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In the Spirit of Faith: Studies in Philo and Early Christianity in Honor of David Hay

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The thirteenth volume of the *Studia Philonica Annual* honors Professor David Hay, whose scholarly expertise covers a wide range of areas, including, in particular, the writings of Philo of Alexandria and the development of early Christian, and especially Pauline, theology, interests that are represented in ten excellent essays offered in parts 2 and 3 of this volume. A first section presents a series of affectionate tributes to the honorand, acknowledging his important place in nurturing the study of Philo through a number of influential publications and by his part in continuing the work begun by the Philo Institute, which inaugurated a new era of study on the sources and traditions behind Philo's writings and to which much of Hay's work on Philo is devoted (W. Sibley Towner; E. Hilgert; G. E. Sterling). Useful reference materials appear here too, including a bibliography of Hay's writings and a list of the papers presented in the Society of Biblical Literature program units devoted to Philo, both published and unpublished.

The second part of this Festschrift comprises five essays dealing with very different aspects of Philo and Hellenistic Judaism and offering important new perspectives on controversial or neglected questions.

E. Birnbaum provides a clear exposition of the extraordinarily complex subject of Philo's attitude toward Greek culture and its relationship to his view of the political opponents of the Jews in his own Alexandria. Birnbaum's distinctive contribution to the first question, based on a valuable study of Philo's use of terminology referring to things "Greek," is to underline the significance of Philo's critical remarks about Greek culture, which are to be interpreted as part of his "one-upmanship" discourse, elevating Judaism above all other cultures. Against the commonplace construction of the political opponents in Alexandria as Greeks and Egyptians, Birnbaum's careful analysis shows how Philo obscures the identity of the Jews' opponents and neither refers to them as "Greeks" nor associates them with Greek culture. Their characterization as Alexandrians and Egyptians raises further difficulties, given the ambiguity of both designations, difficulties that historians are rightly advised to acknowledge.

Also venturing into controversial territory, J. L. Royse argues that, in accordance with the practice of the Hellenistic period, Philo divided his works into books, as revealed by internal references to previous books, and that Philo's references to other writers such as Homer show awareness of this practice in a wider context. On the problematic question of the division of the *Allegorical Commentary*, Royse argues, against Lucchesi, that the earlier works of this series were originally published separately rather than as one undivided treatise. As regards the division of the now incomplete *Questions on Genesis* and *Exodus*, Royse reaffirms his previously published arguments for originally two series of six books each, determined by the ancient divisions of the text of the Pentateuch into weekly synagogue readings.

Philo's works explicitly relating to crises for Jews in contemporary Alexandria and Jerusalem, the *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*, are generally regarded as very different enterprises from Philo's commentaries on the Pentateuch. Against this trend, P. Borgen develops his previously published arguments that these "historical" works must also be seen as "exegetical writings." Based on a hermeneutic model borrowed from Gerhardsson, Borgen argues that the *Legatio* presents the conflict between Jews and their opponents as a struggle over the interpretation and practice of the laws of Moses and ancestral traditions, in which political rulers are "evaluated ... against the criterion whether they allow [the Jews' commitment to the one God and the laws of Moses] to be the foundation of Jewish community life or not" (98). Borgen's analysis provides a useful reminder of the extent to which Philo's interpretation of events is shaped by reflection on the Pentateuch, an area that undoubtedly deserves further exploration and has important consequences for reconstructing the intended readership of Philo's "historical" works.

Acknowledging the importance of Hay's earliest work on the early interpretation of Ps 110, David Runia contributes the first systematic study on Philo's use of the Psalms,

which represent the major source of nonpentateuchal biblical citations in Philo. A detailed exposition of citations, paraphrases, and allusions to the Psalms reveals many interesting conclusions about Philo's uses of the Psalms. Citations, confined mostly to the *Allegorical Commentary*, indicate by their formal presentation that Philo evaluated them as inspired but subordinate to the Pentateuch. The function of citations of the Psalms in Philo is to support the interpreter's argument, "to serve as a secondary biblical lemma in the complex patterns of exegesis which Philo weaves into his treatises" (115). Allusions to the Psalms, on the other hand, found mainly in the less allegorical *Exposition*, have a less central role in the argument, providing "biblically based colour to [Philo's] prose descriptions." Philo's tendency to "tone down" the spiritual aspect of the Psalms distinguishes his approach from that in the writings from Qumran and early Christianity.

