

avoids this by framing her discussion in terms of the underlying philosophical principles that Engaged Buddhists tend to share, and she is further aided by her willingness to define the parameters of what, precisely, she means by the term “Engaged Buddhism.” King argues that not any and all forms of Buddhist social activism should be defined as “Engaged Buddhism,” maintaining that nonviolence, for example, is a bedrock principle of the tradition that would preclude certain forms of militant, chauvinistic nationalism painted in Buddhist terms from inclusion in the category. In general, her discussion of the ways in which key Buddhist concepts such as no-self and interdependence play into Engaged Buddhist thinking and ground-level activism is excellent, and would be especially valuable to non-specialists.

Having established the definitional, philosophical, and theological parameters of Engaged Buddhism in the first half of the book, the chapters of the latter half are primarily devoted to examining the ways in which Buddhist principles have been put into practice throughout the world in the form of social activism. These chapters recount specific instances of both well-known and relatively obscure efforts on the part of Engaged Buddhists to bring an end to warfare and violence in places like Tibet and Vietnam, establish some measure of economic justice and equality in developing nations such as Thailand and Sri Lanka, defend against ecological degradation both in Buddhist Asia and the West, and promote respect for basic human rights in places such as Burma. One might argue that some of these accounts are too brief and lacking in appropriate context to provide a genuine understanding of the character of Buddhist activism in these regions, and that at times the juxtaposition of these divergent movements together tends to emphasize unity at the expense of downplaying legitimate differences that exist among these movements, but these criticisms are more a result of the introductory nature of the volume than they are a reflection of failure on the part of the author.

Socially Engaged Buddhism is an excellent introduction to the phenomenon of Engaged Buddhism that will serve as a particularly useful resource to both newcomers to the field and those from other disciplines who wish to familiarize themselves with modern Buddhist social activism.

Revolt of the Scribes: Resistance and Apocalyptic Origin

Richard Horsley. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009.

ISBN: 978-0800662967. Pp. 192.

Reviewed by Shlomo Mahn, McGill University

In *Revolt of the Scribes*, Richard Horsley assaults the developing academic field of Apocalypticism by proposing that this field is approaching the writings that he

calls “‘apocalyptic’ texts” (1) from the wrong perspective. His goal is to demonstrate that these writings reflect the Scribal class’s response to the evils of the Hellenistic and Roman empires, arguing that these responses “adapt earlier portrayals of God’s coming by the prophets, to defeat oppressive domestic or foreign kings” (1). Hence, there is no new phenomenon of ‘apocalypticism;’ instead, Horsley proposes that these texts are a study in scribal resistance to the evil of empires.

In his first chapter, “The Escalating Crisis in Judea under Hellenistic Rule” Horsley retells the history of this period as he understands it, reminiscent of the historical reviews in many of the apocalypses themselves. Arriving at the point of crisis, Horsley states that “Jason’s project was fully political” (28) arguing that even though “there were indeed religious aspects of it” (28) nonetheless it was primarily a political matter. This approach sets the tone of the book. Horsley argues that scholars must avoid previous religious concepts that he feels were ‘synthetically’ applied to the texts; rather, they should focus on the social/political dimension. Resistance to these ‘political reforms’ is primarily the domain of the scribes, who have lost their jobs due to said reforms. As Horsley wraps up the chapter, he retells Antiochus’ conquest of Jerusalem/Antioch and how he suppressed “ancestral law and sacrifice in Jerusalem and Judea” (31). Here, Horsley acknowledges that “these developments violated the traditional values and laws of the Judeans” (32) and in the final line of the chapter he even allows a religious dimension: “Judean scribes struggled to understand what was happening in the mysterious ways of God” (32).

In the second chapter Horsley approaches Daniel 1–6 from the perspective of the scribal authors. He insightfully demonstrates how these stories reflect the conflicts of the scribes with their imperial rulers, and how they give instruction on how scribes should address these conflicts.

Horsley next addresses the Book of the Watchers, which continues his underlying argument that these texts are a scribal reaction to the Hellenistic empires. On pages 56–57 however, Horsley unveils what may be an essential component of ‘apocalypticism.’ “It would have been intolerable for scribes [...] to believe that the imperial violence was a punishment that they deserved for violating God’s law. They sought another explanation [...] the rebel superhuman heavenly forces [...]” and “contrary to appearances, God is ultimately still in control” even if He seems to be “out of touch” and “remote.” Nonetheless, Horsley concludes the chapter saying that the Story of the Watchers is focused on “Hellenistic imperial warfare and economic oppression.”

