121),⁸ is written by Cécile Dogniez (Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, Paris Sorbonne). The first seven pages of the chapter provide a general introduction to the LXX. Dogniez aims at analyzing the longstanding assertion among many scholars according to which the LXX “had ‘messianized’ the Hebrew text of the Bible, that there was an emphasis on messianism in some of its texts” (90).⁹ Dogniez scrupulously provides an exegesis of most if not all the passages in the LXX for which there is a suspicion over messianism.

Gen 3:15 is the first text considered. Dogniez rightly points that the main idea of the MT is not messianic. Rather, the text introduces the idea of a permanent hostility between the offspring of the serpent and of the woman. As for the translation, the Greek translator closely followed the MT, with a slight explanatory tone. “Only an indirect interpretation makes it possible to see in Gen 3:15 the messianic idea of the coming of a savior” (92).¹⁰ It is interesting to note, according to Dogniez, that this indirect interpretation is found in the early Christian tradition, for example, in Irenaeus.

Concerning Gen 49:9-11, whatever the interpretation, there is no trace of “messianization” in the LXX, even though the translator replaced the words “scepter” and “rod” with two terms designating human leaders. There is no messianic expectation in the LXX, but as pointed by J. J. Collins, verse 10 has given rise to a messianic reading in the Qumran scrolls, the targumim, and the Talmud as well as early Christian literature, in Justin, Irenaeus and Origen, among others (97).

With respect to Num 24:7, 17, differences between the MT and the LXX are more significant. Among them is the introduction by the translator of the word ἄνθρωπος in verse 7. In many texts, when associated with words such as “prince,” “rod,” or “star,” ἄνθρωπος could point to the messiah. But for Dogniez this is not the case here. Nonetheless, verse 17, which underlines the oracles of Balaam, introduces the presence of a kingly figure who in the future will bring a better situation. This reading is also present in Philo, Qumran, and the targumim (100).

In Ps 44 (MT 45), though the LXX uses the vocative Ὁ θεός in verse 7, this does not mean that the translator worked with a messianic agenda. Actually, the translation remains quite close to the MT. If some readings

⁷ “la complexité interne des utopies royales dans la Bible Hébraïque, ainsi que les limites des approches visant à appréhender ces représentations à l'aide des catégories héritées des traditions juives et chrétiennes postérieures ».

⁸ “La question du messianisme dans la Septante.”

⁹ “On a longtemps affirmé que la LXX avait ‘messianisé’ le texte hébreu de la Bible, qu’il y avait une accentuation du messianisme dans certains de ses textes.”

¹⁰ “Seule une interprétation, indirecte, permet de voir en Gen 3, 15 l’idée messianique de la venue d’un sauveur.”

of this psalm are messianic, they are due to interpretations that are completely beyond the translator's control (103).

The case of Psalm 109 (MT 110) is different. Dogniez asserts that the Hebrew text is rather incomprehensible. The translator decided to stick to the MT in quite a literal manner. The translation does not add a messianic flavor *per se*, but for Dogniez, "in view of the context and subsequent theological developments, this text [was] certainly able to take on a messianic coloring, without however having to attribute it, from the outset, to the LXX" (106).¹¹ Following Alison G. Salvesen, Dogniez evokes here a network of texts which could have been read in a messianic way (106).

The last two texts under exegetical scrutiny are Isa 7:14 and 9:5-6. In the first passage, the mere use of the word *παρθένος* does not suffice to support the belief in the virginal conception of the Messiah (107). In the second passage, the LXX simplifies the MT. Instead of the four adjectives of the Hebrew, the translator chooses one expression *Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος*. The Greek text emphasizes God to the detriment of the child (109).

The conclusion of Dogniez is threefold. 1) "It is very difficult to produce a clear, homogeneous, and deliberate messianic interpretation from the translators of the LXX, based solely on the use of isolated sentences or words."¹² 2) "However, it is indisputable that some of the choices of translation specific to the LXX may have served as a basis for messianic readings in emerging Christianity."¹³ 3) "[I]t even seems difficult to continue to claim that the Greek text of the LXX, like its Hebrew *Vorlage*, represents an essential document on the origins of Jewish messianism" (155).¹⁴

Dogniez's contribution is comprehensive. Generally speaking, her conclusions are balanced. This chapter is a commendable *status quaestionis*. Her analysis raises at least two pending questions. First, which translation principles, if any, are at work behind the LXX? Any translation is an interpretation. What are the interpretative trends of the LXX? Second, how have non-messianic texts (according to Dogniez's general reading) easily become messianic in a rather systematic manner?

Chapter three (123-51), "An Example of Royal Messianism in the Hellenistic Jewish Literature: The Third book of the Sibylline Oracles,"¹⁵ is provided by Apolline Thromas (Institut romand des sciences bibliques, Université de Lausanne, Switzerland). After the work of Philo of Alexandria, this document of 829 verses is the longest witness of Hellenistic Judaism available today. Thromas situates this text in the middle of the second century BCE. "The sibyl tells the past and future history of the world, in terms of destruction and restoration, using references from both Jewish tradition and Greek mythology. The Sibyl's main concern is to promote the Jewish divinity, to condemn idolatry and pagan practices, especially of a sexual nature" (126).¹⁶ Thromas asserts that this document conveys a kind of messianic expectation, especially pointing to royal figures.

¹¹ "compte tenu du contexte puis des développements théologiques ultérieurs, ce texte [a pu] assurément prendre une coloration messianique, sans qu'il faille pour autant attribuer celle-ci, dès le début, à la LXX."

¹² "Il est bien difficile de faire émerger de la LXX une interprétation messianique claire, homogène et délibérée de la part des traducteurs, en se fond sur le seul emploi de phrases ou de mots isolés."

¹³ "Il est toutefois incontestable que certains choix de traduction propres à la LXX ont pu servir de point d'appui à des lectures messianiques dans le christianisme naissant."

¹⁴ "il paraît même difficile de continuer de prétendre que le texte grec de la LXX, tout comme sa *Vorlage* hébraïque, représente un document essentiel sur les origines du messianisme juif."

¹⁵ "Un exemple de messianisme royal dans la littérature juive hellénistique : le Troisième livre des *Oracles Sibyllins*."

¹⁶ "Elle [la Sibylle] conte l'histoire passée et future du monde, en termes de destructions et de restaurations, utilisant des références aussi bien issues de la tradition juive que de la mythologie grecque. La Sibylle a surtout à cœur de promouvoir la divinité juive, de condamner l'idolâtrie et les pratiques païennes, notamment à caractère sexuel."

Three royal figures emerge. The first one is the Seventh king, as found in 3, 192-195; 314-318; 608-610. Thromas follows Collins' interpretation according to which this king is identified with Philopator, who made the construction of the Leontopolis temple possible. This is probably the main reason for his high repute among the Jews. But Thromas asserts that "it is quite unlikely for a Jewish reader to consider that he can share power with the divinity" (138).¹⁷ The second royal figure is the Sun King, as found in 3, 652-656. This Sun King figure is quite current in the Egyptian literature. The Prophecy of Neferty is one of the oldest examples of this oracular genre, used to introduce the figure of a savior king, able to put an end to a period of unrest (138). The third and last royal figure is the Great King of Asia (3, 611-615). This king does not act under divine inspiration, as the Sun King, and his intervention coincides with the Seventh King's reign. It is clearly stated that he will not participate in the salvation of his people (142).