Given the huge place occupied by the critique of idolatry and non-Jewish religions in general in Philo's works, it is remarkable how little attention scholars have given to this subject. An important exception to this rule is K.-G. Sandelin, who offers an account of previous scholarship on the subject, of which there is not much, and a study of Philo's evaluation of statues. Sandelin not only successfully situates Philo's critique of statues in Jewish tradition but also relates it to Plato's denunciation of art that deceives, showing too that Philo's sometimes positive evaluation of image-making also shows Platonic influence particularly in connection with the idea that observation of the visible world may sometimes point to understanding of its Creator. Sandelin's study illustrates the flexibility of Philo's conceptualising capacities, always put to the service, however, of explaining fundamentally Mosaic principles.

Finally, D. Winston offers a comparison between Philo and the mediaeval Sufi mystic Ibn al-'Arabi, showing that both writers exhibit striking exegetical similarities (including the use of symbolic interpretation and insistence on the importance of bringing together symbolic and literal interpretation) and conceptual similarities (of God, the knowledge of God, creation, human being). Much of this similarity is to be explained by their mystical view of reality; however, whereas Philo may be described as an "intellectual" mystic, al-'Arabi is also a "practicing" mystic, as the many overtly mystical attestations of his experience reveal.

A third section on early Christianity includes three essays relating to questions of situating New Testament texts in their Jewish (and other) contexts, including their relation to Philonic tradition. T. H. Tobin brings new light to the much-disputed interpretation of Rom 5:12–14, and particularly the significance of Adam's sin represented in these verses, through an examination of the interpretation of Adam's sin (Gen 3) in early Jewish writings. Viewed against that background, argues Tobin, it is clear that Paul's concern is not with articulating a theory about original sin but rather a

restatement of the “kind of commonplace view” explaining the consequences of Adam’s sin that appears, for example, in Pseudo-Philo.

The usefulness of Philo for interpreting and perhaps resolving controversial questions in the understanding of early Christian texts is well illustrated in G. E. Sterling’s carefully argued exposition of the significance of the tabernacle in Heb 8. Reversing the thesis of G. MacRae, Sterling argues, from the evidence in Hebrews of Platonizing exegetical traditions about the tabernacle, comparable to those in Philo, that the recipient community knew those traditions; to these the author of Hebrews added a distinctively Christian eschatological view of history: “People who had thought in terms of the greater worth of a heavenly over an earthly reality, now had to come to terms with a temporal dimension in which the old is not better than the new” (210). Why, however, this indicates, as Sterling suggests, a specifically Diaspora setting for the letter is unclear.

In contrast to such approaches, the failings of “parallelomania” among those scholars who mine Jewish sources, and particularly Philo, to illuminate obscurities in New Testament texts are exposed in D. Zeller’s analysis of the intellectual context in which those who deny resurrection, according to 1 Cor 15, should be situated. Zeller shows the inadequacy of arguments relating the “deniers” position to a spirituality contemptuous of the body, related allegedly to traditions found in Philo.

A final essay provides very detailed arguments for interpreting DOMINA VICTORIA bowls of the fourth-fifth centuries C.E. as celebrating the Christian saint Thecla, the female “beast-fighter,” providing a rare example of a definitely Christian representation of the *damnation ad bestias* theme and demonstrating the importance of using literary texts to interpret the iconographic tradition.

The volume concludes with an extensive critical review of Philonic studies bibliography from 1998 onward. The collection as a whole represents an extraordinarily rich assembly of important and innovative studies and a reminder of the vitality of Philonic studies today.