

BOOK REVIEWS

JENS SCHRÖTER, BENJAMIN A. EDSALL and JOSEPH VERHEYDEN (eds), *Jews and Christians – Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries CE?: Reflections on the Gains and Losses of a Model* (BZNW 253; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021). Pp. vi + 409. Hardback. €102.95.

Jews and Christians is an edited conference volume stemming from a conference held in at the Faculty of Theology of Humboldt University Berlin in late 2019. It strives to investigate the relationship between Jews and Christians in the first three centuries CE. Published by Walter de Gruyter, this conference volume is well bound and smartly formatted, containing twelve content chapters and an erudite introduction. Taking as their starting point the construct of the “parting of the ways” instantiated by the late James D. G. Dunn almost thirty years ago, this volume seeks to “neither to defend nor to refute the model of the ‘parting(s) of the ways’” (1) but rather use it as a point of departure for further discussion. Nevertheless, the overall thrust of most papers strongly challenges the notional “parting,” and some reject the notion altogether.

After an engaging introduction from the editors, setting forth the intent of the volume and robust descriptions of each chapter, the chapters begin broadly before narrowing in roughly chronological format. Christoph Marksches’ “From ‘Wide and Narrow Way’ to ‘The Ways that Never Parted’? Road Metaphors in Models of Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity” zooms out to consider how the use of various metaphors influences the interpretation of “Jewish-Christian Relations,” in a similar fashion to that of the “trajectories” language of past models of Christology.

Anders Runesson follows this, bringing his expertise in ancient groups and the synagogue to bear on the parting of the ways in the provocatively titled “What Never Belonged Together Cannot Part: Rethinking the So-Called Parting of the Ways between Judaism and Christianity,” challenging the notion whether any Christ-association would ever have shared an institution with Rabbinic Judaism. Jan Bremmer helpfully follows this with a linguistic and terminological investigation in “*Ioudaismos*, *Christianismos* and the Parting of the Ways,” drawing out the social distance implied by the usages of these terms in the period.

From these broad chapters the volume turns towards pivotal issues within the New Testament. Jens Schröter asks what Paul’s own construct of Judaism was, and whether he considered himself within it, in “Was Paul a Jew Within Judaism? The Apostle to the Gentiles and His Communities in Their Historical Context,” also a helpful contribution to the current Paul within Judaism debate. Matthias Konradt follows this by asking the same question of Matthew in “Matthew within or outside of Judaism? From the ‘Parting of the Ways’ Model to a Multifaceted Approach.” Kylie Crabbe continues the NT investigation by

looking at hybridity and identity within the Acts, in “Character and Conflict: Who Parts Company in Acts?,” considering how these hybrid characters highlight the interplay of Jewish and Gentiles in the book. Jörg Frey rounds out the New Testament section with a nuanced examination of the difficulties present within the Fourth Gospel: “‘John within Judaism?’ Textual, Historical, and Hermeneutical Considerations,” ultimately concluding that, despite the challenges, “honesty is preferred” to “political correctness” (211).

After these chapters the volume turns to the extra-canonical documents, as James Carleton Paget examines the presumed parting inherent in “The Epistle of Barnabas, Jews and Christians” and finds that outside of the now questioned parting of the ways there are few alternative interpretations offered. Benjamin A. Edsall complements this by examining the writings of “Justin Martyr without the ‘Parting’ or the ‘Ways’” and emphasises the interaction of Jewish and Christian groups in Justin’s arguments.

The final essays draw on various physical settings, with Paul Trebilco shining a light on Asia Minor in “Beyond ‘The Parting of the Ways’ between Jews and Christians in Asia Minor to a Model of Variegated Interaction.” Trebilco deploys his long-standing interest and research in the epigraphic evidence of the area and shows the complexity of community interaction apart from just the two groups of Jew and Christian. Joseph Verheyden examines the sociological non-differentiation of Jews and Christians in Rome, in “Living Apart Together: Jews and Christians in Second-Century Rome—Re-visiting Some of the Actors Involved.” He helpfully argues against the primacy of “religion” in differentiating social groups. Finally, Tobias Nicklas draws our attention to Egypt in “Jews and Christians? Sketches from Second Century Alexandria” proposing that it was external factors in the Jewish expunging from Alexandria in 117 CE that led to that local separation, rather than any inter-group conflict *per se*.

Overall, this is a high-quality volume that does not seek to throw out the baby with the bathwater, but rather incrementally challenge a model that has become a sacred cow in the guild. However, it is somewhat disappointing that this incremental challenge mostly follows the same well-worn paths. Especially in this space many interdisciplinary approaches—from the social sciences—have been questioning the putative parting of the ways for some time now. Furthermore, the observations of those from the majority world are notably silent in this volume—such as that of Gideon Wongi Park on Race and Ethnicity (2019) in Matthew. A broader methodological and contributor scope would have been of benefit here.

Nevertheless, this volume is highly recommended for a current look at the state of the question.

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