The conclusion is the most interesting part of this chapter. Thromas aims at highlighting the literary, historical, and political setting of the Sibylline oracles. For her, it is a text written for a well-educated Greek audience, including Jewish and Egyptian communities (143). "The fact that this collection is placed under the authority of the Sibyl is mainly a strategy aimed at a Hellenized, non-Jewish public" (143).¹⁸ Politically speaking, this text denounces common enemies (Rome and Asia), and the Lagid dynasty. Most significantly, it shows the ability of the Jewish community to adapt to the Egyptian political context and new Hellenistic cultural references. A parallel could be drawn with The Letter of Aristeas. Theologically speaking, this document calls for the abandonment of idolatry and the conversion of every human being to Judaism. Sociologically speaking, the reference to a nourishing god is easily understood in a context of food shortages current in the second century BCE.

Chapter four, "The Psalms of Solomon: An Update on the Questions raised by an over-studied Messiah" (153-203),¹⁹ is written by Patrick Pouchelle (Centre Sèvres, Paris). The author indicates that his contribution focuses on the community which produced the psalms, the role of Pss. Sol. 17 and 18, and the messianism within each of these (157). Pouchelle asserts that the connection between the Psalms of Solomon and the Qumran community is questionable, as those texts were not found in any of the Qumran caves. A connection with the Pharisaic movement is also problematic. It is therefore crucial to refer to the texts themselves before reaching a conclusion on their alleged background (161).

Only Pss. Sol. 17 and 18 refer to a messiah. In the first Pss. Sol., especially Pss. 2 and 8, a non-indigenous king is in charge of the destruction of the sinners. By contrast, in Pss. Sol. 17, the advent of the messiah establishes God's kingdom (163). Generally speaking, "The *Psalms of Solomon* denounce a critical situation in which institutions, such as the Temple, are not only desecrated, but totally rejected. However, the community cannot propose anything concrete to rebuild Jerusalem. This is why the corpus ends with the sapiential description of a programmatic 'Messiah' announcing a whole new Jerusalem where the temple has become useless" (164).²⁰

Regarding Pss. Sol. 17, one of the crucial issues is verse 32 which points to Χριστός κυρίου. Is this a Christian interpolation? Pouchelle acknowledges that there is no consensus among the scholars. He concludes that it is most probable that the author of Pss. Sol. 17:32 did not consider this expression as a messianic title but rather as "a quality inherent in the royalty of this figure" (172).²¹ From a literary point

¹⁷ "il est assez peu probable pour un lecteur juif d'envisager qu'il puisse partager le pouvoir avec la divinité."

¹⁸ "Le fait de placer ce recueil sous l'autorité de la Sibylle est principalement une stratégie visant un public hellénisé, non juif."

¹⁹ "Les *Psaumes de Salomon* : Bilan des questions soulevées par un messie trop étudié."

²⁰ "Les *Psaumes de Salomon* dénoncent une situation critique, dans laquelle les institutions, telles le Temple, ne sont pas seulement profanées, mais totalement rejetées. Cependant, la communauté ne peut rien proposer de concret pour refonder Jérusalem. C'est pour cela que le corpus se termine par la description sapientiale d'un 'Messie' programmatique qui annonce une toute nouvelle Jérusalem où le Temple est devenu inutile."

²¹ "un qualificatif inhérent à la royauté de cette figure."

of view, Pouchelle sees in this Psalm a mix of different genres: laments, prayer, hymn, praise. This prayer utters a real hope (172). The expected messiah is a king, son of David. He will govern, fight against the enemies, judge, bless, without ever weakening. Is this messiah a warrior messiah? A political program is not excluded, including war. But this is nuanced in Pss. Sol. 17 by the role of Wisdom, in contradistinction to the Hasmonean kings known to be violent (181). Overall, it is not easy to decide whether this kingdom is a *redivivus* of David's kingdom, "or a kingdom with borders extended to the whole world, or a subtle political system in which a purified Israel and the world would coexist with a royal figure mediating between God and the world" (184).²² The solution may lie, according to Pouchelle, in the hypothesis that the Psalm has been worked on in several stages.

Pss. Sol. 18 was written at a later date. Even though the term *χριστός* features three times in this Psalm, the definition of the term is much shorter than in Pss. 17, showing, in Pouchelle's estimation, that "messiah" has now become an all-sufficient *terminus technicus*. The messiah is now merely a sapiential figure, a leader and a teacher (189).

Pouchelle's main contribution is his demonstration that there is a messianic development in the Pss. Sol. Whereas the first Pss. present a messianism without a messiah, Pss. Sol. 17 introduces a royal and imminent messiah, and Pss. Sol. 18 concludes with a highly eschatological messianic figure (190).

Chapter five, "The Diversity of Messianic Expectations within Palestinian Judaism" (205–86),²³ is written by David Hadamović (Institut romand des sciences bibliques, University of Lausanne, Switzerland). This contribution focuses mainly on the Qumran texts. Hadamović introduces his contribution with an important statement: "the expectation of the messiah does not capture 'messianism'... If one wants to grasp the belief in the coming of a messiah, one must also grasp the beliefs that are inseparable from his expectation" (206).²⁴ If Judaism and Christianity diverge on messianism, it is mainly due to their different expectational horizons (207). On the one side, Christianity affirms the incarnation of the messiah in the person of Jesus as a distinction against Judaism. On the other side, none of the many messiahs obtained the consent of all Jews. On the one side, all messianic figures of Judaism are merged into the character of Jesus, the Christ. On the other side, the Qumran scrolls show the profusion of messianic types and figures (210).

Hadamović analyzes in detail the main, if not all, messianic types present in Palestinian Judaism. In a first section, he addresses the royal messianic expectations. The expression *משיח ישראל* seems to point to a royal messiah. But, surprisingly, the four occurrences found in the Damascus Document lack any reference to the Davidic dynasty. For Hadamović, this indicates that the "messiah of Israel" is only assuming a national role, without explicit reference to royalty (221). Other titles are used in the Qumran scrolls, without using the word *משיח*: prince of the congregation, star, scepter. Notably, the Temple Scroll indicates that the king is under the rulership of the Levites. The War Scroll confirms what Hadamović calls the "sacerdotalization" process by which there is a powershift from kingship to priesthood (224). But 4Q252 gives another picture: the Davidic messiah keeps his royalty forever. This confirms the variety of positions on the nature and function of the messiah in the scrolls. This variety is already present in the Hebrew Bible. As a conclusion to this section, Hadamović asserts that the royal messiah is only secondary in the eschatological scenarios. He appears as a secondary protagonist, after the priestly messiah and the priests, who occupy the leading roles during the final events (231).

²² "un royaume aux frontières étendues au monde entier, ou un système politique subtil dans lequel un Israël purifié et le monde coexisteraient avec une figure royale médiatrice entre Dieu et le monde."

²³ "La diversité des attentes messianiques dans le Judaïsme palestinien."

²⁴ "l'attente du messie ne résume pas le 'messianisme' Si l'on veut saisir la croyance en la venue d'un messie, il faut aussi saisir les croyances indissociables de son attente."

The second section focuses on the priestly messiah. Hadamović addresses the issue of the double messianic expectation, as found in 1QS IX 11: the messiahs of Aaron and Israel. In light of 4Q175 (Testimonia), the Testament of Levi (4:3, 6; 8:17) and Jubilees (30:18-20; 31: 12-17), Hadamović asserts that there is in Qumran the glorification of the image of Levi. “The messiah of Aaron in 1QS and probably in the other quotations in the Qumran and related manuscripts would be an eschatological figure modeled on the figure of the ideal Levi priest” (237).²⁵ What is then the role of this priestly messiah? Basing himself on 1QSb III 23-24, IV 27; 4Q400 1 I 17; 4Q491 11 I 16-17 and also Jubilees 31:15, Sir 24:1-12 and 45: 5-7, Hadamović asserts that the role of the priests was mainly to teach the Torah. This didactic function would therefore be the main characteristic of the priestly messiah. If this is confirmed, the eschatological priest or high priest is not really a messiah. His role is to strengthen the heart of the soldiers when they fight against the sons of darkness, as stated in 1QM X 2-3 (239). A possible distinction may exist between the priestly messiah, largely in charge of teaching the people, and the high priest in charge of the liturgy. Whatever the interpretation, it is under the leadership of the priestly messiah that Jerusalem and its temple will be restored (244).

