

REVIEW

Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor, Eds.

Paul's Jewish Matrix

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This conference volume, co-edited by Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor (the latter a contributor as well), brings together essays from a 2009 symposium on the topic “Paul in his Jewish Matrix,” hosted by the Cardinal Bea Centre for Judaic Studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. The occasion for the conference was Pope Benedict XVI’s recognition of 2009 as the Year of St. Paul, the 2000-year anniversary of the birth of the apostle. Among the contributors to the volume, Rome and Leuven are especially well represented, followed closely by Jerusalem, with a few other Italian and American scholars as well.

The book’s twelve chapters, in order, are as follows: Karl P. Donfried, in “Paul’s Jewish Matrix: The Scope and Nature of the Contributions,” briefly summarizes and responds to each of the eleven essays that follow. E. P. Sanders, in “Paul’s Jewishness,” programmatically outlines a number of essentially Jewish aspects of Paul’s upbringing, identity, and worldview. Serge Ruzer, in “Paul’s Stance on the Torah Revisited: Gentile Addressees and the Jewish Setting,” argues that Paul’s ostensibly anti-Torah statements reflect pre-Christian intra-Jewish debate about the proper purpose of the Torah. Antonio Pitta, in “Paul, the Pharisee, and the Law,” argues that Paul’s Jewish background was particularly Pharisaic but cautions against the use of Paul’s letters as a source for Pharisaism. Pasquale Basta, in “Paul and the *Gezerah Shawah*: A Judaic Method in the Service of Justification by Faith,” explains Paul’s use of the exegetical rule of *gezerah shawah* (i.e., verbal analogy) in citing Gn 15:6 and Ps 32:1-2 in Romans 4. Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, in “The Heavenly Journey in Paul: Tradition of

a Jewish Apocalyptic Literary Genre or Cultural Practice in a Hellenistic-Roman Context?” argue that Paul’s ascent to the third heaven in 2 Cor 12:1-4 is an example of a pan-Mediterranean religious practice widely attested in ancient Jewish, Christian, and pagan texts. Emmanuel Nathan and Reimund Bieringer, in “Paul, Moses, and the Veil: Paul’s Perspective on Judaism in Light of 2 Corinthians 3,” explain how certain lexical and grammatical ambiguities in 2 Cor 3:7-18 have enabled supersessionist accounts of Pauline theology. Didier Pollefeyt and David J. Bolton, in “Paul, Deicide, and the Wrath of God: Towards a Hermeneutical Reading of 1 Thess 2:14-16,” survey various text-critical and exegetical strategies for dealing with an ostensibly anti-Jewish Pauline text and favor a theological-hermeneutical solution that gives priority to God’s salvation over God’s wrath. Shaye J. D. Cohen, in “From Permission to Prohibition: Paul and the Early Church on Mixed Marriage,” argues that the patristic interpretation of 1 Cor 6-7 as a prohibition of mixed marriage is a deviation from Paul’s logic, and that Paul himself permits his believers to marry non-believers. Daniel R. Schwartz, in “‘Someone Who Considers Something to be Impure—For Him it is Impure’ (Rom 14:14): Good Manners or Law?” argues that Paul’s discourse on vegetarianism in Rom 14 agrees with most ancient halakhah that *kashrut* is artificial, that pure and impure statuses are conferred by Torah, not by properties inherent in the foods. Justin Taylor, in “Paul and the Jewish Leaders at Rome: Acts 28:17-31,” argues, against a common supersessionist interpretation, that the character Paul at the end of Acts, like Paul himself in Rom 9-11, envisions a future restoration of the people of Israel in the homeland. Paula Fredriksen, in “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” argues, against the common trope of a law-free Gentile mission, that Paul does in fact obligate his Gentile believers to keep Torah, at least to the extent that they must renounce their ancestral gods and worship the Jewish god exclusively.

It was only a generation or so ago that scholarly gatherings of this ecumenical variety were exceedingly rare. We are fortunate to live in an age when leading Jewish, Catholic, Protestant,

and nonreligious scholars of religion are able and willing to collaborate in forums like the one represented by this book. The book itself is a valuable contribution to the lively current discussion of Paul and Judaism. As often happens in conference volumes, the contributions do not all follow the same template. Some are broad and programmatic, while others are very specific and exegetical. The quality of the various essays is a bit uneven, but generally of a high standard. At least one of the essays was previously published elsewhere, and several summarize research published in fuller form elsewhere, but these fit the remit of the book very well. Other essays break interesting new ground. For instance, Ruzer's essay on intra-Jewish controversy about the purpose of Torah, Schwartz's essay on the artificiality of *kashrut* in ancient halakhah, and Taylor's essay on "eschatological realism" at the end of Acts all do very interesting, creative work, much of which was persuasive to the present reviewer. The editors' decision to invite Donfried, an eminent authority on the subject matter of the book, to write a critical interaction with each of the component essays, has yielded a nice cornerstone chapter, although it might have been better placed at the end of the book after each contributor had had his or her say. I noticed rather more typographical errors than are typical in academic books in the field—evidence, perhaps, of a rapid turnaround from conference to publication. In any case, these cosmetic faults are easily forgiven in a book whose contents generously repay reading. One hopes that it will find a wide distribution and readership.