

»Retribution« in Jewish and Christian Texts

Edited by
DAVID HAMIDOVIĆ,
APOLLINE THROMAS,
and MATTEO SILVESTRINI

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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»Retribution« in Jewish and Christian Writings

A Concept in Debate

Edited by

David Hamidović, Apolline Thromas,
and Matteo Silvestrini

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Foreword

The editors of this volume (Apolline Thromas and Matteo Silvestrini) are PhD candidates working under the supervision of David Hamidović at the University of Lausanne. Their research projects inspired the one-day conference on the concept of retribution, with the aim of reviewing different case studies in the Jewish and Christian texts in which the concept of »retribution« seems to appear. In particular, »retribution« serves as a key concept for Matteo Silvestrini's PhD thesis about the Book of Watchers (the first section of 1 Enoch [chapters 1–36]). From the earliest stages of his research, Silvestrini realized that the concept is frequently used in an unclear way in biblical studies. This conference was therefore an important opportunity to articulate a clearer and nuanced understanding of this topic, which would contrast different points of view about how retribution might be conceptualized in several areas of research.

This volume represents the results of the international conference *La rétribution dans les littératures juives et chrétiennes: un concept pluriel*, which took place in September 2015 at the University of Lausanne. Each paper deals with the concept of »retribution,« highlighting the diverse meanings of this term in the specific case studies analyzed, as well as the important similarities which can be observed between them. The essays show the importance of treating retribution not as a stable or monolithic concept, but rather as a process: that is, following the epistemological current of *Begriffsgeschichte*, »retribution« is seen as an ambiguous concept, the conceptualization of which does not produce a final or authoritative outcome. Such an understanding of conceptualization allows us to question the possibility of achieving a single definition of »retribution« and instead to expect diverse meanings of the term in the different case studies analyzed here.

Indeed »retribution« will be shown in this volume to be a constantly moving concept which is elusive and impossible to be simplified in a clear definition. For Reinhart Koselleck,¹ »*Begriffsgeschichte* must register the variety of names for (identical?) materialities in order to be able to show how concepts are formed.«² The concept of »retribution,« as we understand it today, is never explained or defined in the ancient sources analyzed in this volume. However, it is still possible to approach the texts at hand from the perspective of retribution, thanks to the

¹ R. Koselleck has been considered the most important scholar within the *Begriffsgeschichte* trend. For a study on this author, see N. Olsen, *History in the Plural: an Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2012.

² R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge/London, The MIT Press, 1985 (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought), p. 86.

Begriffsgeschichte, since we can explain the writings through the formed categories of »*ex post*, employed without being present in the source itself.«³ This book seeks to emphasize the different ways in which this concept *ex post* progressed or was analyzed within each literary tradition proposed by the panelists. Moreover, we highlight the similarities through a synchronic reading of each text.

This volume also analyzes the different attempts in the history of interpretation to read the texts at hand through the lens of retribution. We explore the ways in which current scholarship might go beyond traditional difficulties and aporia – both of which are acute in the study of retribution, given the problematic conceptualization of the term in Judaism and Christianity through the centuries, in which a literal interpretation of the retribution concept has often been promoted. This book compares the Jewish and Christian approaches with the complexity of the concept in the ancient sources analyzed in the present volume – a contrast which is particularly emphasized in the introduction by David Hamidović.

In addition, the volume explores several sources coming from various literary traditions within Jewish and Christian texts, so as to show the specificity of each literary tradition and their diverse concepts of »retribution.« The diverse textual analyses reveal the variety and the complexity in Jewish and Christian worldviews concerning the semantic field of retribution during the last centuries B.C.E. and the first millennium A.D.

