

D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*. Vol. 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. Tübingen/Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck/Baker, 2001. xiii + 619 pp. n.p.

The massive book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (1977) written by E. P. Sanders has exerted a tremendous influence on NT scholarship. Sanders opposed, by carefully scrutinizing Jewish literature from Qumran to Tannaitic Judaism, the oft-repeated claim that Judaism was legalistic and that Paul responded to such legalism. It is fair to say that the position argued by Sanders, though it has been qualified by various scholars, represents the new consensus. Most scholars would now agree that Judaism in the second temple period cannot fairly be identified as legalistic.

The work edited by Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid represents a response to and an adjustment of the thesis argued by Sanders and others. Two volumes are planned, the first covers the literature of second temple Judaism, whereas the second will examine the Pauline writings. The first volume does not, of course, attempt to investigate the literature of second temple Judaism comprehensively. The respective authors concentrate on the soteriology of such writings—at the risk of distorting the main purpose and function of the works in question. Particularly, most of the essays ask whether the covenantal nomism of Sanders accurately portrays the authors or writings consulted.

The book contains sixteen chapters. Carson wrote the introduction and the conclusion (which also contains his summaries of the various chapters). The remaining chapters examine various writings, authors, and types of literature in second Temple Judaism: "Prayers and Psalms," (Daniel Falk); "Scripture-Based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha," (Craig Evans); "Expansions of Scripture," (Peter Enns); "Didactic Stories," (Philip Davies); "Apocalypses," (Richard Bauckham); "Testaments," (Robert Kugler); "Wisdom," (Donald Gowan); "Josephus," (Paul Spilsbury); "Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature," (Philip Alexander); "Some Targum Themes," (Martin McNamara); "Philo of Alexandria," (David Hay); "1QS and Salvation at Qumran," (Markus Bockmuehl); "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism," (Mark Seifrid) and "The Pharisees Between 'Judaisms' and 'Common Judaism'" (Roland Deines). One of the strengths of the book is that the authors of the various chapters are experts in the area studied. The contributors clearly do not have an agenda to "trash" the work of Sanders. Each contributor strives to understand the literature studied on its own terms, and they approach the literature sympathetically, trying to hear the voice and concerns of the various authors.

Space is lacking here to summarize the contributions of each author. The book as a whole argues that Sanders's view on covenantal nomism should be qualified. The Judaism of the second temple period is truly "variegated." Sometimes the emphasis is on God's grace and in other instances the focus is on obedience to the law. Explaining the relationship between "covenant" and "nomism" is often difficult, because the Jewish authors themselves do not explain systematically how these two strands should be explicated. Some of the writings lean in a more legalistic direction (e.g., Josephus, 2 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch), while others emphasize God's grace (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, penitential psalms and prayers, 1 Enoch).

What would E. P. Sanders think of this work and its impact on his own study? I cannot, of course, say with certainty. But if I were Sanders, I would be rather pleased with this study that advertises itself as a "a fresh appraisal of Paul and second temple Judaism." A number of the authors actually agree that covenantal nomism accurately represents the literature they investigate. Others nuance Sanders in various ways, but do not substantially call into question his major thesis. Still others argue that the emphasis on nomism and the keeping of the law is greater than Sanders perceived, that Sanders overemphasizes the covenant and underplays the role of nomism in some writings. Even in these latter instances, I wondered if Sanders might argue that the specific purpose of the writing in question placed the focus on nomism, but such an emphasis does not rule out the priority of God's covenant. For instance, in reading the NT one would probably not place the same emphasis on God's grace if we only read James and Jude and did not have the Pauline letters. Finally, Sanders himself agrees that in some cases we do have legalism (4 Ezra), but sees legalism here as exceptional.

How should we assess this volume as a whole? The contributors can be commended for striving to study the literature objectively and sympathetically. They also demonstrate that Sanders's rubric "covenantal nomism" does not account well for the diversity of second temple Jewish literature. On the other hand, Sanders attempted to come up with a synthetic view of Judaism, a coherent Judaism (while acknowledging that the rabbis did not always attempt to show how everything cohered). Most of the scholars in this volume approach each piece of literature disparately. They are specialists in various realms of second temple literature who would probably not attempt to enunciate an overarching view of second temple Judaism. Hence, some of them spy out problems in the synthesis proposed by Sanders when they analyze a particular piece of literature. And yet it seems that Sanders's synthetic Palestinian Judaism, with some nuancing, is not far from the conclusions of most of the contributors. At the very least, I could see Sanders arguing that the evidence presented could be interpreted in a way that fits with his synthesis.

The next proposed volume will examine Paul's writings. The first volume does not clearly show, in my estimation, that the thesis proposed by Sanders seriously distorts Jewish literature. And yet I, for one, am convinced that Paul engages in a polemic against Jewish legalism. How do we explain this? Does Paul distort Jewish theology to advance his own agenda? Or, should we read Paul in a new way as Tom Wright and James Dunn propose? I would suggest that this volume actually helps us see what the answer is. The contributors detect the emphasis on nomism but they also perceive an emphasis on God's grace. The evidence taken as a whole is ambiguous. One can sustain Sanders's thesis if the literature is examined from a sympathetic and insider point of view. Many of the scholars contributing to this work come close to the view of Sanders precisely because they are attempting to view the literature from the inside.

On the other hand, the emphasis on nomism can be construed differently. It may also indicate a role for obedience that is rightly described as legalistic. In essence, such a view sees obedience as the basis of or contributing to one's justification. The latter, in my judgment, was Paul's view of the Judaism of his day. The volume compiled here also demonstrates that such a view of Judaism does not entail distortion since nomism was also central in Judaism. Which view is more defensible? We are not merely neutral readers who occupy the Archimedean standpoint from which to assess all of reality. We

confess that an authoritative and accurate word has been vouchsafed to us in the scriptures. When we compare the perspective of Qumran and Paul on the law, we gladly and rightly embrace Paul.