The third section deals with prophetic messianic expectations. 1QS IX 10-11 mentions together the three figures: the priest and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel. Using again 4Q175 to interpret 1QS IX, Hadamović explains that the anonymous prophet fulfils the promise of Deuteronomy 18. This prophet would be an eschatological figure such as Moses, but without any messianic role (248). Elijah is another prophetic figure who plays an important role. 4Q251 could point to a prophetic messiah according to the Elijah model (251). Here, Hadamović goes a step further in connecting this prophetic model to the Teacher of Righteousness figure. “The Teacher of Righteousness could have precisely this didactic mission of salvation by bringing new prescriptions to the Essenes, and also indirectly to all Jews according to the Essene project called to become the alpha and omega of all Jews at the end of time” (255).²⁶ Overall, these texts reveal varied expectations, far from being standardized (257).

The fourth section – the longest of this chapter – considers supernatural or celestial expectations. These expectations reflect a significant change of perspective. Salvation is not the result of the work of the king, or priest, or high priest. A celestial figure is now in at work, deeply connected to God, who finally is in charge of meeting all the expectations. 1 Enoch 85-90 is a testimony to this paradigm shift (259). The Son of Man does not belong to the human order, nor do Michael and Gabriel. Following García Martínez, Hadamović thinks that in 1QM, 11Q13, and 4Q246, the Son of Man is the prince of light or Melchizedek. “The Messiah would no longer have anything to do with an earthly model but with a supernatural model; the titles ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of the Most High’ in 4Q246 would be just another expression of the same supernatural messianic figure” (263).²⁷ In 2 Baruch, the role of the messiah seems to evolve. He becomes a true warrior, as any earthly king. He allows the resurrection of the faithful; he intervenes in the final judgment, even though his role is not precisely stated. Nonetheless, he performs a function similar to that of a prosecutor who confronts the actions of the sovereign with the actions of the angels (269).

Hadamović’s conclusion mirrors his introduction: the messianic expectations are varied, diverse, and numerous. Contrary to Sanders’ famous formula “the expectation of a messiah was not the rule,”²⁸ he claims the constant growth of messianic ideas. More importantly – and this could be considered as the main

²⁵ “Le messie d'Aaron en 1QS, et probablement dans les autres citations dans les manuscrits de Qumran et apparentés, serait une figure eschatologique modelée sur la figure du prêtre idéal Lévi.”

²⁶ “Le Maître de Justice eschatologique pourrait avoir précisément cette mission didactique de salut en apportant de nouvelles prescriptions aux esséniens et aussi indirectement à l'ensemble des Juifs selon le projet essénien appelé à devenir l'alpha et l'oméga de tous les Juifs à la fin des temps.”

²⁷ “Le messie n'aurait plus rien à voir avec un modèle terrestre mais avec un modèle surnaturel; les titres ‘fils de Dieu’ et ‘fils du Très-Haut’ en 4Q246 ne seraient qu'une autre expression de la même figure messianique surnaturelle.”

²⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66CE* (London, Philadelphia, SCM, 1992), 295.

value of this meticulous and exegetically sound chapter – Hadamović provides a historical framework to this bursting and blooming situation. This historical timeframe could be divided in four different periods: 1) development of messianic expectations; 2) messianic expectations connected to the works of God at the end of time; 3) God’s actions that supplant messianic expectations; 4) integration of the messianic expectations into the collective memory of the Jews at the beginning of the era. 5) messianic “silence,” as there is no need to discuss these ideas, which have largely been accepted (276).

Chapter six, “The Messianism of Philo of Alexandria” (287–302), is written by Jean Riaud (Université catholique de l’Ouest, Angers, France).²⁹ Philo ignores the word *χριστός*. He also largely ignores the character of David, so important for the understanding of royal messianism (287). Does this mean that messianism is absent from Philo’s mind and work? Many scholars would agree. Some, however, assert that “Philo professed a messianism of earthly happiness, not a simple moral development of his people and a bliss beyond death” (288).³⁰ The aim of this chapter is to check whether this understanding of Philo is confirmed in the texts. Riaud analyzes the only two passages at stake, as far as Philo’s alleged messianism is concerned: *De praemiis et poenis* 79-172, and *De vita Mosis* I, 289-291. Regarding *De vita Mosis* I, Riaud follows closely the analysis of Borgen,³¹ particularly on Philo’s interpretation of Balaam’s oracle (Num 24): “Philo sees in Num 24:7-9 the proclamation of a Hebrew emperor who will fully realize this universal mission of Moses and the nation of the Hebrews. This ‘man’ is not a new Moses, but an emperor who will carry on, in continuity with the Exodus, the work of Moses and will lead it to its completion. The features Philo attributes to him in his paraphrase of Num 24:1-9 are those of a Messiah king” (292).³² The tone of *De praemiis et poenis* 79-172 is different. The saints (οἱ ὅσιοι) are at the center of the passage. They will succeed against the enemies through war, inspired by three major virtues: dignity, terror, and beneficence “for dignity causes respect, and terror causes fear, and beneficence causes good will.”³³ A man will come forth to lead them, a chief commander “who will subdue great and populous nations, God sending that assistance which is suitable for pious men.”³⁴ Further in the same tractate (§165), when describing the return from exile, Philo refers to a “leading vision, more divine than is compatible with its being of the nature of man,” similar to the cloud in the wilderness. Would this be the description of a messiah? Riaud refrains from reaching this conclusion. Instead, he endorses a balanced reading of Philo: Philo professed, while not giving it first-rate importance in his work, a messianism of earthly happiness, convinced as he was, it seems, that faith in the future comes from the realization in the past.

Chapter 6, “Messianism in Flavius Josephus” (303–31),³⁵ is written by Christophe Mézange (Université catholique de l’Ouest, Laval, France). Is Josephus inconsistent regarding messianism? On the one hand, he never uses the word *χριστός*. On the other hand, a statement in the *Jewish War* (VI, 312-313) seems to allude to a messianic expectation: “But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, ‘about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.’ The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination.” In his introduction,

²⁹ “Le messianisme dans l’œuvre de Philon d’Alexandrie.

³⁰ “Philon a professé un messianisme de bonheur terrestre, non un simple développement moral de son peuple et une béatitude au-delà de la mort.

³¹ P. Borgen, “‘There Shall Come Forth a Man’: Reflections on Messianic Idea in Philo,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1992), 341-361.

³² “Philon voit dans Nb 24, 7-9 l’annonce d’un empereur hébreu qui réalisera pleinement cette mission universelle de Moïse et de la nation des Hébreux. Cet ‘homme’ n’est pas un nouveau Moïse, mais un empereur qui poursuivra, en continuité avec l’Exode, l’œuvre de Moïse et la conduira à son achèvement. Les traits que Philon lui prête dans sa paraphrase de Nb 24, 1-9 sont ceux d’un roi messie.”

³³ § 97.

³⁴ § 95.

³⁵ “Le messianisme chez Flavius Josèphe.”

Mézange accounts for the messianic silence of Josephus. Being the official historian of the Flavians, Josephus avoided any form of anti-Roman messianic expectation for the simple reason that any appearance of a messiah would indicate the defeat of Rome (304). With this historical background in mind, Mézange divides his contribution in two parts.