First, Nathan McDonald presents an overview of the Book of Numbers. He asks two questions about retribution in the Old Testament: is there a doctrine of retribution? And how might the collective and individual comprehension of retribution have changed in ancient Israel through time? Hans Ausloos then presents the concept of »retribution« in the Septuagint (LXX). After defining the issue within the Israelite environment in which the texts were produced, the author asks whether the LXX enshrines a distinctive ideology of retribution. In particular, Ausloos asks whether the LXX presents a new vision of the concept of retribution or, on the contrary, if it confirms or reinforces the Hebrew text's perspective. He addresses this issue with reference to particular biblical passages which prove particularly illustrative. The essay by David Hamidović begins by showing the close links between the concept of retribution and that of wealth and poverty in Jewish literature of the Second Temple, before focusing on Qumran texts about poverty and the impoverished. He shows the importance of a divine economy surrounding donations and issues of poverty, which shed valuable light on important aspects of the concept of retribution. In his essay, Matteo Silvestrini analyzes the process of retribution in the book of Watchers. He highlights the specificity of this process, both in terms of its ideological dimensions and its formative steps in the writing process. This is followed by a paper

³ Ibid., p. 90.

by Moisés Mayordomo, which studies divine retribution in some New Testament texts, which he links to some Latin and Greek texts. Through several methods and textual case studies, he shows the specificity of retribution in the New Testament according to different philosophical and religious contexts.

Following the conference, we sought to expand the focus of our analysis with select case studies of texts outside the Jewish and Christian frameworks. For this reason, the present volume also contains three additional contributions concerning Greek, Islamic and Buddhist texts.

First, David Bouvier discusses Greek texts from outside the Jewish and Christian traditions. This allows him to measure how much the theological and ideological approach of the concept affected the criteria of analysis from mythological texts in archaic and ancient Greece. His essay specifically focuses on honor and retribution in Homeric religion. In this tradition, the unique hope of the hero is to be sung by the poets, and the gods wish to be honored according to their hierarchical importance by humans. Therefore, this essay shows how the word »retribution« works in the context of ancient Greece in a way which differs from biblical concepts. The following essay by Mathieu Terrier then focuses on Islamic texts, and analyzes the literary and theological development of the retribution concept within them. More precisely, he discusses the »Final Retribution« through the Quran, the Hadiths and other texts and reflections throughout the centuries. The final essay by Frédéric Richard presents a study of the »karmic« retribution in Sanskrit texts and in specific terms, especially of Theravāda Buddhism. The author emphasizes that Buddhism purposes a practice of liberation through karmic retribution process – a process which, as he shows, serves as an instrument of rebirth and suffering.

The analysis of these various texts from Jewish and Christian corpus, and their counterparts in Greek antiquity, Islam and Buddhism, helps the reader to grasp the complexity of the concept of »retribution.« The analysis also emphasizes common aspects, with a view to exploring the coherence in the semantic field generated by the concept across diverse contexts. It also highlights the various components in the retribution process, the temporal modalities, the addressees and the protagonists. Moreover, it emphasizes the relation between retribution and other concepts, such as myth, law, tradition, and the perception of wealth, power and poverty.

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About the Blurred Concept of Retribution

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The concept of retribution has become a common idea in Western civilization, as it perfectly fits with the capitalist society in which we nowadays live. Conventionally it stands for a reward, a salary after labour. However, the concept used in the Bible appears to be more complex, which makes it harder to grasp the full meaning of this concept. Undeniably, it was not born in the emergence of capitalism. The first mention of the term »retribution« appeared around 1120. The word has its origins in the low Latin word *retribution* which not only referred to a reward, a giving back, but also to a deed to give back at the same level as the giving, literally a »retaliation.«¹ One century later, around the year 1220, the term »rétribuent« in Old French generally designated the reward given after a deed. However, in the middle of the 14th century the same word took on a more precise meaning. The context of use was clearly economical, as the word either corresponded to money or advantage in kind given after labour or service. The Latin verb *retribuere* already contained the two parts of the exchange: *re-* designating the giving back and *tribuere* indicating the repartition between the tribes, i. e. the distribution. A double movement is thus shaped within the concept: the »giving« or the gift and the expected »giving back«. However, the term also bore a religious significance that has been attested during the 16th century. Indeed, through the writing of the Protestant Johannes Calvin and its influence, the meaning of the verb was slightly modified. In 1541 he used it to indicate a reward or a remuneration according to merit.² Thus, he introduced a moral factor to the concept's definition. During this same period, in the catholic context, the word also referred to the concept of reward, but it appeared as reward occurring after a special devotion to God. In this way, the concept was one of the aspects of the crisis and dissociation between Catholics and Protestants. Generally speaking, it obtained a religious definition, while the non-religious definition remained in use. The concept of retribution therefore was set as part of a conflict between the two religious groups. Likewise, retribution presented different definitions according to the religious contexts and the original non-religious context that has

¹ See A. Rey (ed.), *Le Robert. Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, 2nd ed., Paris, Dictionnaire Le Robert, 1998, p. 3226.

