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Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen, eds.

The Ways That Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus

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Although *The Ways That Often Parted* has a common theme, it is impossible within a short review to pay due respect to each of the seventeen different but all fine contributions collected in the Festschrift to Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, Joel Marcus, at Duke Divinity School. To honour Marcus, the editors have invited several of his former students, colleagues, and friends who, similar to the beneficiary, have strong interest in the examined topic. In addition to Marcus's *cursus vitae*, bibliography, and a list of his former doctoral students that precedes the editors foreword, a list of contributors, an index of ancient sources, and one on modern authors close the volume. Bibliographies succeed individual essays, but, unfortunately, there is no joint bibliography at the end of the book; I may be old-fashioned (also) in this regard, but I do think it gives a better overview.

The three editors, all former PhD studentss of the honoree, introduce the book with a brief but warm and appreciative foreword. The choice of topic is evident in light of Marcus's scholarly interests and accomplishments. Furthermore, his dual personal history as a Jewish Christian nicely exemplifies the book title, *The Ways That Often Parted*, or perhaps and even more so another pregnant title resonating in the background of the volume. By virtue of the chosen title, it is difficult not to expect the book to provide a counternarrative to the volume edited by Adam H. Becker and

Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*.¹ The editors also state in the preface how they are aware of the fact that the book because of the title is likely to be interpreted as a polemical retort to Becker and Reed. However, such a reading amounts to a misunderstanding: “The cumulative findings of the following essays in fact provide additional evidence for the argument their volume makes. After all, ways that eventually did part can only be understood to have parted often, if indeed there was no single, definitive, early parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity” (4). This statement presupposes a particular interpretation of the Becker and Reed title that amounts to claiming that that the parting was of no irreversible, one-time character. The editors, however, do not consider another possibility that may be pertinent to Becker’s and Reed’s argument that the partings are a never-ending process. It continues as long as Christianity and Judaism share a joint semantic system. At any rate, to acknowledge the legitimacy of both perspectives intoned by the two different titles, it may be useful to recall Wittgenstein’s idea of noticing an aspect: “Ich betrachte ein Gesicht, auf einmal bemerke ich seine Ähnlichkeit mit einem andern. Ich *sehe*, daß es sich nicht geändert hat; und sehe es doch anders. Diese Erfahrung nenne ich “das Bemerkens eines Aspekts” (*Philosophische Untersuchungen* 2:xi, 165; see also 181). This is significant, and we should pay heed to it in future discussions of our topic.

Some of the essays are valuable because they include texts that have not previously figured prominently, if at all, in the debate. This applies to Matthew Thiessen’s contribution. He juxtaposes Paul’s idea of Christ as Abraham’s seed with the Animal Apocalypse in which God’s *eschaton* effects a rewriting of “gentile DNA in order to genealogically connect them to Abraham” (73). Contrary to Paul, however, the Animal Apocalypse reserves the timing of this event to the future. However, both authors agree that gentiles obtain a share in the Abrahamic gene pool through an act of God connected to an eschatological figure precipitating the genealogical transformation.

Other essays adducing new texts to the discussion are by Philip Alexander, Dale Allison, and Lucas van Rompay. Alexander discusses whether the enigmatic *Toledot Yeshu*-texts provided a counter-narrative to the gospels or the reverse. He concludes that the latter may well have been the case (394). Allison examines 4 Baruch and emphasizes the text as a “Christian” usurpation of an originally “Jewish” writing. In its Christian rewriting, the text wrote Jews out of the sacred narrative of Israel and placed themselves in their position. Contrary to other Israelitic texts such as Jubilees, 1 Enoch, Psalms of Solomon, the Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, and 2 Baruch, which all witness moderate Christian rewriting, 4 Baruch exemplifies the more drastic rewriting found in texts such as the Sibylline Oracles, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Abraham, and 3 Baruch. The final example of a rarely examined text in the context of the discussion of the partings is van Rompay’s analysis of an Armenian preserved text entitled An Exposition of the Gospel. This fascinating writing, originating somewhere in Syria or Armenia of the fourth century, is without

1. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

vituperative statements about Judean religion and hails Christ-religion's Judean legacy and "may serve as a corrective to the paradigm of separation and exclusion that has gained dominance all too often" (373). The faithful copying of the text by Cač'atur of Halbat and updating of it by Bishop Nersēs of Tarsus indicates the its continuous resonance in twelfth-century Armenia.

Other essays tread on overgrown paths in discussing texts that have been analysed endlessly. Still, if authors can provide new models or theoretical and methodological breakthroughs, we may come to see the texts through novel lenses. Susan Grove Eastman's "Unveiling Death in 2 Corinthians" provides a subtle reading of 2 Cor 3. She demonstrates how the infamous veil concealed not the glory of the Mosaic covenant but its transitional and lethal character. She is right to point to the close relationship between the motif of speaking with frankness (*parrēsia*) and the unveiled face of Paul. I think, however, that the point can be pushed further by also seeing the contrast between hiding and sincerity in light of the polemic against the rhetorically instantiated sophist opponents who covertly and cunningly seek to exploit the Corinthians, that is, according to Paul (see 1:12–14; 2:17).