The first part deals with the period preceding the Jewish war of 66-74. Right after Herod's death in 4 BCE, messianic contenders appeared. Herod's cruelty had made him the tyrant of the last days in the eyes of the Jews. Simon the slave is the first contender mentioned by Josephus. From a modest origin, his natural strength and beauty gave him a charismatic flavor. Arthronges, the second pretender, was a shepherd, which made him the fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy (34:23): "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd." Ezekias, son of Judah, was the head of the robbers. Herod had a hard time capturing and killing him. He had declared himself king, but surprisingly, there is no confirmation of his messianic claims in Josephus (308). All those pretenders were severely repressed and destroyed. But by the year 50 CE, there is a new surge in messianic expectations. The eschatological tyrant is not Herod anymore, but the very figure of the Roman emperor. An Egyptian messiah gathers more than 30,000 people on the Mount of Olives.

The second part deals with the Jewish war of 66-74. Menahem the sicarius and Eleazar son of Ananias led the revolt against Rome. According to Mézange, "this war was not only for the revolutionary movements a nationalist war of liberation, but also and above all an eschatological war against the evil Empire of the end times, the ultimate war before the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God" (311).³⁶ For Josephus, there was no hesitation. These messianic expectations were pure madness despite the many wonders and supranatural signs that accompanied them: armed battalions walking through the clouds above the besieged cities; the heavy locked door of the temple opening by itself in the middle of the night; a star in the form of a sword, a comet which continued to shine above Jerusalem for a year; a flashing light around the altar and the temple; a cow brought into the temple as a sacrifice that gave birth to a lamb in the middle of the holy place, and so on. The people considered all these wonders as divine signs, proof that Rome would be defeated and the messiah would come. But Josephus takes much care when describing these wonders to highlight the madness of the rebels, and at the same time refrains from giving any interpretation of these signs (315).

The last pages of this chapter mainly concern the three leading figures of the Jewish war, Menahem, John of Gischala, and Simon bar Gioras. According to Mézange, the case of the latter is significant. In a well-crafted production, Simon, who had hidden in a tunnel while Titus had taken the city, went to the Roman army chief dressed as the king. He thus acted as a "suffering messiah, offering himself for the salvation of his people for a cathartic purpose, the ultimate sacrifice before divine intervention that would bring about liberation" (325).³⁷ Mézange's contribution beautifully describes the complex historical universe of Jerusalem during the turbulent period of the Second Jewish revolt. Although robust and detailed in its analysis, this chapter reads smoothly as a historical novel.

Chapter seven, "Messianism in Jewish Christianity"³⁸ (333–90) is written by Xavier Levieils (Université catholique de l'Ouest, Angers, France). This chapter begins with the following observation: "Jesus of Nazareth is certainly the most clearly identified historical figure as a messiah. This identification is largely attested by the sources at our disposal. No other messianic recognition in antiquity has comparable

³⁶ "Cette guerre n'était pas seulement pour les mouvements révolutionnaires une guerre nationaliste de libération, mais aussi et surtout une guerre eschatologique contre l'Empire du mal de la fin des temps, l'ultime guerre précédant l'avènement définitif du Royaume de Dieu."

³⁷ "Il s'agit là d'un messie souffrant, qui s'offre pour le salut de son peuple dans un but cathartique, ultime sacrifice avant l'intervention divine qui amènerait la libération."

³⁸ "Le messianisme dans le christianisme juif."

documentation” (333).³⁹ The first section of this chapter presents a thorough *status quaestionis* of scholarly research on Jesus’ messianism. It contains the following sections: Jesus, the political messiah (Reimarus, Eisler, Brandon); Jesus the ethical messiah (Strauss, Renan); Jesus the unreachable messiah (Bultmann); Jesus the prophet (Vermès, Mimouni, Meier, Schlosser); Jesus the crucified messiah (Dahl); Jesus the herald of a kingdom without messiah (Sanders, Fredriksen, Crossan, Horsley, Grappe); Jesus the expected messiah (Hengel, Dunn, Wright, Bird).

The next section addresses the difficult question of the messianic consciousness of Jesus. Even though it seems today illusory to rebuild Jesus’s intellectual and spiritual journey, the many texts at the disposal of the historian make it possible to identify the content of his teaching and the main trends of his action (343). The very fact that Jesus addressed God as his father indicates that he thought he had a special relationship with God. This gave him the authority to affirm his personal understanding of scriptures (consider for example his understanding and practice of the sabbath). Jesus was often named “rabbi,” but it was above all as a prophet that he affirmed his authority. Leveils meticulously considers most, if not all, the messianic occurrences in the gospels: Peter’s messianic confession; Jesus’s response to John the Baptist (Matt 11/Luke 7); Jesus’s triumphal entry in the temple (Mark 11/ Matt 21/Luke 19/John 12); The Davidic filiation of Jesus (Mark 12/Matt 22/Luke 20); Jesus’s appearance before the Sanhedrin and before Pilatus. Leveils concludes that Jesus benefited from the plurality of messianic expectations of his time. They gave him a leeway to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God without being subservient to any messianic model. Leveils accordingly reaches the following conclusion regarding Jesus’s messianic consciousness: “Jesus skillfully endeavored to satisfy the eschatological expectations of renewal and deliverance that prevailed in the Judean society of his time by being the messiah he desired” (361).⁴⁰

The next section of this chapter deals with the messianic titles attributed to Jesus. The title Son of Man forged in the disciples’ minds the hope of the return of the messiah (362). The title messiah, which gave the disciples their identity as Christians, provoked the hostility of the Judean community, and caused some public unrest, forcing the Romans to intervene. The title Lord, especially with the use of the Aramean formula מְרִינָא תָא, transliterated by the Greek μαρτάνα θά, gave Jesus his eschatological dimension. But more importantly, Paul’s use of this title in OT quotes referring originally to God clearly indicates that the Lord Jesus is the ultimate incarnation of the salvific power of God (366). The title Son of God, particularly in the Johannine literature, demonstrates in the difficult context of the fight against docetic tendencies the divine status of Jesus and his heavenly origin (369). The title Son of David conveys with no ambiguity Jesus’ belonging to the royal dynasty. However, for Leveils, this title was not well received by Greek-speaking communities, which were less focused on the national and political aspirations of Israel (371).

The last section of Leveils’ chapter briefly considers the messianic debate between Jews and Christians. The failure of the different armed revolts in Israel and Egypt, not least the Bar Kokhba Revolt, forced the Jewish religious authorities to reconsider the role of the messiah. According to Leveils, messianism evolved from being messianically centered to being God-centered. God will be the main actor of the national restoration at the end of time. The messiah will appear, but only at the end of this period. For the Christians, the eschatological dimension of their faith evolved towards the hope in the instauration of a messianic kingdom on earth for a one-thousand-year period (millenarism). This millenarist messianic expectation was totally rejected in the fourth century, the emperor having become the earthly representative of Christ reigning in heaven (377). This section ends with a short reflection on the *logos*. Leveils asserts that “Christ’s identification with the *logos*, perceived through Greek thought as Word but also as Reason of

³⁹ “Jésus de Nazareth est certainement le personnage historique le plus nettement identifié comme messie. Cette identification est largement attestée par les sources qui sont à notre disposition. Aucune autre reconnaissance messianique dans l’Antiquité ne bénéficie d’une documentation comparable.”

⁴⁰ “Jésus s’est habilement employé à satisfaire les attentes de renouvellement et de délivrance eschatologiques qui avaient cours dans la société judéenne de son temps en étant le messie qu’il a voulu.”

God, contributed to giving a cosmological dimension to Christ. His involvement in the creation – ordering and maintenance of the world – was to give a new meaning to the word ‘messiah,’ which came to mean not only the anointing that the son of God had received, but also the divine character of his person” (379).⁴¹ In his conclusion, Leveils considers that the strong messianic expectation among the Judean population at the beginning of the Common Era largely explains the emergence of the Christian messianism. “Political and religious circumstances have led popular expectations to focus on certain characters with a prophetic charisma, including Jesus of Nazareth” (380).⁴² But beyond those circumstances the expectation of Christ’s return played a major role and became a characteristic motif of the Christian faith. This fifty-seven-page long chapter is a *tour de force*. It offers a robust overview of the religious and political situation of the first century, which can be considered as a must-read introduction to any discussion on Christology. Oversimplification is sometimes not far off. But there are enough grains to grind here.