² J. Calvin, *Les ordonnances ecclésiastiques*, Genève, 1562.

always been in use. From this time, some scholars in linguistics exclusively reserved the term »retribution« for the ecclesiastical sphere, while others used it in a vernacular way to signify »reciprocity.« This second understanding was reused in the context of the Industrial Revolution at the beginning of the 19th century. In fact, the definition of the verb »to retribute« was broadened. It is now commonly known as the salary of an employee or more generally, as a remuneration to pay back somebody or pay someone for their work. This explains how the verb quickly became a synonym of »to reward« nowadays.

In this short history, Calvin's understanding introduced a moral perspective consecutive to an evaluation: but what is the merit? From his close reading of the Bible, the Protestant leader deduced that God does not reward anyone without good reason and therefore added a condition for the reward: good deeds during one's lifetime. From this point, it is interesting to examine the perspective of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and also other religious literature, in order to evaluate the roots of the concept of retribution in Western civilization. The present volume aims to examine whether the Bible is the only literary source of the concept and whether the concept of retribution is limited to the Western area.

The concept of retribution in the human and social sciences

The concept of retribution is not exclusively devoted to religious concerns, i. e. theology. The idea is frequently used in the human and social sciences, i. e. anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, archaeology and history. The connection between the concept and the human and social sciences appears with the scholarly studies on capitalism and its social consequences. Therefore, the seminal essay of Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, published in 1924,³ assumes a relationship between the notion of exchange and the concept of retribution. Although many scholars already thought about the concept of giving or gift in the 19th century,⁴ Mauss' essay has influenced scholarship of the 20th century as it

³ M. Mauss, »Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques,« *Année sociologique* 1, 1923–1924, pp. 30–186, and republished in M. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950 (Quadrige), pp. 145–279.

⁴ Before Mauss, Prussian scholarship had already shaped the reciprocity with the giving (*Gegengabe*) and the giving back (*Wiedergabe*): J. Grimm, »Über Schenken und Geben,« in: *Vorgelesen in der Akademie der Wissenschaften am XXVI. Oktober 1848*, Berlin, 1849. The article is republished in: *Kleinere Schriften, Vol. 2: Abhandlungen zur Mythologie und Sittengeschichte*, Berlin, Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1865, pp. 173–210. Then the conceptual approach of Grimm is developed in 1882 by K. von Amira, *Nordgermanisches Obligationenrecht, 1: Altschwedisches Obligationenrecht*, Leipzig, Veit & Comp, 1882, for the juridical difference between Swedish and German donations, and in 1898 by R. Meyer, »Zur Geschichte des Schenkens,« *Zeitschrift für Kulturgeschichte* 5, 1898, pp. 18–29, who sums up the giving

offered an explanation for the problems of capitalist society, formulating a severe critique of the capitalist system of domination. Mauss suggests another system, one where giving helps to avoid the excesses of capitalist society such as poverty, the fear of becoming poorer or the social and moral exclusion this produces. Thus, the essay sheds new light on the concept of giving with a strong background on the social representation and critics. Another step towards the entrance of the concept into historiography was Moses I. Finley's book, *The World of Odysseus*, published in 1954.⁵ While discussing Homeric society before Classical Greece, he used the system of giving and giving back as a category of understanding (Homeric) society. Since the 1980s, many scholars have followed this way in different fields. The concept has crossed the borders of anthropology, thus entering all the fields of human and social sciences.⁶ However, one problem of the interdisciplinary approach lies in the evaluation of the concept newly embedded. Is Mauss' concept of giving still operating in history for example? Are giving and giving back useful categories outside of anthropological analysis?

