

BOOK REVIEW

C. Marvin Pate, *Communities of the Last Days: The Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament and the Story of Israel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000).

As significant as the Dead Sea Scrolls are for one's understanding of the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls continue to remain an unexplored territory for many New Testament students. In this light, C. Marvin Pate's volume entitled, *Communities of the Last Days: The Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament and the Story of Israel*, which seeks to integrate the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament (p. 8), is a welcome addition to the field of New Testament studies. According to Pate, the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the New Testament comes from the fact that they both retell the story of Israel from the perspective of Jewish apocalypticism—that is to say, each of the two communities identifies itself to be the restored Israel living in the last days (p. 20). As a result, similarities as well as differences abound between the two, and Pate's goal, in this volume, is to account for such comparisons.

Chapter 1 presents the 'story of Israel', which dominates the literature of the Second Temple period. Following Odil H. Steck, Pate suggests that this period was marked by the Deuteronomistic view of Israel's history, expressed through the 'sin-exile-restoration' framework. This chapter also covers the basic information surrounding the Dead Sea Scrolls corpus such as the story behind their discovery and publication, as well as the overview of the types of documents found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Chapter 2 is devoted to the 'contours of debate' surrounding the identity of the group responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls. Based on a set of internal (sociological, archaeological, paleographical, historical) and external (Josephus, Pliny the Elder) evidence, Pate supports the majority view which sees the Essenes as the group responsible for the production of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, he rules out the possibility of any

direct contact between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament. Rather, he believes that the similarities between the two are based on the fact that they both retell the story of Israel from an apocalyptic point of view. Chapter 3 begins the comparative analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, starting with the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament. Pate examines the *peshar* technique employed in both literatures in order to determine their respective views on Israel's restoration. Both the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew employ the three types of *pesharim*—single, continuous and thematic. Through the use of such hermeneutical methods, they present their respective communities as the fulfillment of Israel's restoration. The only difference is in the identity of the leader around whom the restoration is made possible—the Teacher of Righteousness for the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jesus for Matthew.

Using the insights of such scholars as J.J. Collins and N.T. Wright, Chapter 4 considers how the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, in their messianic expectation, retell and subvert Israel's story as understood by many Jews of the Second Temple period. Taking the fourfold category of messianic expectation operative in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament—Davidic Messiah, the eschatological priest, the prophet-like-Moses, and the Danielic Son of Man—Pate compares and contrasts the two literatures. While both see their own communities as constituting the true people of God, not ethnic Israel, they still differ greatly on how Israel's restoration is to take place. For the Dead Sea Scrolls, the restoration takes place through the community's obedience to the interpretation of the Torah given by the Teacher of Righteousness, while for the New Testament it is ushered in through the community's faith in Jesus the Messiah. Drawing on N.T. Wright's worldview analysis in *The New Testament and the People of God*, Chapter 5 seeks to determine how the Dead Sea Scrolls and Luke–Acts both restructure the worldview of ancient Judaism by 'retelling the story of Israel through a recasting of its symbols and praxis' (p. 154). The praxis of each group confirms the idea that the Dead Sea Scrolls and Luke–Acts saw their respective communities as constituting the true Israel. Consequently, both the Dead Sea Scrolls and Luke–Acts depart from ancient Judaism by redefining the symbols such as ethnicity, land, Torah and temple. However, while the ideas of sectarian nationalism and social separation are strong in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Luke–Acts suggests that Israel's rejection of Jesus, God's most authoritative prophet, has led to the restoration of the Gentiles before the Jews. Chapter 6 deals with the

concept of justification as understood by the Dead Sea Scrolls and Paul. Agreeing with Sanders, Pate purports covenantal nomism to be the underlying motif of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Thus, entrance into covenant comes as a result of God's grace; the people's obedience to the Torah is simply for maintaining their status in the covenant. Paul in his letters, however, takes this understanding to another level by reversing the understanding of covenantal nomism. In fact, passages such as Rom. 1.16–3.21, 5–8, 9.30–10.8, Philippians 3, and Gal. 3.10-14 demonstrate that for Paul, whether one seeks to enter the covenant or to remain in it, there is only one solution—faith in Jesus Christ apart from the works of the law.