Chapter eight, “Messianisms in rabbinic and synagogal Judaism”⁴³ (391–427) is written by José Costa (Université de Paris, Sorbonne nouvelle). In the introduction of his contribution, Costa notes the absence of an exhaustive study on rabbinic messianism. He recalls the main features of the messianism of the rabbis (391), including its rich Hebrew lexical field, which include expressions such as: messiah, king messiah, son of David, days of the messiah, future world, future times. He then reminds the readership that the rabbinic corpus is heterogenous. The messianism of the Tannaim is different from the messianism of the Amoraim, the messianism of the Mishna from the messianism of the midrashim. In sum, “There is no systematic treatment of the question of the Messiah in rabbinic literature.... The term ‘Messiah,’ for example, is never strictly defined” (393).⁴⁴ Costa claims that actually “the Messiah is probably absent from the Hebrew Bible in its obverse sense. Messianism is, among other things, a hermeneutical construction aiming to show that a large number of verses from the prophets, but also from the other two parts of the Hebrew Bible only become intelligible if they are considered as allusions to the Messiah” (393).⁴⁵ What are the main features of rabbinic messianism? Costa notes that the dominant feature is what he calls the “sobriety” and the “minimalism” of the rabbis regarding the messiah. They are interested in a function, or a set of functions, rather than in a person. The messiah is a simple liberator, the restorer of national independence. The spatial extent of messianic royalty is unclear. Miraculous actions are rare. Suffering messianism is only found in the Pesiqta Rabbati.

The textual terrain Costa covers is immense. One can achieve only so much in a short chapter. Nevertheless, Costa does the non-specialist a great favor, who otherwise might feel overwhelmed by the scope of the topic and the sheer size of rabbinic literature.

The last chapter, “Messianism in the Targumim” (429–63),⁴⁶ is written by Thierry Legrand (Université de Strasbourg, France, Faculté de théologie protestante). According to Legrand, it is still difficult to specify the origins of synagogues. The oldest remains of synagogues date back to the third century BCE, while the writing of targumim started progressively from the end of the first century CE (430). Legrand’s contribution

⁴¹ “L’identification du Christ au logos, perçue par le biais de la pensée grecque come Parole mais aussi come Raison de Dieu, contribua à accorder une dimension cosmologique au christ. Son implication dans la création, l’ordonnement et le maintien du monde devait donner un sens nouveau au mot ‘messie,’ qui en vint à désigner, non seulement l’onction que le fils de Dieu avait reçue, mais aussi le caractère divin de sa personne.”

⁴² “Les circonstances politiques et religieuses ont conduit les espérances populaires à se focaliser sur certains personnages dotés d’un charisme prophétique, parmi lesquels se trouvait Jésus de Nazareth.”

⁴³ “Le messianisme dans le Judaïsme rabbinique et synagogal.”

⁴⁴ “On ne trouve pas dans la littérature rabbinique un traitement systématique de la question du Messie ... Le terme de ‘Messie,’ par exemple, n’est jamais l’objet d’une définition rigoureuse.”

⁴⁵ “Le messianisme est donc, entre autres choses, une construction herméneutique, visant à montrer qu’un grand nombre de versets des Prophètes, mais aussi des deux autres parties de la Bible hébraïque, ne deviennent intelligibles que si on les considère comme des allusions au Messie.”

⁴⁶ “Le messianisme dans les Targumim.”

is divided in two parts. The first one deals with messianism in the Pentateuch. Generally speaking, Legrand notes that messianic interpretations are rather scarce in the Pentateuch. The word messiah features only twenty times. Nonetheless the targumic traditions convey many eschatological themes. Final retribution is quite present. The observance of commandments plays a significant role in the salvation of human beings, particularly in view of “the judgment day” or “great judgement.” There are two worlds: the “present world” and the “world to come” (435). Surprisingly, the resurrection theme does not occur frequently. As for the identification of the messiah, the mysterious mention of “Shiloh” in Gen 49:10b is unambiguously and consistently interpreted as the messiah in the targumim. In Gen 49:10b, the messiah is connected to Judah but in Tg Neof. Num 24:17 he is also the Messiah of Israel. This distinction between two messiahs – one as a liberator, the other as a warrior – is also found in the Talmud of Babylon (b. Sukka 52 a). The messiah king (מלכא משיחא) will gather the exiles and lead them at the end of times (Tg Neof. Num 24:7). The function of liberator is associated with the messianic figure (Tg Ps-J. Num 24:7).

The second part of this chapter deals with messianism in the Targum of Jonathan. In this targum, the messiah is absent from the books of Joshua and Judges, despite the fact that the targum develops the themes of the end of times and judgement therein (443). However, the situation is somewhat different in 1-2 Samuel. According to the targum, Hanna’s prayer (1 Sam 2:1-10) testifies to a significant eschatological development. In verse 10, there is a mention of the anointed of YHWH with a reference to the kingdom of the messiah. In 2 Sam 22, the author of the Targum tries to get around the question of “who is God but YHWH” (v. 32) with the mention of his messiah (למשׁיחך). As for the last words of David in 2 Sam 23:1-7, they have also been interpreted in a messianic way, from the perspective of prophecy. The targum of the book of Kings is of relatively little interest as far as messianism is concerned, as it underlines the importance of a stable Davidic dynasty. The situation is quite different in the Targum Isaiah though, where the translators have reinterpreted the MT. This translation conveys hope in the restoration of Israel. The coming of the messiah corresponds to the opening of an era of peace and blessings (449). In Isa 52-53, it is “the only version - but can still be called as such? - that offers a clearly messianic interpretation” (449).⁴⁷ The servant messiah is the instrument for the restoration of Israel. He will rebuild the sanctuary. In Targum Isaiah, the work of the messiah and his intervention are inextricably bound to the work and intervention of YHWH (451). In Targum Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets, Legrand asserts that messianism is not a central theme. Hosea, for example, only uses the title messiah twice (3:5; 14:8). In Zachariah, the targumist clearly makes a distinction between the messiah and the high priest. Messianic times will correspond with the restoration of kingship and priesthood in a restored sanctuary (459). In his conclusion, Legrand reiterates that the targumim do not convey a coherent exposition of messianism. “Thus, some messianic interpretations of the Targum may be rooted in traditions from the end of the Second Temple, while others bear traces of rereading from the Islamic period; the same verse may contain pre-Christian traditions reinterpreted from the Talmudic period” (460)⁴⁸. If this is the case, then reconsidering these texts in the light of their reception would be a priority.

The five-page-long conclusion of this *Encyclopédie* reminds the readers that, as far as messianism is concerned, any intellectual simplification is dangerous for the following reason: “the messianic idea must be considered as constantly in motion, under construction and evolution.... It is also permeable to the influences of the various producing environments ... and is built on the basis of constant questioning and

⁴⁷ “la seule version – mais peut-on encore la désigner comme telle ? – qui offre une interprétation clairement messianique.”