Mauss himself has encouraged the diffusion of the concept of giving in other fields.⁷ Many scholars have positively answered Mauss' appeal in the domain of prehistory, ancient Greece, the Celtic world, African kingdoms, the Middle Ages in Europe, etc. But E. Magnani, for example, rightly points out the increasing confusion between the system of giving and the economy of prestigious goods.⁸ Applying Mauss' concept to different periods and worlds necessarily leads to the decontextualisation of the concept. This in turn produces methodological debates and issues of knowledge. Indeed, in *Le pain et le cirque*, published in 1976,⁹ Paul Veyne shows that the giving system is not the only concept that can be used to understand Greek and Roman societies. He believes that euergetism is a key component in these ancient societies.

However, there are forms of giving or gift which have been attested in a lot of societies at different periods and therefore cannot be completely denied. Scholarship refined Mauss' concept and offered many new directions. One of these is the idea of *reciprocity* or *balance*. The giving and the giving back are not always at

before the Modern Age. See B. Wagner-Hasel, »Egoistic Exchange and Altruistic Gift: On the Roots of Marcel Mauss' Theory of the Gift,« in: V. Groebner, B. Jussen and G. Algazi (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003 (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Institutes für Geschichte 188), pp. 141–171.

⁵ M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, New York, Viking Press, 1954.

⁶ See A. Komter (ed.), *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1996; M. Osteen (ed.), *The Question of the Gift: Essays Across Disciplines*, London/New York, Routledge, 2002 (Routledge Studies in Anthropology 2); E. Magnani (ed.), *Don et sciences sociales. Théories et pratiques croisées*, Dijon, Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2007.

⁷ See M. Mauss, »Une forme ancienne de contrat chez les Thraces,« *Revue des Études Grecques* 34, 1921, pp. 388–397.

⁸ E. Magnani (ed.), *Don et sciences sociales*, p. 9.

⁹ P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique*, Paris, Seuil, 1976.

the same level and do not always have the same intensity.¹⁰ Post-Mauss anthropology adds the concept of predation, especially for Amazonian societies.¹¹ Thus exists a model giving-predation which is, by definition, unbalanced, because the giver gives, receives and takes. Moreover, the multitude and diversity of giving in societies lead some scholars to prefer the concept of *repertoire* of giving.¹² Such an idea allows one to consider the diversity of giving according to the context, and the attempts to classify it. In this perspective, Natalie Zemon Davis in her work on giving in France during the 16th century concluded that four »registres« of giving structure society: the giving to God, the giving to the poor, the giving to the elites, and finally the giving in order to sustain an activity of common interest. Another trend develops the conclusions of Mauss on the hybridity of the giving system: giving intermingles interest and disinterest which means that the giver articulates necessity and liberty. Mauss already pointed out the complexity of human societies. The choice of giving corresponding to liberty rather than necessity and vice-versa leads to reconsidering morale and *ethics* in a given society. Thus, the giving is not a secondary social aspect or a declination of the capitalist system shaped around profit. The giving system appears as the pivot of societies by using ethical norms. Behind these three scholarly directions there is an evident desire to contextualize each situation in the precise society at a definite date. But it does not imply a renouncement to think globally the place of the giving system. The starting points are analytical studies, but they often lead to synthetic considerations. Although they are not exhaustive in the present scholarship, the notions of unbalance, repertoire and ethics seem peculiarly efficient to refine Mauss' definition of the giving system.

The concept of retribution in »biblical« studies

»Biblical« studies often avoid Mauss' concept, preferring the concept of retribution. After considering the etymology and the first references to the term, we can see that retribution corresponds to notions of reward, reciprocity, giving back,

¹⁰ See G. Algazi, »Some Problems with Reciprocity,« in: P. Moreno Feliú and D. Nartozky (eds.), *La reciprocidad*, Madrid, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Facultad de Filosofía, 2001 (Éndoxa, Series Filosóficas 15), pp. 43–50.

¹¹ See E. Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques cannibales*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2010 (Métaphysiques 216); D. Karadimas, »Le don ou le droit à la prédation. Le rituel des esprits des animaux chez les Miraña d'Amazonie colombienne,« in: E. Magnani (ed.), *Don et sciences sociales. Théories et pratiques croisées*, Dijon, Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2007, pp. 105–122.

¹² See I. F. Silber, »Gift-Giving in the Great Traditions: The Case of Donations to Monasteries in the Medieval West,« *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 36 (2), 1995, pp. 209–243; N. Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

i. e. a part of the giving system or the whole process. Therefore, we could assume that the concept of retribution is another name for the giving system.