Chapter 7 studies the parallels found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Colossians, particularly focusing on the *merkabah* tradition. The investigation focuses on the three aspects of angelology found in the Angelic Liturgy of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Col. 2.8-23: (1) mysticism (angelic worship), (2) legalism (angelic revelation) and (3) asceticism (angelic purity). Based on this comparison, Pate states that the Colossians error resembles the teaching of the Dead Sea Scrolls which suggests that strict observance of the law leads one into the presence of angels and into the heavenly inheritance. Chapter 8 analyzes the Dead Sea Scrolls and the book of Hebrews, particularly focusing on how these writings, both Jewish-oriented, share in the beliefs of monotheism, covenant and eschatology, and yet do so from a very different perspective. Both believe that their communities were the true Israel which constitutes the New Covenant of the one God. They differ in that for the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is the Teacher of Righteousness in the line of the Zadokite priesthood who institutes the true Torah and regulations for the temple. For the book of Hebrews, Jesus fulfills that priestly role. His gospel replaces the Torah, and his atoning work on the cross redefines the priesthood and temple. Chapter 9 discusses the parallels between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel of John. Pate notes that both present their founders as having suffered the messianic woes, 'the culmination of the covenant curses of the exile' (p. 217) and as having brought the deuteronomic blessings of restoration. The means of actualizing this renewal is to follow these leaders—the Teacher of Righteousness and his *halakhah* for the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Jesus Christ for the Gospel of John.

Despite the difficulty involved in bringing together two such vast bodies of literature in just over two hundred pages, this volume is informative with details on many important passages found in the Dead Sea

Scrolls and the New Testament. Also, beginning with the accounts of the scrolls' discovery and their publication to the discussions of numerous books which make up the corpus, the volume provides much essential information for the beginning student of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In this light, this volume may work as a great textbook for an introductory course on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Pate's worldview analysis, adopted from Wright's *The New Testament and the People of God*, which he applies to the Dead Sea Scrolls, is innovative and will be of interest not only to students but also to scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament. Such analysis provides a helpful overview of the Dead Sea Scrolls as a whole, and gives a sound framework through which to read and understand different passages of these documents. It is always helpful to have a grasp of the forest before the tree, and this volume provides one useful overall picture of the entire Dead Sea Scrolls.

By attributing a common first-century Jewish apocalyptic worldview to the two communities, Pate accounts for the similarities found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, without having to assert that the former had direct influence on the latter, as some in the past have argued. At the same time, his worldview analysis, which suggests that in sharing the same perspective the two communities told the same story with variations, also accounts for the differences found in the two literatures. Overall, Pate's approach gives a better account of the relationship which existed among the various sects within first-century Judaism than those which hypothesize about direct contact.

Pate's examination of the two literatures also reveals the significance of placing the New Testament in its first-century context. While some may not agree with all of his conclusions, this book nevertheless shows the inherent value in reading the New Testament as a document in its historical context—that of first-century Judaism.

There are, nevertheless, a few minor concerns regarding this book. Following Wright, Pate believes that first-century Judaism saw Israel as still being in exile. While many scholars now support the idea of exile being in place, some may still question the assertion that it dominated first-century Judaism to the extent that Wright and Pate believe it did. Having finished his comparison and contrast of the two, Pate concludes his book by making note of Christianity's true unique stance which contributed to its triumph over the other sects of the Second Temple period.

While many would agree with Pate's suggestion, those who do not share the same theological stance as Pate may find his statement inappropriate.

These are, however, only minor points of criticism. In fact, the strengths of this book far outweigh its weaknesses and thus anyone interested in the field of the Dead Sea Scrolls and also their relationship to the Christian origin will do well to own a copy of this volume.

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