Another fine essay is the volume's opening one by Timothy Wardle on "Samaritans, Jew, and Christians: Multiple Partings and Multiple Ways." I like his idea of an exercise in comparing the bifurcation of Samaritans with Judeans with the discussion of the partings of the ways. I think he is right to accentuate how, "for all three communities, battles over rightness may really have been battles over who could legitimately claim to be the chosen people of the God of Israel" (34). In this way, there were many partings. However, I am becoming increasingly skeptical toward the worth of this metaphorical cluster. It is seemingly difficult to avoid what appears an integral dimension to the metaphorical use, that is, that those who parted were somehow bound to secede at some point often in tandem with the assertion that they constituted a less genuine manifestation of the *genus* at play.

Lori Baron's piece on "The Shema in Mark and John and the Parting of the Ways" (note the singular in the title) is also an interesting read. She notices how the Shema is used in both texts at key points and finds that in John the Shema is both apologetic and polemical, which are, of course, two sides of the same coin: "It explicates Jesus's unique relation to God and condemns those Jews who fail to recognize the unity of Father and son" (205). Based on later theologians' use of the Shema, for example, Justin, Athanasius, and Hilary of Poitiers, Baron finds that the Shema was "useful insofar as it is mediated by John 10:30 and supports Christian theological commitment." She adds that, "although the separation of Judaism and Christianity is still not complete, John's use of the Shema paved the way for later gentile Christians to redeploy it, thereby contributing to the widening of the ways" (207). The essays is well-argued, but I would be more cautious in endorsing the very stereotypical and essentialized categories Judaism and Christianity as regards the first century, just as I am reticent toward a retrojection of the partings to John's Gospel as someone

paving the way. This retro-projection has a strong ring of a John the Baptist–ideology of preparing the way, but Baron is certainly not the only one contributing to the volume who falls into this trap.

Numerous other essays could be highlighted, since they are worth discussing, but I shall finish by emphasising Boyarin’s contribution. I think this is the most promising piece in the volume in, I dare say, paving the way for further development in the discussion of the topic. In line with his recent book, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion*,² of which his present chapter is an extracted and redacted version for the context, Boyarin focuses on Ignatius of Antioch and his use of the binary *Ioudaismos* and *Christianismos*. In continuity of David Nirenberg’s *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (2013), whose argument Boyarin partly embraces, Boyarin contends with a quote from Nirenberg that “‘Judaism’ [was projected] as a form of interpretation, an attitude toward word and world” (321, in Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 238). With William Schoedel, Boyarin argues that Ignatius and not the “heretics,” that is, the ones whom Ignatius castigated, was the one to blame for the polarization of the situation. Ignatius molded the situation into the casting mold of *Ioudaismos* and *Christianismos* that contrary to Paul’s use “prepared the way” for the invention of Judaism as constituting the defining other of Christianity (322). It was a Christian straw man, since no Jews would call themselves by this name until fairly recently. Tragically, however, such rhetorical figures frequently come to take a life on their own, whereby oratorical reality is conflated with actual social reality. The history of Christianity’s entanglement with Judaism is a dreadful example of this.

Other essays are Albert Baumgarten on “John and Jesus in Josephus: A Prelude to the Partings of the Ways”; Michael Winger on “‘Being a Jew and Living as a Gentile’: Paul’s Storytelling and the Relationship of Jews and Gentiles according to Galatians 2”; John Barclay on “The Epiphany of Christ and the Identity of Scripture”; Suzanne Watts Henderson on “Was Mark a Supersessionist? Two Test Cases from the Earliest Gospel”; Claudia Setzer on “Sinai, Covenant, and Innocent Blood Traditions in Matthew’s Blood Cry”; Martinus de Boer on “The Johannine Community under Attack in Recent Scholarship”; Susan Miller on “‘Among You Stands One Whom You Do Not Know’ (John 1:26): The Use of the Tradition of the Hidden Messiah in John’s Gospel”; Jill Hicks-Keeton on “John Makes a Way: A Narrative-Critical Reading of Psalm 69 in John 2:17”; and Bart Ehrman on “Christian Persecutions and the Parting of the Ways.”

I conclude the review with some further suggestions. The Festschrift has many fine essays, but apart from adducing some hitherto not much discussed texts in the context of the partings of the ways, there are not so many new things added to the discussion compared to Becker and Reed’s edited volume. Can we make progress? I think so. Three points are crucial, if we shall move ahead.

