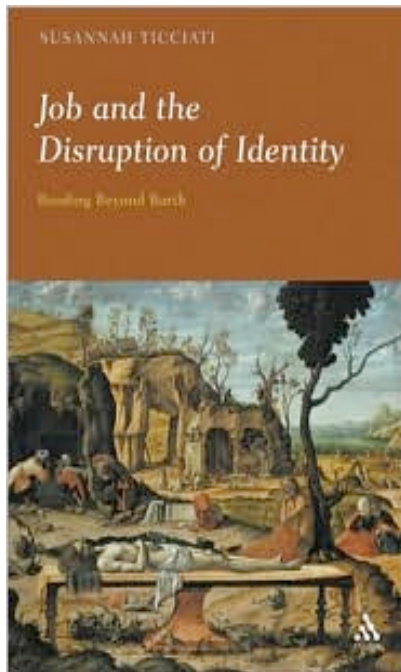


RBL 10/2009



Ticciati, Susannah

Job and the Disruption of Identity: Reading Beyond Barth

London: T&T Clark, 2005. Pp. x + 204. Hardcover.
\$132.00. ISBN 0567041131.

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At the outset it may be noted that this is a challenging and provocative book that is well worth further study and meditation. It is unusual in that it brings together the two disciplines of Old Testament scholarship with that of dogmatic theology. Since Professor Clines has shown in his work on the book of Job that it is the most theological book in the Old Testament, what Ticciati has attempted to do in her work may be judged as being most appropriate. One thing is clear from the study of this work is that Ticciati is as much at home in the Hebrew text as well as the world of dogmatic theology.

As scholars of Barth know very well, the *Church Dogmatics* is full of exegesis of both Testaments. Barth's exegesis can be defined as being eccentric in places, but the least that one can say about it is that it is unusual. He is better known for his exegesis of the New Testament than for that of the Old, and the reasons for this is that he had a life-long fight with the Hebrew language, a language in which his father was strong in but in which he, apparently, was not. That being said, the most extraordinary exegesis that he has furnished his arguments with are perhaps, that on 1 Kgs 13 in *CD II/2* and his account of Job in *CD IV/3*. Typically, Barth does not follow the course set by many twentieth-century exegetes of Job by considering it to be an essay in theodicy; rather, he considered

Job to be a type of Christ, who is the true Witness, and the friends were a type of resistance to the truth. In making these conclusions, Barth not begin with a text analysis that assumed that the speeches of Elihu were not original and therefore could be discounted. In his exegesis Barth dealt with the text in its canonical shape and made his arguments upon it. The thrust of his exposition is that Job is vindicated by his refusal to give God up.

At the outset it should be noted that, as Ticciati understands the text, it is a consideration in the problem of obedience and sanctification. In her consideration of this biblical book, she positions Job within a Deuteronomic context and develops the key terms of the book, such as, justice, integrity, truth, and wisdom, as elements of human obedience before God rather than pieces of the argument about theodicy. In her investigation of this biblical book, she finds herself in agreement with Barth that the central theme is not theodicy, but in the course of doing so she examines Barth's explanation of this book and finds that she is not in agreement with his exegesis. It is then that her examination of the text of the book begins in earnest. What she comes up with is that Job is an account of what it means to be human before God. But is this correct? Is it not the case that the book of Job is more about the being of God rather than that of human obedience to God? As the book of Job is read, there is a lot about the humanity of mankind, and the being of God is somehow there throughout the dialogue, but somehow far away. The basis for Ticciati's argument is that she takes her clue from the affirmation of Job's integrity in Job 1:1 to argue that the book is fundamentally about the nature of human obedience. The only difficulty with such a procedure is that it could be argued that Ticciati has imprisoned the rest of the book within the prologue, which then gives rise to a lopsided exegesis and understanding of the book. Her basic argument with Barth's exegesis is that he would appear to make too sharp a distinction between the epilogue and the historical dimension contained in the dialogue. For Barth, Job is representative of all human beings before God and is therefore justified purely by divine election, so that the historical dimension loses its significance. By contrast, Ticciati in her treatment of the biblical Job seeks to pay greater attention to the historical and psychological dimensions contained in the text.

As stated at the beginning of this review, this is a work well worthy of further study. Apart from the distinctive approach of this work, which readers will either criticize or admire, the work has one additional feature that scholars of all persuasions will warm to: the Hebrew type is printed in large letters, so that all can consider which part of the text she is commenting on. The work is completed with a suitable bibliography and indexes of subjects, which includes authors, and scriptural texts. Clearly, the author has succeeded in her objective in that this works brings together the often separate disciplines of Old Testament scholarship and dogmatic theology, and for this reason alone this work is destined to become a must for students of both disciplines.