

Stephen Arden Long

## Dynamics of Charity and Reciprocity in the Book of Sirach

[Dynamiken der Wohltätigkeit und Gegenseitigkeit im Buch Jesus Sirach.]

Published in English.

In this study, Stephen Long explores the role of reciprocity and gift exchange in the wisdom-instruction of Ben Sira, contextualizing the sage's prescriptions in relation to comparative data from Greco-Roman antiquity and his own teaching on »charity«. While tangible human returns are the normal expectation in response to acts of generosity, Ben Sira is seen to have inflected this cultural expectation in a uniquely Jewish and theological manner. First, sacrifice is understood as a »gift« for the deity, a gift which the God of Israel will »repay«; second, acts of both ordinary, »self-interested« generosity as well as more »altruistic« acts are brought within the ambit of »sacrifice«. Ben Sira appears to think that he thereby followed the lead of prior, pentateuchal tradition, and drew out implications of a theology of creation whereby the cosmos is so ordered that every »need« is – or should be – met »at the right time«. Thus, Long elucidates a second century BCE sage's theological construal of the relation between charity and reciprocity.

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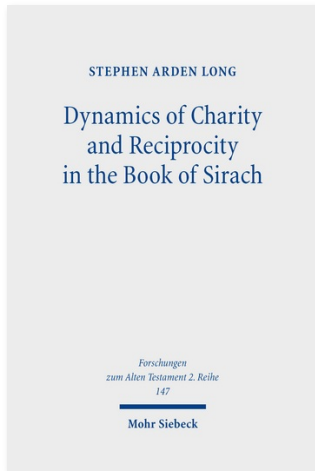
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