2. See my forthcoming article in *JSJ*, “Fighting Essentialisation Fosters New Ones: A Critical Dialogue with and Review of Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion*, New York, Rutgers UP 2019.”

First, I am skeptical about the use of the road metaphor. To judge from past scholarship and several of the contributions to the book reviewed, this metaphor inevitably leads to the idea that one of the two in the constellation of the partings is held to be either a less phenotypic manifestation of the genus or to be inherently doomed for a later parting. In this way, Wardle's comparison with the Samaritans is instructive. This usage is problematical for two reasons. It introduces a determinism into historical processes characterized by contingency and unpredictability. Retrospectively, one can make inferences from the present to past situations, but to argue prospectively and draw inferences from past situations to the present situation is anachronistic. In current paleoanthropology and evolutionary studies on the hominin lineage, there is a growing awareness that we should not think of it in terms of a unilinear evolutionary process. One metaphor used today is budding, which implies different emergences occurring at different places and during different epochs relative to specific environments. I think we may advantageously use this metaphor because it does not presuppose the unilinearity and homogeneity implied in the road image. Nor does it presume a necessary break with the base plant. It can develop in this way, but it need not (see the Wittgenstein reference again).

Second, Boyarin is right to emphasize the problems pertaining to existing nomenclature. Contrary to Boyarin, however, who adamantly pursues a line of scholarship exclusively focused on using terminology corollary with the actors' level of analysis, I think we need categories situated at the third-order level of discourse as well. Were it not so, there could not be commensurability and, thereby, translatability between past and present cultures. To argue for the incommensurability between actors' and observers' level of analysis, as Boyarin does, philosophically must imply an insight into the comparability between the two levels, unless the proposition turns meaningless. Thus, we also need to develop our third-order categories. If this is so, we had better, with Boyarin—although argued from a different perspective—give up talking about Judaism and Christianity and the partings (or even worse, parting) in the reified way that most scholarship does, the present volume included. We must differentiate between different types of religion each assigned a specific name. It could be X, Y, and Z, but why not grade between Israelite (archaic) and Israelitic religion (roughly equivalent to Second Temple Judaism in terms of period)? The latter again differs from Judean religion (equal to post-Second Temple but pretalmudic Judaism), which eventually developed into Judaism. What are the implications of such distinctions for the debate about the partings of the ways? Pharisaic religion, Sadducean religion, early Christ-religion, and so on would be located within a common genus. They represent different niches (buddings) relative to the specific form of religion they constitute. I can only indicate the ideas here and not elaborate upon them, but such a theoretical and conceptual framework opens up for a greater appreciation of the diversity within each of the specific types of religion with respect to both time, location, and cultural and social context. Rather than turning the debate into a zero-sum game, Judaism and Christianity and their partings, things become more complicated also in the way we reconstruct and communicate them—to the benefit of rendering a historically more plausible picture of the

texts and their sociocultural contexts. In his justifiably acclaimed “The Rule of the Martian as Applied to Qumran (*Israel Oriental Studies* 14 [1994]: 121–42), Al Baumgarten underscored how the groups and texts most fiercely involved in polemics against each other are the ones that, from a Martian perspective, are most proximate. I wish more colleagues would recall this when writing on the partings of the ways—or what I now prefer to name different buddings in different biotic and sociotic niches within Israel religion.

Third, I appreciated Thiessen’s attempt to bring Paul into dialogue with the Animal Apocalypse. Rather than comparing these two texts and thinking of the partings and the similarities between different forms of Judaism, one could take the exercise further in light of the previous reflections. I would pose the question whether the correspondences Thiessen demonstrates may originate in a parallel type of religion rather than in textual proximity only. I would stress that both texts belong to apocalyptic Israelitic religion, which as a subcategory of a grander type of religion that manifests the Axial age form, or what I designate the *kosmos* type of religion. It is a different type from the urban form of religion, which especially older forms of Israelite religion filled out and continued to represent as long as the temple remained, just as elements from this type reemerged in late formative Christ-religion and even more so in Christianity. “Nothing is ever lost,” as Robert Bellah famously epitomized his thinking on biocultural evolution.

To think along these lines, we may coincidentally approach a line of thinking in Marcus’s heritage, that is, apocalypticism connected with his teacher J. Louis Martyn and his source of inspiration, Ernst Käsemann. Obviously, this is a very different way of approaching the issue, since Käsemann’s category, far from being the seemingly religio-historical concept many interpreted it as, was not least a way of undergirding his sociopolitical engagement in the discussion with Bultmann’s politically indifferent theology. However, dissimilar as the two approaches (the Käsemann-Martyn-Marcus tradition, on the one hand, and my biocultural understanding of religion, on the other) may be, there are possibilities for a *rapprochement*, as in Marcus’s theological legacy, there is, perhaps, a stronger element of the ancient *kosmos* type of religion than is commonly acknowledged.