⁴⁸ “Ainsi, certaines interprétations messianiques du Targum Pseudo-Jonathan peuvent s’enraciner dans des traditions de la fin du second Temple, tandis que d’autres portent les traces de relectures datant de l’époque islamique ; un même verset peut contenir des traditions préchrétiennes réinterprétées à l’époque talmudique.”

enrichment, which makes it protean” (467).⁴⁹ A sound approach of messianism should then take into consideration four levels: first, the messianic pretender; second, the historical background; third, the subsequent redaction level; fourth, the reception of the texts. Using the example of the so-called “messianization” of the LXX, the three co-authors of the conclusion – Hamidović, Levieils, and Mézange – assert that “it is not the text that creates the belief (in any Messiah), but the belief that generates new interpretations of the text” (467).⁵⁰

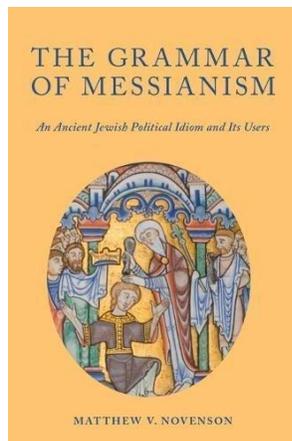
In the end, does this 527-page-long book deserve the rather pompous title of *Encyclopedia*? At first, the answer would be no. This is not a set of volumes which would naturally find its place with the other prestigious encyclopedias at the entrance room of university libraries. But after careful consideration the reviewer is convinced that it deserves its title, at least for the following reasons. First, it covers an extremely wide range of human knowledge regarding messianism. Each chapter ends with a large bibliography, which contains not only Anglo-Saxon references but also sources in many other languages. This volume belongs to the limited sphere of universal knowledge, where there is no room for one hegemonic language. Second, whereas the information found in an encyclopedia is mostly factual, this volume goes further. It is factual, but more significantly, it is textual. All the contributors share a text-centered approach, where absolute priority is given to written data. Systematicians, dogmaticians, and biblical theology advocates as well as Christian readers might be disappointed. Building or (re)building a messianic Christology is not part of the agenda here. Third, the contributors are intellectually upstanding and balanced. Multiple theories and divergent interpretations are never hidden. If there are sometimes simplifications, shortcuts, and possible silences, it is mainly due to the constraints of space. In some chapters, the conclusions may seem meager and shallow, but this is one of the main conclusions of the volume, by which the authors acknowledge that “the messianic idea within ancient Judaism is the result of a ‘complex process ... a long series of bifurcations, trials, and errors” (465).⁵¹ Where is the defect in the armor? Nihan’s chapter promisingly introduced the word “utopia” (19) to replace the usual word messianism or the expression messianic expectations. This could have been the scarlet thread of the volume but never features again. It could have helped the readers build on what the conclusion mentions as a “typology” of messianism. This relative lack of coherence leaves the work incomplete. But this is what authentic scholarly publications are made for: opening minds and calling for further research.

This must-read volume comes with three indexes on topics, references (biblical and non-biblical), and authors. Readers who may not be fluent in French have no excuse: they are provided with all the necessary tools to access this well of knowledge. On the other hand, they will have to disburse \$110, which is unacceptable.

⁴⁹ “l’idée messianique doit être considérée comme étant sans cesse en mouvement, en cours de construction et d’évolution.... Elle est de plus perméable aux influences des différents milieux producteurs ... et se construit à partir de remises en cause et d’enrichissements permanent, ce qui la rend protéiforme.”

⁵⁰ “ce n’est pas le texte qui crée la croyance, mais la croyance qui génère de nouvelles interprétations du texte.”

⁵¹ “processus complexe”; “une longue suite de bifurcations, de tâtonnements.”



Matthew Novenson's book comes with a challenging title, *The Grammar of Messianism*, and an intriguing subtitle, *An Ancient Jewish Idiom and Its Users*. This publication aims at opening new perspectives on the highly debated issue of messianism. The volume is divided into eight chapters, followed by an extensive bibliography (forty-nine pages) and three indexes (subjects, ancient sources, modern authors).

The first chapter, "After the Messianic Idea" (1-33) starts with a review of secondary literature. Novenson first notes that "the modern study of ancient messianism has suffered from a lamentable naiveté with respect to theory – that is, meta-level reflection on what we talk about when we talk about messianism" (4). Only a minority of authors addresses conceptual questions. Most scholars do not study the texts "but a concept abstracted from them – a concept most often called the messianic idea" (5). From this observation, Novenson moves forward and builds a methodological framework to guide him as he constructs his own grammar of messianism. He invokes important scholars such as Dahl ("Sources of Christological Language") and especially Wittgenstein from whom he deduces "language game theory" (*Sprachspiel*), the idea that the speaking of a language is part of an activity or of a form of life. He also refers to Lindbeck (*The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postbiblical Age*) who applied language game theory to the study of religions. "If messianism is a language game, then what I am calling 'the grammar of messianism' is the rules of the game..." (14). Novenson claims that his study is a response to the failure of the traditional *Geistesgeschichte* approach. He defines his book with the following sentence: "The book thus takes the form of a proof, by means of a series of related studies, that in antiquity the messiah was not an article of faith but a manner of speaking" (21).

From a historical point of view, Novenson follows pioneers such as Schürer, Vermes, and Segal, for whom ancient Christianity is a chapter in the history of ancient Judaism, and ancient Judaism is not the antecedent of ancient Christianity. To quarantine Jewish and Christian texts from one another is therefore unacceptable (24). The time frame of the book ranges therefore from the Judahite exile (sixth century BCE) to the redaction of the Talmud of Babylon (sixth century CE). In contrast to the supersessionism often assumed in the *Geistesgeschichte* model, Novenson emphasizes continuity: "what the primary texts actually suggest is the resilience of literary features of messiah texts from one epoch to subsequent ones" (25).

The first chapter ends with a lexicographical analysis regarding the meaning of the word messiah. Novenson quotes Chester who asserts that "it can easily appear that there are as many different definitions of messianism as there are those who write about it" (27). In some cases, the spectacle is bizarre: a modern interpreter claims that a figure called *messiah* in an ancient text is actually not a messiah *sensu stricto*. Novenson's conclusion is radical: "the taxonomic anxiety ... is misplaced. It is a manufactured problem" (29). Further, he reiterates his assertion: "There is no single correct taxon to which ancient messiah texts belong" (32). How to proceed from this observation? The research question of the book is set as follows: "How do ancient writers actually use the word *messiah* and its attendant concepts?" It implies "to eschew all definitions of *messiah*, return to the pertinent ancient texts, and follow the way the words run" (33).

Chapter two, "Oil and Power in Ancient Israel," mainly reviews the scholarly debate on messianism between maximalists and minimalists. The former assert that messianic expectations must have been a dominant theme for the people of the covenant (see for example Hengstenberg's *Christologie des Alten Testaments*). The latter claim that there is little or no evidence of a messiah in the Hebrew Bible. The chapter centers especially around Mowinckel's masterpiece, *He That Cometh*. While acknowledging the outstanding value of Mowinckel's book, Novenson highlights its weaknesses. One of them is obvious. When considering Isa 45:1, Mowinckel starts by establishing a definition of the word messiah "and then rules particular instances either relevant or not according as they agree with that definition." (36) This is

precisely the approach that Novenson is critical of. Yet many scholars followed the Scandinavian scholar. And even those scholars who adopted a maximalist approach (e.g., Becker, Coppens, and Horbury) revealed similar weaknesses, particularly Horbury whose definition of “messianism” was nothing less than “capricious” according to Novenson (45). Both the maximalists and minimalists’ positions actually lead to a dead end.

