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William Loader. *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Apocalypses, Testaments, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature.* Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011. vii + 571 pp. $65.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8028-6666-0.

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The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Learning from History?

In discussing religion, philosophy, and ethics, Friedrich Nietzsche called for the revaluation of all values. This call foreshadowed what came later in the twentieth century in questioning and abandoning much of the framework of traditional Western ethics. This has left the religious traditions that provided much of this framework, namely, Judaism and Christianity, asking questions of their own ethical traditions. Questions have been asked and debates have raged.

However, debates have not always been particularly well informed, as, for example, the debates around sexual ethics that have taken place in many Christian churches. The sexual ethics of Jesus and Paul are examined often and in many ways rigorously, but frequently without a thorough examination of the Second Temple Jewish culture in which they lived. Such a lack of historical groundwork necessarily impoverishes the aforementioned examinations of Jesus and Paul as they are not as well understood within and against their cultural framework as they might be.

William Loader addresses this issue. The current volume is one of a number that he has authored which cover sexuality in Second Temple Judaism. Already published are *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament* (2004); *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition* (2005); *Enoch, Levi and Jubilees on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Early Enoch Literature, the Aramaic Levi Document, and the Book of Jubilees* (2007); *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Sectarian and Related Literature at Qumran* (2009); and *Philo, Josephus and the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (2011). This survey of attitudes to sexuality in the literature of Second Temple Judaism is long overdue and we owe Loader a debt of gratitude for working through this material and presenting his results for discussion.

In *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality*, Loader analyzes attitudes to sexuality in apocalypses (*1 Enoch*, *Sibylline Oracles*, Letter of Jeremiah, Baruch, 4 Ezra, *3 Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *Testament of Moses*, *Testament of Job*, *Testament of Abraham*, and *Testament of Solomon*); in histories and legends (Tale of the Three Youths, Tobit, Judith, Susanna, Additions to Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Pseudo Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Lives of the Prophets*, *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, *History of the Rechabites*, *Story of Zosimus*, *Life of Adam and Eve*, and *Apocalypse of Moses*); and in wisdom and other fragmentary writings (*Psalms of Solomon*, Wisdom of Solomon, *Pseudo-Aristeas*, 4 Maccabees, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, *Theodotus*, *Ezekiel the Tragedian*, *Pseudo-Eupolemus*, *Demetrius*, *Pseudo-Sophocles*, and *Pseudo-Menander/Pseudo-Philemon*). Ibolya Balla, a former Loader student, contributes a section on Sirach (based on his PhD dissertation). Loader presents a thorough survey of all the texts he finds that contain a reference to human sexuality. His research is clearly painstaking and his results well-grounded in both the primary and the secondary literature. He examines texts one by one in order to assess the attitudes to sexuality that these texts present. His analyses of the texts are well grounded in an appreciation of the genre and historical

setting of each text insofar as scholars can establish these. This makes for a thorough work although not one that makes particularly light reading. Nonetheless, whether one agrees with every single assessment of a text which Loader makes, his approach does make his work a generally surefooted guide for future researchers.

For all its relevance to debate on sexual ethics, Loader does not attempt to advance a general thesis about sexual ethics in this work. In the introduction, he writes: "this investigation is not about gathering stones, let alone, then assembling them into a contrived pattern, but about analysing each writing which has its own story to tell" (p. 3). He stays true to this intention throughout the book.

His method may be painstaking and his research thorough but his conclusions are not value-free. By way of example, he refers to Sirach as portraying "two marital partnerships, one, stable, with male authority unquestioned, the other, refreshingly rocky with failures on both sides" (p. 492). Whilst any author is surely entitled to express a view, readers who are looking for a solid introduction to sexuality in the period to guide their thinking about wider contemporary ethical questions may wish to distinguish carefully between fact and value in this work.

His approach to the attitudes toward sexuality is primarily cultural, ritual, and ethical. His discussion of the cultural aspects of sexuality include analyses of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles, and the (often patriarchal) organization of the household and marriage. His examination of the ritual aspects of sexuality covers sex and danger, particularly the danger to moral and ritual purity, as well as other purity issues. In surveying the ethical dimension of sexuality, he explores adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, divorce, bestiality, rape, sexual violence, and various other sexual sins. In the final pages of the book, Loader explores the grounds for constructing sexual ethics which the authors of this literature appeared to assume.

One area that Loader does not cover in detail is the way in which the Jewish and early Christian attitudes toward sexuality compare with those of other cultures in the Greek and Roman worlds. Given that he explicitly sets out to discuss attitudes to sexuality in Jewish and Christian literature, this cannot be leveled at his work as a criticism. However, once he has completed his work of surveying this literature, he might consider a study of how these attitudes and mores compare with those of contemporary Hellenistic and Roman culture. Such a study would be valuable for current discussion in which religious traditionalists find themselves increasingly involved, in a culture that seems to be returning to Greek and Roman sexual attitudes and customs.

The final discussion underscores the fact that this book is primarily ethical in focus and intent. Interestingly, Loader's exploration of sexual pleasure in the literature is also primarily ethical–assessing how far texts see it as something to affirm and how far texts put guards around sexual attractiveness and attraction. Given the questions that religious traditions are asking of their scriptures, one can understand why an author would take such an approach. However, the question ought to be asked whether this gives a balanced picture of attitudes toward sexuality in the literature studied. Loader acknowledges the erotic (for example, in Joseph and Aseneth) and the bawdy (for example, in the Tale of the Three Youths), but seems to me to downplay the aesthetic in favor of the ethical. An exploration of sexuality in this literature with a more aesthetic would explore more fully, for example, the delight in Joseph and Aseneth or Sirach 51 or the tragedy of Sarah (in Tobit). A fuller study along these lines might have given greater understanding of how these ancients understood and appreciated the joy (and misery!) of sex. Personally I would have liked to have read more on romance and passion in the literature and an exploration of emotions and sexuality.

Such an approach would benefit the study of sexuality. Ritual purity, sexual attraction, romance, pride, and religious ethics are all part and parcel of the plot in Joseph and Aseneth, for example. The beauty and value of the story lie very much in its presenting all these aspects of sexuality as bound up (often inextricably) with each other. And I venture to suggest that this is likely the kind of exploration that will be of value to today's religious people who are unlikely to benefit much from trying to live out sexual ethics that are compartmentalized off from sexual aesthetics. Nietzsche threw down an aesthetic gauntlet in this area, which cannot be answered by ethics alone.

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