The appreciation of the use of the concept of retribution in »biblical« studies leads me to two conclusions. First, the entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedias devoted to »biblical« studies rarely mention the concept of retribution. However, you will often find terms that are close to the concept, replaced by terms such as punishment, covenant, mercy, forgiveness, repentance, and redemption. Surely these notions are given specific attention in theology because they are crucial in the affirmation of Jewish religiosity and Christian faith. Nevertheless, the combination of many of these notions corresponds to the presented giving system and its nuances. Without doubt, the different combinations in the biblical passages and the apocryphal writings are the products of different contexts from a historical and theological perspective. Therefore, the use of the concept of retribution is meaningful at different levels and scales such as: the narrative context, the theological system of the redactional milieu, and the historical context. The second conclusion is that there is a quasi-absence of consideration and discussion of Mauss' works and its development. Such a conclusion can be drawn not only for »biblical« studies, but the same remark can be applied to numerous fields. However, for decades, the inclusion of the human and social sciences in the scholarship of »biblical« studies has indicated that the giving system has not been considered as operative in the description of society/societies behind the Bible and apocryphal literature.

A close examination invites us to evaluate this last point in a more nuanced way. Indeed, even if the reference to Mauss is absent, many studies still consider the notions linked to the giving system. In the Hebrew Bible, it appears that many words might correspond to the concept of retribution. Thus, the term נקם (*naqam*) mainly designates the »revenge« of God against sinners as in Exod 32:34; Num 31:3; 1 Sam 20:6; Jer 15:15, for example. In carrying out his »revenge,« God wishes to restore the original balance of the world and/or the respect of the Covenant contract.¹³ »Revenge« therefore is a divine punishment. The term שָׁלוֹם (*shalôm*) is well-known because it designates a salutation, literally »peace« on someone or somewhere. But the word also contains a specific nuance: to proclaim the wish to restore balance. Thus, *shalôm* means the desire to (again) obtain prosperity and/or good health from God as in Isa 59:18; 66:6 in which the term indicates »reward,« or »repayment.« The principle of retribution for *shalôm* is the same for *naqam* because God restores the balance. Thus, both words are placed together in Deut 32:35 to insist on the restoration after God's reaction. But let us keep in mind that both terms may have different facets:

¹³ See H. G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root NQM and the Function of the NQM-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament*, Leiden/New York, Brill, 1995 (Old Testament Studies 31), pp. 292–295.

Naqam suggests a negative perspective,¹⁴ i. e. the condemnation of sin, whereas *shalôm* presents a more positive aspect, i. e. the upgrading or restoration of »well-being«. But the alleged unity of God's deeds in the Hebrew Bible tends to erase these minor differences and both aspects often appear behind both words. Another word that indicates the concept of retribution is the verb שׁוּב (*shûv*) and its derivations. It means »to return,« »to restore« in general, but it can also be declined so that it bears the meaning of »to repent.« The restoration of balance is due to the action of God in return. And in some cases, before restoring balance, God punishes and the deed of punishment is considered as the »return« as in Judg 9:57. The retribution through the verb *shûv* designates the consequence of a negative statement.

The commonality of these three words applied to God's deed is the definitive assessment that God is still willing to restore the balance with the sinners in Israel (Lev 10:1–2 with the sons of Aaron: Nadab and Abihu; Num 16 with the revolt of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; 25 with the worship of Baal of Peor) and the nations (Gen 6–7 with the Flood punishing the whole humankind; Exod 32 with the Golden Calf). Thus, God becomes the destroyer of wickedness. Yet the concept of retribution is unconcerned with the causes of the unbalanced situation.¹⁵ In the Hebrew Bible, retribution takes place in the depiction of the divine punishment and/or in the action of restoring the balance.¹⁶ The strict reciprocity of the retribution's relationship, with equal measure of punishment or restoration corresponding to the unbalanced state, remains difficult to evaluate,¹⁷ because the perspective is not based on a concrete gift but on a theological framework in which the preservation of the original world's order seems to be the priority. Thus, the problem is not equal punishment or restoration corresponding to a sin but the return to the balanced situation without eluding possible dissymmetry. The divine chastisement is not conceived as a calibrated answer to sin: it can appear as being of higher or lower nature than the fault that was committed according to the point of view of the people concerned or people who have nothing to do with it. Behind this consideration, the expected retribution gives great confidence to those who are faithful, because God will destroy sin and restore the unbalanced situation.¹⁸

¹⁴ See S. Kershner, *Desert, Retribution, and Torture*, Lanham, University Press of America, 2001, pp. 69–71.