Novenson proposes another approach, where he considers the *modus operandi* of messianism: “Behind the whole discourse of messianism lies a very ancient Near Eastern complex of oil rituals” (47). The ritual smearing of oil confers sacredness. This is attested in ancient Israel and in the other ancient Near Eastern cultures (Egypt, Hittite, Canaan). The origin of this practice is still unclear. Possibly, “the anointing of Israelite kings perpetuated a custom that had long been current among the tribes of the Levant, although there is no evidence that any of these older cultures derived a title of office, ‘anointed one,’ from the custom (49). But the main question which constitutes the basis of Mowinckel’s reasoning is still pending. Do the texts within and outside the Hebrew Bible confirm that there are two phases in messianism: the first one in which the word “messiah” points mainly to kings (and also to priests); the second one where the word is loaded with an eschatological meaning? There is a consensus among modern scholars that the word “messiah” or “anointed” in 1–2 Samuel is simply the divinely approved king, not any kind of mythical archetype (53). Yet Novenson claims that in later texts from the Roman period “there is no *geistesgeschichte* flip of a switch from an earlier Israelite, mundane sense (‘anointed one’) to a later *spätjüdisch*, eschatological sense (‘messiah’)” (54). Even figures such as Bar Kokhba were understood simply as usual, normal “anointed” ones. For Novenson, the conclusion is obvious: “If our goal is to understand any of these texts on their own terms, then the putative late, technical sense of ‘messiah’ is simply a red herring” (55). The same conclusion applies to the so-called messianic Psalms, the Psalms of Solomon and the Qumran scrolls. Novenson’s final appraisal of Mowinckel is therefore drastic: “the thesis itself is, strictly speaking, trivial ... the difference between an ancient Israelite ‘anointed one’ and an early Jewish “messiah” is nil. This may be a disappointment for the historian of ideas, but it is an essential piece of evidence for the exegete” (63).

Chapter three, “Messiahs Born and Made” (65-113) discusses the criterion for deserving the title of messiah. Is it membership in a specific lineage? Or exceptional and extraordinary achievements? As a historical starting point, Novenson considers the situation of Judah Maccabee who, despite his great achievement for his people and Jerusalem, is never called messiah, because he was not a Davidide. By contrast, Shimon bar Kosiba, who led with some success the revolt against the Romans, is called messiah without being a descendant of David (66). In other words, he deserved the messianic title because of his great heroism and significant achievement notwithstanding his lineage. This disparity of treatment is frequent “in not all but many early Jewish and Christian messiah texts” (69).

Chapter four is entitled “Messiahs Present and Absent” (114-160). It mainly addresses the “Vacuum Hypothesis” or “*messianologische Vakuum*,” namely, the silence of the postexilic prophets and the OT apocrypha and pseudepigrapha concerning the messiah. Novenson does not hide the dust under the rug. He is well aware that there is no consensus on this matter. The first part of the chapter (114-124) is a thorough literature review of the current *status quaestionis*, which he provocatively assesses as “perverse”: “When we find ourselves devising strategies for analyzing what is not in our primary texts rather than what is in them, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a kind of methodological madness has set in” (123).

The second and most interesting part of the chapter is Novenson’s attempt to revisit several of the texts (or *corpora*) at stake. The first one is Philo of Alexandria. All scholars would agree that as far as messianism is concerned, the data in Philo are meager. Novenson tries to explain why. Rather than talking about messiahs, Philo is interested in the question of an ideal political order: “he almost always speaks in terms of a pristine past, not a utopian future” (128). In this endeavor, Philo’s main figure is Moses, the ideal king, the greatest ruler who has ever lived or will ever live, “a supremely excellent figure from the distant past”

(131–32). As a consequence, Philo’s philosophy entails a “profoundly conservative politics” supporting the “status quo,” which is “not directed toward nationalist aims but the fruits of contemplative world-citizenship” (133). In sum, if scholars are disappointed with Philo’s messianism (or lack of messianism) “the fault is ours, not his” (135).

Novenson then moves on to Flavius Josephus. The surprise is the complete non-use of messianic terminology by the Judean historian, especially when he narrates about the many Jewish insurgents against Roman rule in Palestine. Josephus calls none of the leaders of the revolt (Judah ben Hezekiah, Simon of Perea, Athronges, and Menahem) “messiahs” but “bandit-kings,” “graspers of the kingship,” “wearers of the diadem,” and “tyrants” (141). Josephus considers that all these rebels misinterpreted the prophecy pointing to a ruler who would reign over the entire world. It is Vespasian who accomplishes this prophecy. More importantly, Novenson considers that core to the interpretation of the alleged messianic silence of Josephus lies his deliberate will to translate the messianic claims of the rebels into “Roman idiom” (145). Novenson sees Josephus as “constrained by literary convention.... He calls the insurgents ‘diadem-wearers’ for the same reason that he calls the Pharisees ‘Stoics’: because that is the term by which his audience will understand what he means” (148).

The Mishnah is the last corpus considered in this chapter. Novenson challenges Neusner’s view according to which there is a tension between the Mishnah’s messianic silence and the Talmuds, which present a considerable amount of messianic characters and statements. Novenson concludes this chapter by asserting that the metaphor of the vacuum should be abandoned: “Rather than asking the primary texts to confirm, either by their speech or by their silence, a theory of messianism arrived at on other grounds, we should approach the sources afresh with an eye to the problems they identify and the solutions they propose” (159–60).

Chapter five, “The Quest for the First Messiah” (161–86), starts with 4Q491, sometimes called “the Self-Glorification Hymn,” one among many texts scrutinized in search of the “first messiah.” For the tenants of this quest, Jesus’ identification as the messiah comes out of the blue. There must be a missing link, a pre-Christian Jewish messiah whose power and influence could explain Jesus’ inexplicable phenomenon. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, the scholars would make a distinction between Jewish messianism and Jesus’ radical innovation. But the discovery and publication of the Qumran scrolls changed that perspective. Dupont-Sommer, followed by Allegro, claimed that Jesus was a reincarnation of the Teacher of Righteousness (164). Michael Wise went a step further by asserting that Judah in 1QH 11:1–10 – for him the Teacher of Righteousness – was the first messiah. Novenson considers this hypothesis as “very lacunose” and “not uncontroversial” (167). Novenson notes that “none of the Hodayot contains any references to a messiah” and that “the Teacher of Righteousness is never called a messiah in any of the manuscripts in which he appears (169). Knohl (*The Messiah before Jesus*, 2–3) claims that Jesus “did regard himself as the Messiah and truly expected the Messiah to be rejected, killed, and resurrected after three days, for this is precisely what was believed to have happened to a messianic leader who had lived one generation before Jesus.” As for the identification of the speaker of the Self-Glorification Hymn, Knohl proposes the name of Menachem the Essene. He sees in John’s mention to the comforter (John 14:26) a reference to this figure, via a semantic equivalence between the Hebrew מנחם and the Greek παράκλητος, both words meaning “comforter.” While acknowledging that Knohl’s interpretation is “admittedly ingenious,” Novenson ultimately esteems that it is too tenuous (175–76). The same holds true in Novenson’s opinion for Knohl’s interpretation of the fragment *Hazon Gabriel*. The authenticity of the text is not confirmed, and its transcription by Knohl is questioned by all paleographers. In sum, Novenson asserts that the quest for the first messiah is “fundamentally misguided” (183). He thinks that the questers are working within a Hegelian mindset, presuming the existence of a world-historical force (*Geist*) independent of the ancient texts. Second, the questers have hard time recognizing that all ancient messianic texts are a reinterpretation of previous scriptural oracles. Third, they are reluctant to admit the uniqueness

of Christian messianism: “Ironically, the quest ... actually reinscribes the very paradigm of Christ uniqueness that the questers ostensibly, and I presume really, want so much to avoid” (184–85). The final words of the chapter leave no ambiguity at least in Novenson’s mind: “there is no such thing as the first messiah” (186).

