

BOOK REVIEW

Richard Bauckham. *The Jewish World around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010). 560 pp. Pbk. \$59.99.

Incorporating twenty-three essays that span over thirty years, Richard Bauckham's *The Jewish World around the New Testament* is the culmination of the author's superb work on the Jewish background of the New Testament. The essays cover a wide range of topics—examinations of various Jewish and Second Temple literature, assessment of common themes in early Judaism and a look at the 'parting of the ways'—that provide valuable insight into the complex relationship between the New Testament and its Jewish context. Bauckham's essays range from introductory remarks on the value of Second Temple literature for New Testament interpretation to more technical examinations of, for example, a translation problem in the Greek version of 1 Enoch.

Given the depth of both the subjects addressed and Bauckham's treatment in each essay, it is impossible in this review to analyze each chapter in a way that does justice to the wealth of material. Rather, I will look at Bauckham's collection in a more general way, addressing the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the collected whole.

One of the strengths of this collection is the wealth of knowledge and insight Bauckham provides in regards to Second Temple literature. Bauckham's expansive knowledge of the literature is seen throughout. In the essay 'Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles of Northern Israel', he thoroughly analyzes the apocryphal book as a paradigm for the restoration of Israel (p. 446). The eighth essay, 'The Apocalypses in the New Pseudepigrapha', serves as a supplement to *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (edited by J. H. Charlesworth) as Bauckham offers comments on the treatment of the apocalyptic works included. His comments on the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* (pp. 106-109) are particularly helpful, as he highlights its detailed images of the punishments of those damned in hell—a theme often thought to belong in the second

century AD onwards, but shown here to be in the first century. In ‘The Rise of Apocalyptic’, Bauckham looks historically and theologically at the role of apocalyptic literature between the Testaments. Apocalyptic, Bauckham argues, is ‘the bridge between Testaments’, keeping the Old Testament eschatological hope open to the future (p. 64).

In several essays, Bauckham demonstrates how a knowledge of Second Temple (and ancient) Judaism and its literature enlightens the interpretation of specific New Testament passages. In ‘The Restoration of Israel in Luke–Acts’, he argues that Luke demonstrates the significance of the ministry of Jesus and the acts of the early church ‘through the lens of Israel’s hope and the prophecies of Israel’s restoration’ (p. 327). So, for example, Pentecost is to be understood as the beginning of the restoration of the Diaspora (a theme present in Old Testament prophecy: Isa. 49.22-23; 60.1-9; 66.20; Zech. 8.7-8, 20-23) (pp. 357-58). In the essay ‘The Horarium of Adam and the Chronology of the Passion’, Bauckham draws upon this first-century Jewish work (the date is defended in pp. 398-412) alongside other early works to tie the reference to the cock-crow in the Gospels (Mt. 26.34; Mk 14.30; Lk. 22.34; Jn 13.38) to a particular time of evening. He concludes that Peter is said to deny Jesus three times before the cock-crow that signaled the end of the third watch of the night and this was the common time when people awoke, although it was not the very first crow of the night—which explains why Mark calls it the second cock-crow (pp. 417-18).

Another example comes in the essay ‘The Spirit of God in Us Loathes Envy (James 4:5)’, in which Bauckham argues that the quotation in that verse is taken from an apocryphal text originally written in Hebrew (he proposes the Book of Eldad and Modad) and that the challenge for modern interpreters comes from an issue that arose as the quote was translated from Hebrew to Greek. Bauckham contends that the original quotation may have used *בַּעַר/בִּשַׂר* (two verbs that had a similar meaning: ‘to long for’—one positive, one negative—which may have been thought of as the same verb with two different meanings). It was translated using *ἐπιποθεῖν*—which has the positive sense of *בִּשַׂר*, but not the negative sense of *בַּעַר* (pp. 428-29). Therefore, *ἐπιποθεῖ πρὸς* in Jas 4.5, often translated as ‘longs for’, was supposed to mean ‘abhors, is intensely opposed to’. If this translation is correct, then the reference is to the divine Spirit, rather than the human spirit, that loathes envy.

Another strength of this collection is Bauckham's development of themes in Second Temple Judaism. In 'The Delay of the Parousia', he places this uniquely Christian concept within the context of the delayed eschatology found in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Interestingly, Bauckham draws a parallel between the attempts to find a positive meaning for the delay in rabbinic material and the Apocalypse of Baruch and similar ideas in 2 Peter 3 and Revelation (11.1-13). In another essay, 'Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism', Bauckham traces the development of the Jewish view on resurrection and the afterlife through this period. While various images are presented in the literature, Bauckham argues that most Jews in the late Second Temple period shared a common view—the resurrection and transformation of the dead; the righteous going to Paradise and the wicked to Gehenna. He concludes: 'The first Christians did not derive their understanding of the afterlife from any specific Jewish group, such as the Pharisees or the Essenes, but shared the views which had become general in the Judaism of their time' (p. 256).

In any collection of essays, some stand out above the rest while some seem to be the weaker links. *The Jewish World around the New Testament* is no exception, and some essays do not match the strength of the collection. The essay 'What if Paul Had Travelled East rather than West?' treats an interesting conjecture, but ultimately becomes a digression on the over-emphasis often placed on Paul for the survival of the early church. While interesting, this speculative essay does not seem necessary.

Concerning the order of the essays, one wonders why they are organized chronologically rather than by theme or progression. Several essays are broad in scope and introductory in content (especially 'The Relevance of Extra-Canonical Jewish Texts to New Testament Study'). Why would these essays not be placed earlier in the collection to provide a foundation upon which the other essays build? As another example, the essay 'The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why' brings clarity to the historical situation with which many other essays interact; yet it arrives half way through the collection.

Finally, while the essays contained in this collection engage with a wide variety of themes and literature from ancient and Second Temple Judaism, the book lacks a full articulation of the religion and its literature. Put differently, the sum of this collection is not a complete picture of the 'Jewish world around the New Testament'. In one essay,

Bauckham writes, ‘Only someone who understands early Judaism for its own sake will be able to use Jewish texts appropriately and accurately in the interpretation of the NT’ (p. 211; also quoted in his introduction). This collection is strong in applying this principle, yet only partially helpful in giving an understanding of the full picture of early Judaism. There is limited articulation of the core beliefs or tenants of Second Temple Judaism (beyond the ‘Parting of the Ways’ essay). I suspect that giving such full information was not Bauckham’s goal with this collection, yet the title attached to it may be misleading.

All things considered, *The Jewish World around the New Testament* is essential reading for those interested in how Second Temple Judaism and its literature impact the New Testament documents. While there is no full articulation of the Jewish world in the first century, this collection superbly demonstrates that it is vital for the New Testament scholar to understand early Judaism and its literature. Bauckham has been a vocal advocate for the view that the New Testament needs to be understood in its Jewish context. Here, in this collection, we are privileged to have many of his finest essays on the subject in one location.

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