¹⁵ See J. L. Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 107–112.

¹⁶ See Gen 18:23–25.

¹⁷ See C. D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002, pp. 207–210.

¹⁸ The relationship between retribution and community is not exclusive, because God's retribution leads to punitive and restorative forms for Israel and also for the nations in general or in peculiar. Thus, the concept of retribution works inside and outside the community. See

However, all people still notice the perpetuation of evil on earth and the prosperity of sinners. Thus, many texts suggest being patient with the divine deeds of restoration.¹⁹ The confrontation with reality though needs to find other ways to explain and justify divine justice, because the time of retribution is often too long. The wisdom literature deals with this problem. First, it presents the unbalanced situation with suffering and predation or rapaciousness of people, and secondly attests to the long life of the perpetrators who are opposed to common ethics. Likewise, the righteous ones could become afflicted. The retribution's system seems to be broken in the sapiential writings, because God does not restore the balance. Such a situation needs to be explained. Therefore, the redactors suggest that the sinners do not admit their sin.²⁰ The concept of retribution is then refined. The book of Job is the best example. Indeed, God decides to test the righteousness of Job following Satan's advice. According to Job 7:11–21, an afflicted Job concludes that God has no obligation to punish the wicked and to reward the righteous. In the following chapters, the friends of Job reject Job's conclusion; they accuse him of having done something wrong which has led him to his afflictions. Then Job, despite his innocence, begins to doubt himself. He ends up stating that God is unfair with him because he gave him only a short-term reward (Job 29:1–25) and no full retribution, but according to Job 27:2 he remains faithful. At the end of the book, in his dialogue with God, Job acknowledges that God's deed is difficult to evaluate, and he proclaims his repentance (Job 42:1–6). Thus, the mysterious and inscrutable knowledge of God justified the existence of evil on earth and the preservation of the unbalanced situation. From a different starting point, the redactor of Qoheleth comes to more or less the same conclusion. But the absence of retribution leads him to doubt whether there is a giving back on earth for people, or not. Despite this uncertainty, he hopes to receive retribution in the future and that the evil ones will be chastised according to Qoh 8:12–13. In the apocalyptic writings, the answer to injustice is transformed into the hope of receiving retribution after life on earth. For example in Dan 12:2–3, it is said that the elite group called the *maskilim* will resurrect («awake») and have «everlasting life». In the Jewish-Hellenistic writings, such as the Wisdom of Solomon, the same hope is clearly expected for the righteous ones in heaven according to Wis 3:4–9, and the wicked ones will be punished in Wis 4:10–11.18–19. Thus, the search for alternative ways to explain and solve the unbalanced situation is attested in Judaism in the last centuries BCE. The appar-

J. White and M. Werntz, »Retribution,« in: R. L. Brawley (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Ethics*, vol. 2, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 212–213.

¹⁹ See Hab 2:1–3 with the prophetic concern.

²⁰ In the pioneered work on retribution in the Hebrew Bible, K. Koch, »Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?« in: J. L. Crenshaw (ed.), *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, Philadelphia/London, Fortress Press/SPCK, 1983 (Issues in Religion and Theology 4), pp. 57–87, claimed that sin carries its outcome. Thus, he eliminated the possibility of retribution by default.

ently broken retribution is not restored because the present situation contradicts the existence of a system of retribution. From an ethical point of view, the concept of retribution, in its alternative perspective, appears as a means of maintaining the relationship between God and Israel, despite the critical situation in the present. The absence of retribution may be interpreted as the break or the negation of the concept of election, therefore the redactional milieus needed to look for alternative solutions.

