

BOOK REVIEW

Bauckham, Richard, *The Jewish World around the New Testament: Collected Essays I* (WUNT, 1.233; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). 548 pp. Hbk. \$210 USD.

This volume is a collection of essays by noted New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham, all of which have been published elsewhere (with the exception of the introductory chapter) in various journals and books from 1976 to 2008, spanning over thirty years of research in the Jewish background of the New Testament. The 24 chapters are arranged chronologically, with the exception of Chapter 3 (since it is closely related to Chapter 2). The upside to this type of format is that Bauckham has spent a great deal of time, at least longitudinally, thinking and researching in this particular area. The possible downside to such an endeavor is that some of the older articles may not be relevant to today's issues.

Because this volume is a collection of essays, there is no particular thesis advocated and no linear argumentation throughout, except perhaps that the essays 'all share that basic perspective on the historical place of the New Testament writings within late Second Temple Judaism' (p. 1). In the introduction Bauckham writes:

This is not to deny the obvious influence of the non-Jewish Greco-Roman world in which the New Testament writings also belong, but that influence was felt right across the Jewish world in varying ways and to varying degrees (p. 1).

This thesis is stated rather than argued for, since it seems to be agreed upon by the majority of New Testament scholars, and the rest of the chapters simply note various aspects of the Jewish world that relate to the New Testament. Some chapters refer little or not at all to the New Testament, which Bauckham admits. It is impossible to provide a review that encompasses every chapter of this book, since it lacks a major thesis. In light of this limitation, rather than attempting to

summarize every chapter, I will offer two broad critiques in consideration of its collective nature.

It seems to me that the main shortcoming of this volume is the lack of appropriate updating of many of the older articles it reproduces. Of course, it is stated at the outset that this is a collection of older and recent essays, but I think some of the older articles would benefit from being updated to ensure accuracy in today's academic climate. Some of these updates would be very simple. For example, the first sentence of Chapter 7, 'The Son of Man: "A Man in my Position" or "Someone"?' refers to Barnabas Lindars's 'new book, *Jesus Son of Man*', which was published in 1983 (p. 93). This chapter was originally published in *JSNT* in 1985, so Lindars's book was certainly new then. However, almost thirty years have now passed. The point is not that Lindars's book is no longer relevant, although it does mean that Bauckham's chapter does not engage with scholarship on the Son of Man since 1985, in spite of the numerous articles and books that have been published on the topic since that date. There is not even an addendum appended to address any recent works. In fact, the references in this chapter do not cite any works published after 1983. This is a significant weakness for a book published in 2008, regardless of whether it is stated at the outset that it is meant to be a collection of essays. In certain other chapters, however, namely Chapter 2 and Chapter 20, Bauckham does add appendices to note recent work that has appeared since the original publications. I think the book would benefit from having all the chapters updated in a similar way for it to be a contribution to current scholarship. Otherwise, why not simply find the articles individually and compile them in a folder without spending two hundred dollars?

The other critique I offer deals with the relevance of some of the chapters to the topic of the Jewish world of the New Testament. Ostensibly, many of the chapters do make a direct contribution to elucidating some aspect of the Jewish world in the New Testament. For example, in 'The Restoration of Israel in Luke–Acts' (pp. 325–70) Bauckham argues that the writer of Luke–Acts provides a program for the future restoration of Israel as envisaged by late Second Temple Judaism—in other words, the program of Israel's restoration in Second Temple Judaism is reflected in Luke–Acts as well. Another chapter that has direct relevance to the Jewish world around the New Testament is entitled 'The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why?' (pp. 175–92). Obviously, Bauckham's discussion of the various sects of Judaism in this

chapter is directly related to the Jewish world, the discussion including the debate over whether Christianity was merely a sect of Judaism or a completely divergent group.

However, not all the chapters seem to have such relevance to the Jewish world. In the chapter entitled ‘Pseudo-Apostolic Letters’ (pp. 123-49; first published in 1988 in *JBL*), Bauckham states his objective:

to derive such criteria [for distinguishing pseudepigraphal from authentic letters] from the study of undoubtedly pseudepigraphal letters among the Jewish pseudepigrapha and the NT apocrypha (p. 123).

His procedure is to identify various features that characterize ancient letters and compare them with the undisputed pseudepigrapha, and then to analyze the pseudo-apostolic letters and New Testament apocrypha, comparing these analyses to the features identified in the first part. However, in spite of his initial statement, the main task of this chapter seems to be to confirm that among the canonical epistles, 2 Peter has a ‘very high probability’ (p. 146) of being pseudepigraphal, the Pastorals could ‘very well be pseudepigraphal’ (p. 146), and Ephesians, James, and 2 Thessalonians have pseudepigraphy as a ‘possibility’ (p. 146). While it is not the point here to reflect on Bauckham’s conclusions, it seems that this chapter has less to do with Jewish backgrounds and more to do with pseudepigraphal activity in the first and second centuries. Though biblical pseudepigrapha are predominantly Jewish in character, they are not limited to Jewish writings, but include non-Jewish writings such as *The Gospel of Peter* and *The Epistle to the Laodiceans* that identifies the writer as the apostle Paul.

Another chapter that lacks direct relevance to the Jewish background of the New Testament is the chapter entitled ‘Paul and Other Jews with Latin Names in the New Testament’ (pp. 371-92; originally published in 2002). Incidentally, this is a chapter that contains an additional note identifying more recent works discussing the issue of Latin names among Jews (so it escapes my earlier critique of obsolescence). In this chapter, Bauckham does not advance a particular thesis but simply provides some useful information regarding the use of Latin names for Jews. He identifies fourteen or fifteen of them in the New Testament, the prominent figure being Paul, or Saul of Tarsus. The discussion is certainly helpful, but this is not an instance of elucidating the Jewish world; rather it is more directly relevant to the Greco-Roman world the Jews occupied. While I may be accused of being overly pedantic on

this critique, the point stands that this chapter elucidates not the Jewish world but the Greco-Roman world

Despite my two critiques for this book, I have high regard for Bauckham as a New Testament scholar and have benefitted immensely from his scholarship. Additionally, this book is a helpful resource that has a collection of Bauckham's articles related to the Jewish background of the New Testament in a single, unified place. As I have noted, a major failure of the book is that it does not engage recent scholarship on the various topics of each chapter. As such, it may be misleading to reference this work as from 2008. Responsible scholars will note both the publication date in the book and the original publication date when referencing articles in this book, especially if little or no change has been made to the original article. Also, it seems that the purpose of the book would be better described, especially in the introductory chapter, if it was presented simply as a collection of essays that all have varying degrees of relevance to Second Temple Judaism, instead of having statements (as reproduced above) that characterize the book as a unified, seamless whole. Having said that, as long as the reader is aware of some of the shortcomings of the book, it is still a helpful resource to have for the excellent articles that Bauckham has written in previous contexts. For those who do not have the time to sift through all Bauckham's articles on the subject, I recommend this book as a convenient resource.

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