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Deuteronomy and the Root of Political Theology: Discuss with Zhang Xu's “Towards Jerusalem in ‘Athens and Jerusalem’: On Jewish Political Theology”

YAN Zhaoyu

Abstract: In dialogue with Professor Zhang Xu's article “Towards Jerusalem in ‘Athens and Jerusalem’: On Jewish Political Theology”, this paper firstly brings with two methodological and hypothetical problems that may exist in the article: On the one hand, it points out the tension and discrepancy between the terms of “Jewish (political) theology”, “Old Testament theology” and “Hebrew biblical theology”; On the other hand, it argues that von Rad's “traditional history” paradigm should not be simply pitted against the modern text-historical critical method and postmodern studies. Subsequently, the paper focuses on two central issues in contemporary studies on Book of Deuteronomy, namely, (a) the “subversive adaption” of Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology by Deuteronomic theology, and (b) the duality of Deuteronomy as both canon and interpretation in the literary history of Pentateuch, to complement and enrich the study of Deuteronomy's political theology. On this basis, the paper emphasizes the historical causality of covenant theology as reflected in the Deuteronomic formula of “blessing and cursing” and its significant influence on the concept of “salvation history”. Finally, the paper also addresses that the “root(s) of political theology” should not be confined to a single tradition of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, but should be more fully grasped in the context of a synthesis of the Deuteronomi(stic) (D) and Priestly (P) traditions, as well as of Apocalypticism, Wisdom, and the sectarian literature in Qumran, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of “Jerusalem in ‘Athens and Jerusalem’”.

Key Words: Political Theology, Old Testament Theology, Überlieferungsgeschichte, Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy, Esarhaddon Succession Treaty, Inner-biblical Interpretation