Could a distinction be made between the “Jewish Messiah” and the “Christian Messiah”? This is the question addressed in chapter six (187–216). Novenson summons Scholem’s view which seems to differentiate the two messianisms: a Jewish concept of redemption as a public event, on the stage of history and within the community; a Christian concept of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, with effects in the private world of each individual (189). Where does the origin of this distinction lie? In Jesus and the gospels, according to Mowinckel, for whom “Jesus partly accepted and partly rejected the prevailing Jewish model of the messiah, and this idiosyncrasy on his part accounts for what we call the Christian understanding of the messiah” (191). For Novenson, this binary approach of the texts leads to broad and questionable stereotypes. He provides the following examples that question this dichotomy: “The Jewish messiah of the *Parables of Enoch* is a preexistent heavenly figure (*1 En.* 48), whereas the Christian messiah of the Gospel of Mark is a human teacher and exorcist (Mark 1). The Jewish messiah of *2 Baruch* exercises universal rule over all the nations of the earth (*2 Bar.* 72), whereas the Christian messiah of the Epistle of James is lord of the twelve tribes of Israel in the diaspora (Jas 1:1)” (192). Novenson prefers Dahl and MacRae’s interpretation of the distinction between Jewish and Christian. Instead of a dichotomic view, Novenson proposes the following: “Jewish messianism ... always and everywhere involves the interplay of biblical tradition and empirical circumstance. In this crucial respect, there is no difference whatsoever between the Jewish messiah and the Christian messiah” (196).

Chapter seven, “The Fate of Messiah Christology in Early Christianity” (217–62), is the longest of the volume, and not the easiest to understand. Novenson’s knowledge of Early Christianity is uncontested. But this may well be the strength and the weakness of this chapter. The reader is not told what the time frame of the study is. As for the rationale of the chapter, Novenson acknowledges his closeness to Horbury’s study (“Messianism among Jews and Christians in the Second Century”, *Aug.* [1988]: 71-88). The chapter starts with the Epistle of Barnabas (12:10-11) where the author clearly states that for the Jews the messiah is the son of David, whereas, for the Christians, he is the son of God. At the turn of the second century, significant changes occurred regarding the understanding of messianism within early Christianity: “the dynamic presentation of Christ in the economy of salvation was impregnated more and more with a static-ontological awareness of the reality of Christ as God and man” (222). Authors such as Neusner consider that the name “Christ” became just a relic of the movement’s origins in Jewish messianism. This is visible for example in Tertullian’s *Adv. Prax* (28.1, 8), where *Iesus* is the *nomen proprium* of the son of God, whereas *Christus* is an *apellatio* and an *accidens* (229). Novenson notes that Paul and Mark are silent regarding the chrismation of Jesus. But from the turn of the second century, several texts address the meaning of anointing for believers. Tertullian (*Bapt.* 7) reports that Christian baptism includes an oil ritual. Later Theophilus of Antioch (*Autol.* 1:12) clearly indicates that the believers are called Christians, because they are anointed with the oil of God (239). The *Gospel of Philip* goes a step further: “Chrism has more authority than baptism” (74). In fact, the understanding of the word “messiah” varies significantly within early Christianity: “some Christian writers interpret ‘messiah’ in such a way as to differentiate themselves from Jews ... others ... interpret ‘messiah’ in such a way as to differentiate themselves from what they consider the wrong kind of Christians – that is, heretics” (250).

There is no conclusion to the book but a last chapter entitled “The Grammar of Messianism” (262-76). The reader is reminded of the wording in Novenson’s first chapter where he referred to Wittgenstein “language game,” indicating that the grammar of messianism is the rule of the game, “the way messiah language worked for the ancient authors who chose to use it” (14). Novenson provides further examples from primary sources to illustrate his point one last time. How does all of this enlighten our understanding of messianism? Novenson’s answer is straightforward: “‘Messiah’ is a well-attested ancient Jewish and subsequently also

Christian way of speaking about political authority, and it can be analyzed productively as such, just as the fasces can be in a Roman context” (271). As far as future research on messianism is concerned, Novenson underscores the need for new and better approaches that free themselves from the assumptions of nineteenth-century scholarship: “The future of the study of messianism lies not in vain attempts to measure the vigor of the phenomenon, nor in pedantic quarrels over the definition of “messiah”, nor in lightly taxonomies of redeemer figures, but rather in fresh expeditions into the primary sources to trace the way the words run, in the exploration, that is, of the grammar of messianism” (276).

Novenson’s book is therefore an application and a plea for a totally new methodological approach to the study of messianism. Throughout, Novenson builds his case on robust arguments. His critical observations on previous scholarship are sharp. His interaction with primary literature is remarkable, given the chronological and linguistic range of the sources covered. This is more than enough to be praised and to recommend as an innovative piece that every graduate student and scholar interested in messianism should read.

Both the *Encyclopédie* and Novenson’s work are to be commended for their vast command of and interaction with scholarship, not least works published in languages other than English. This is not characteristic of the academic world (and beyond) today, which easily ignores research not written or translated into English.

Though both works explore the same topic, their approaches are significantly different. The contributors of the *Encyclopédie* adopt an approach that is rather standard in biblical studies: they are mainly interested in exegeting texts to determine their level of messianism, if any. Novenson works differently. Most of the time, he first assesses the work of a famous author or a well-known theory: Mowinkel in chapter two; the *Davidssonfrage* in chapter three; the *messianologische Vakuum* in chapter four. At each occasion, Novenson deconstructs long-held assumptions and theories, revealing their weaknesses. The outcomes of these two different approaches are evident. The exegetes of the *Encyclopédie* are cautious and balanced: “the texts are difficult”; “the texts are silent”; “the LXX may have provided some raw material from which messianism was later built”. Novenson’s daring spirit leads him, on the other hand, into more radical territory. He does not hesitate to name the spectacle offered by some scholars as “bizarre,” or to qualify a thesis as “strictly speaking, trivial.” The way the two volumes address the so-called messianic silence – the paucity or absence of messianic language – in authors such as Philo or Josephus, or corpora such as the Sibylline Oracles, further highlights their different perspectives. Whereas the *Encyclopédie* provides an in-depth exegesis of the texts, Novenson goes a step further. He first critiques methodology (at least once as “methodological madness” because of its presuppositions and focus on what is *not* in a text). This allows him to find different answers for the supposed silence of a text or its “low” messianism (as in the case of Josephus, whom he claims is “constrained by literary convention”).

Do the two books offer what they promised? In its conclusion, the *Encyclopédie* claims that it is possible to draw a typology of messianism. But when Hamidović, Levieils, and Mézange speak of the messianic idea as “multiple” and “burgeoning,” the contours of such a typology still seem vague and nebulous. But perhaps they have offered a new perspective for the study of messianism when they conclude that disasters and historical shifts are probably the driving forces explaining its diversity of messianism. Does this point to how futures historical investigations should be carried, looking beyond pure exegesis, which often leads to dead ends, and carefully considering the *Sitz im Leben* of each messianism? For Novenson, “grammar” is the answer to the many challenges facing the study of messianism. It still remains to be seen how Novenson’s adoption of language game theory and grammar of messianism may help understand the multiple messianic expressions that were burgeoning throughout antiquity.

Strong messianism versus weak messianism? Many messiahs versus no messiah? Scholars are still divided on the issue. This surely means that the methodologies used so far are not appropriate. The door is still locked. The keys used to open it are the wrong ones. Unfortunately, some have forced the lock and have entered by force, like poor archaeologists. Maybe they can show certain trophies, but they have distorted the messianic site. Both volumes agree: messianism is a complex and difficult topic. Ready-made and long-established answers have shown their limits. Indeed, the time has come for “fresh expeditions.” On their intellectual journeys, students and scholars need good tools. To this end, the *Encyclopédie* will provide them with a remarkable presentation of the *status quaestionis* and a survey of the relevant ancient corpora. Novenson’s book will show the shortcomings and dead ends of many academic probings, potentially unlocking new ways to revisit familiar sources. We are reminded that the study of messianism cannot be limited to exegesis or historical analysis. It is an interpretative enterprise.