The same difficulty is portrayed in the New Testament writings which attest both positions about retribution: the »old« conception of the retribution's system and the »new« ways to attain the retribution's system. Thus, the Greek term ἀνταπόδομα (*antapodoma*), according to its meaning in Classical Greek literature, already attested in the Septuagint and other Jewish-Hellenistic writings (Gen 50:15; Tob 14:10; Sir 12:2; 14:6), suggests the notion of reward, giving back as the second part of an exchange. But in Paul's writings, such as in Rom 11:9, it designates punishment. Indeed, in Pauline theology, everyone is aware that God's giving to humankind is good (Rom 1:11–32). Therefore, human faults or sins are paid by punishment as a logical consequence. Moreover, the relative silence in the New Testament about the divine retribution has raised the question of a potential substitution of God's retribution by Jesus' acts.²¹ Indeed, Jesus rejects the *lex talionis* (Exod 20–23; Lev 17–26) in Matt 5:38–42 to highlight the refusal of (a) temporal retribution, i. e. the immediate chastisement.²² But a close reading of the texts, especially of the eschatological passages of the New Testament, cannot confirm this hypothesis because the divine retribution remains possible in spite of the temporal punishment (Matt 25:31–46; Rev 22:1–5). The New Testament perspective about retribution is to bring back the sinners inside the community rather than only punishing them (Matt 18:15–17; 1 Cor 5:9–13).

Following one of the last solutions found in the Jewish literature, the hope of retribution in afterlife appears as the central point of the retribution system in the New Testament. In the canonical Gospels (Luke 13:4–5; John 9:2–3), Jesus refuted the relationship between sin and suffering. The suffering of people is thus set aside in the system of retribution. A consequence is that sin is not responsible for the sufferings and God's retribution is not the cause of suffering. But Jesus

²¹ M. S. Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006, p. 197.

²² The commentators remain divided to know if it is the refusal of the temporal retribution or the eschatological retribution. See M. Rathey, »Talion im NT? Zu Mt 5,38–42,« *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 82, 1991, pp. 264–266; W. Harnisch, »Die Befreiende Zumutung des Widersinnigen. Eine hermeneutische Skizze zu Matthäus 5,38–42,« in: U. Schoenborn and W. Harnisch (eds.), *Die Zumutung der Liebe: gesammelte Aufsätze*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999 (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 187), pp. 96–110; J. F. Davis, *Lex Talionis in Early Judaism and the Exhortation of Jesus in Matthew 5.38–42*, London, T & T Clark International, 2005 (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 281).

proclaims the post-mortem retribution with eternal life for his followers and the annihilation of the wicked ones in Matthew 25:31–46. There is still doubt about the moment of retribution however. For example, the accomplishment of retribution is still awaited for the martyrs in Revelation 6:10. Yet the belief in eschatological retribution with the afterlife is well-established in the first Christian communities (Rev 20:12–15) and following the apocalyptic perspective, the process of retribution happens in different stages: death on earth, judgment of each one's deeds, sentence, and then reward with afterlife or final destruction for the wicked ones.²³ However, the Christian texts generally remain unclear about the question of retribution whether it is temporal or eternal. Anyway, in the Christian, and later in the Western world, the process of retribution shapes part of morale and ethics, because it is the result of an ancient belief which explained the sufferings encountered in human experience. Above the different used terms to describe the retribution's system, the concept of retribution shapes thus a worldview. One of the best examples is the current debate about the death penalty. Some countries promote death penalty as retribution for deeds, e. g. murder, and other countries insist on incarceration because they prefer the notions of forgiveness, mercy, redemption, and reconciliation. The first option is the prolongation of the *lex talionis*, while the alternative is based on the Gospels. Thus, the different definitions of the concept of retribution in the Bible result in different visions of justice and the penal code in Western civilization today.

Even though the concept of retribution in »biblical« studies clearly does not consider a link with the present research on the post-Maussian giving system in the human and social sciences, the echoes of the restorative balance and its ethical implications are strong in scholarship. Likewise, the representation of a blurred concept of the notion of retribution in the Bible may correspond to the plurality of definitions in different texts, written by different milieus at different periods. Such a view may fit the notion of »repertoires« in the human and social sciences.

²³ S. Travis, *Christ and the Judgement of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in New Testament Thought*, rev. ed., Milton Keynes/Peabody, Paternoster/Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.

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