The fourth and fifth chapters address historical reviews in the Animal Vision, the Vision of Weeks, the *Testament of Moses* and Daniel 7–12. Horsley continues to argue that these texts are concerned with the Hellenistic empires and that they do not contain visions of the end of time that are more extreme than what is found in the Prophets. A telling example is Daniel’s famed declaration of the “awakening”

(12:2), which is commonly understood to refer to bodily resurrection. Horsley discards this understanding and suggests that it refers to the redemption of the nation (100). Furthermore, “everlasting life” in Daniel is to be understood as “long life.”

Chapter six, “Scribal resistance to Roman Imperial Rule” begins the second section of the book. Beginning with a review of history, Horsley explores the decline of the Hasmoneans and describes the ever-increasing brutality of the Roman domination.

Horsley then tells the history of the Qumran community. They are a prime example of scribal revolt, first against the Hellenists, then the Hasmoneans, and finally against the Romans. Horsley also reviews concepts such as the doctrine of the two-spirits, and explains why they are not apocalyptic. He concludes this chapter focusing on the War Scroll where he argues that it describes preparation for a this-worldly—rather than other-worldly—battle with the Romans, which apparently occurred, just not according to the script.

The *Psalms of Solomon* is addressed next. Horsley explains where these psalms relate to historical events and concludes that it is more deuteronomic than the other ‘apocalyptic’ texts. For this reason it does not contain many of the elements in those texts.

Chapter 9 discusses the *Parables of Enoch* and an updated *Testament of Moses*. Horsley explains that their visions of the eschaton accord with his general approach, as they are visions for life on earth as we know it, without the empires. However, this life will be an ‘illuminated life’ under ‘an open heaven’ in a way similar to the Qumran community’s understanding of their communal life together with spiritual entities.

Before concluding, Horsley considers forms of resistance other than texts. He is setting an example of how to focus on forms of resistance to historical events rather than on ‘apocalypticism.’ Horsley analyses various cases described in Josephus, such as the Sicarii.

Horsley’s conclusion is not only a summary, but a call to scholars. He focuses on the role of the scribe and their question: “Had God become so remote as to lose control of history, of the universal governance established in creation?” which Horsley answers for them, “In the strength of their faith, however, they could not entertain the notion that God had abandoned them or lost control of history” (202). He concludes that the literature under discussion is not about despair, but the opposite, a call to action. Horsley then issues a noble call to today’s intellectuals to act as the Judean scribes: Modern scribes must identify oppressive evil empires and find ways to resist them.

Revolt of the Scribes addresses important issues in the study of apocalypses. Horsley’s warning to avoid previous theological categories is valid. However, his insistence that there is nothing unique about apocalypticism may be imprecise. For

example, in his conclusion he argues that the scribes did not understand that God “lost control of history” (202), an idea today considered ‘apocalyptic.’ However, God’s inability to hear the cries of a suffering humanity in the Story of the Watchers implies that God had lost control temporarily. Similarly, in the Animal Vision, God abandons the nation to the shepherds, whom he knows will afflict the nation more than He wants them to. The faith of the authors of the apocalypses is that God will retake control and set the world right. Their noble call to action reflects this faith.

Canada’s Big Biblical Bargain: How McGill University Bought the Dead Sea Scrolls

Jason Kalman and Jaqueline S. du Toit. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010.

ISBN: 978-0773536883. Pp. 424.

Reviewed by Andrew B. Perrin, McMaster University

With the Dead Sea Scrolls leaving Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum just months ago, Jason Kalman and Jaqueline S. du Toit’s *Canada’s Big Biblical Bargain: How McGill University Bought the Dead Sea Scrolls* is a timely and valuable account of Canada’s instrumental role in bringing the Qumran discoveries to the world and McGill University’s dashed hopes of having a substantial amount of the Cave 4 materials housed on campus. The volume comes along at a time noted for increased academic interest in the modern historiography of the finds.

The book opens with a brief forward by one of Canada’s prized Dead Sea Scrolls scholars, McMaster University’s Dr. Eileen Schuller. Following this, *Canada’s Big Biblical Bargain* is presented in two parts. The first, comprised of four chapters, tells the tale of the discovery of the Scrolls largely from the perspective of McGill’s Professor R. B. Y. Scott, who arranged for the purchase of some of the materials for the university between 1954–56 for \$20,000 (14). In the introduction the authors state that their goal is to contextualize McGill’s crucial role in the unfolding Scrolls saga within the changing world of Canadian academia in the post WWII years as well as broach the thorny issue of the ownership of objects of cultural heritage. Bemoaning that most accounts of the discovery are disappointingly brief and merely draw on “the personal recollection[s] of the people directly involved” (12–13), the authors assert that their history will rest primarily on personal correspondences and related documentary materials in the archival collections of McGill, the United Church of Canada, and the Israel Antiquities Authority. However, to be sure, Kalman and du Toit at points also rely on personal interviews or recollections and few academic accounts of the discoveries are tarnished by nostalgia.