

RBL 07/2015

**Matteo Munari**

***Il compimento della Torah: Gesù e la Scrittura in  
Mt 5, 17–48***

Analecta 81

Milan: Edizioni Terra Santa, 2013. Pp. 252. Cloth.  
€25.50. ISBN 9788862402064.

Andrea Ravasco  
ISSR Genova  
Genova, Italy

In this published version of the author's PhD dissertation, Munari seeks to deepen our understanding of the notion of fulfillment announced by Jesus in Matt 5:17, defined in 5:18–20, and applied in 5:21–48. The notion of fulfillment is the key to reading the six instructions of Matt 5:21–48.

The book contains an introduction and two chapters. The first chapter deals with Matt 5:17–20, the second with 5:21–48. A general conclusion, abbreviations, rich bibliography (twenty-six pages), and indexes close the book. For every verse, Munari presents a short note of textual criticism and a thorough commentary. It is worthwhile to analyze in a little greater detail a key section of the work.

On pages 31–56 Munari considers the Semitic roots of the Greek verb *plērōō* (to fulfill). Since G. Dalman's *Jesus-Jeschua: Die drei Sprachen Jesu* (1922), the first root connected to *plērōō* has been the Hebrew/Aramaic verb *qwm*. B, the LXX normally uses *plērōō* to translate the Hebrew verb *ml'*, which is also normally used in Syriac manuscripts of Matt 5:17 and in other passages to translate *plērōō* (see, e.g., Matt 3:15). Munari also notes the verb *šlm*, frequently used in the Targums to indicate the notion of fulfillment. The root *šlm* is used in Biblical Hebrew with the meaning of fulfillment in several passages, such as Isa 44:26, Lam 2:17, Josh 4:10, and 2 Sam 15:7. Munari thus concludes (54–56; see also

185) that *šlm* in its causative forms is to be considered as the possible back-version of *plērōō*, in addition to *qwm* and *ml'*. In this view, according to the Syriac version *ml'* and *šlm* are synonymous, and both contain in their etymology a kind of fulfillment that does not exclude an idea of fulfillment of the revelation.

Furthermore, this could suggest the (difficult to prove) *written* transmission of Matt 5:17–48, based on the possibility that *šlm* in 5:17 might be an inclusio with the adjective “perfect” in 5:48 (*teleios/teleioi* in Greek, possibly *šlm/šlym* in the back-version).

We can summarize the general conclusions of the book (185–88) as follows. First, although a Semitic origin of Matt 5:17–48 is difficult to demonstrate, Munari suggests a transmission of the *logia* in Aramaic or Hebrew on the basis of clues such as the transliteration of Semitic words.

Second, the fulfillment of the Torah preached by Jesus is not against the law. The Torah is not only a legal code but also a prophecy of the coming Messiah (68), and the Messiah requires a greater justice than that required by the Torah (129). Jesus asks his disciples to go beyond the law, not against the law. Jesus preaches a way of life that goes beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Third, this fulfillment has three meanings: Jesus fulfills the law because in him all the prophecies about the Messiah are accomplished; Jesus reveals the deeper meaning of the Torah commands, discovering the true identity of the person; and Jesus adds something new to the law.

Thus there is an element of continuity with the law that is the authentic interpretation by the Messiah of the Old Testament passage. At the same time, an element of discontinuity is present as well: the request to his disciples to have a more demanding behavior than that requested by Torah. Thus, according to Munari, Jesus explains the true intention of what was said *and* says something new.

Munari’s analysis makes comparisons with rabbinic literature and Dead Sea Scrolls. The comparison with the former is, in my opinion, well done, as well as the quotation of Targums. According to Munari, Matthew’s antithesis has nothing to do with rabbinic antithesis; Munari does not agree with B. Schaller and J. Kampen’s suggestion that Jesus’s *egō dē légō humin* is adversative against rabbinic interpretation of the law; according to Munari, it is to be referred to the Scripture. This is important because it testifies to the Christology of the first Christian community.

The comparison with the Dead Sea Scrolls is good, but Munari does not know important works such as *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance*, edited by M. G. Abegg, J. E. Bowley, and

M. Cook, or the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten*, edited by H.-J. Fabry and U. Damen. The second volume of the *Wörterbuch* could be consulted, for example, about the root *ml'* (44).

The book is quite good for a number of reasons: it analyzes thoroughly and exhaustively every verse and aspect of Matt 5:17–48; the bibliography is large; and footnotes offer great depth, sometimes so much as to slow down one's reading. Munari sometimes presents suggestions from other scholars but does not take a position (see, e.g., 117 about the hand), and sometimes he seems uncertain about LXX renderings, such as on page 97, where he only alludes to the use of *énochos*, or on page 26 with regard to the analysis of *katalúō*. All in all, however, the book represents a valid contribution to the study of Matt 5:17–48 and is recommended for scholars dealing with the Sermon of the Mount.