The Dead Sea Scrolls Today

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These hypotheses and many scholars are quoted in The Cyrus or denied by numerous quotatic
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Hopefully, those who have felt similar-sounding titles which have Dead Sea Scrolls will resist the urge book is neither another technical, e as aspects of life at Qumran, nor an market some new conspiracy theor the growing literature on Qumran, scrols, beginning with their disci scandals and controversies surround useful summary of their contents a Hebrew Bible and the New Testa VanderKam’s latest book is writ it is thus not only lucid in its sty footnotes or Hebrew and Greek ac diagrams. He begins his book by prescrolls and of the complicated and in recognition of their significance to s Included in this section (pp. 1-27) artefacts and various archaeologica discovery of the scrolls, together methods (such as palaeography and date the scrolls, and a list (provided
The second part of the book is an attempt to explain the origin of some names which refer to people and places. W. Dulęba was trying to find some historical and sometimes mythical prototypes of some Šāhnāme' characters. The author compared the Ferdousi's genealogy of the Kayānī dynasty with the genealogies given by Bundahiš and Tabari. Many scholars agreed that Kayānī was a legendary dynasty and that Cyrus is a protoplast of Kay Xosrow in the epos.

These hypotheses and many others proposed by W. Dulęba or other scholars are quoted in The Cyrus Legend in the Šāhnāme. They are confirmed or denied by numerous quotations from the Šāhnāme and scientific sources.

The book is good review of ideas referring to historical and mythical motives in the Ferdousi's Šāhnāme. It also tries to answer the question of whether and in which part legends about Cyrus the Great influenced Iranian epic and especially Šāhnāme.

Dorota OPEL


Hopefully, those who have felt a bit overwhelmed by the huge number of similar-sounding titles which have been published in recent years about the Dead Sea Scrolls will resist the urge to say, 'Oh no, not another one'. For this book is neither another technical, detailed study of one or more documents or aspects of life at Qumran, nor another unscholarly sensationalist attempt to market some new conspiracy theory. Rather, VanderKam's book fills a gap in the growing literature on Qumran, providing an up-to-date introduction to the scrolls, beginning with their discovery in 1947 through to the more recent scandals and controversies surrounding their publication, and providing a useful summary of their contents and their relevance to the study of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

VanderKam's latest book is written specifically with students in mind, and it is thus not only lucid in its style of writing, but also unencumbered by footnotes or Hebrew and Greek scripts, and full of helpful photographs and diagrams. He begins his book by providing an account of the discovery of the scrolls and of the complicated and intriguing story which eventually led to the recognition of their significance to scholars of early Judaism and Christianity. Included in this section (pp. 1-27) is also a description of the manuscripts, artefacts and various archaeological finds uncovered in connection with the discovery of the scrolls, together with a useful summary of the different methods (such as palaeography and accelerator mass spectrometry) used to date the scrolls, and a list (provided on p. 18) of the (sometimes divergent)
results reached through them. Students are too rarely provided with this sort of background information concerning how conclusions are reached about the date of these and other documents, and VanderKam's concern for such detail and background information assures that this book will be of lasting value.

The next section of the book is an overview of the contents of the scrolls, describing briefly the Biblical, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts found in the Qumran caves as well as the other documents which appear to be the community's own compositions. The student will find here helpful descriptions of the finds, with a summary of their contents and some discussion of their importance. The frequent inclusion of segments of text from the manuscripts under discussion enables the book to stand on its own, without the need for constant reference back to a separate translation of the scrolls. This section strikes a healthy balance, providing neither texts in isolation nor detailed verse-by-verse commentary, but a selection of the most important and interesting texts coupled with a brief discussion of possible historical allusions in the text, their probable setting in history and an explanation of any phrases which are particularly important or difficult to understand.

VanderKam then proceeds to a discussion covering two chapters (pp. 71-119) of the nature of the Qumran community. Like the majority of scholars, VanderKam upholds the view that the Qumran community were a group of monastic Essenes, but he does not assume that this reader will share his view, and takes the time to discuss the matter in reasonable detail, presenting a number of parallels between the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves and other ancient authors, such as Pliny, Josephus and Philo. The apparent differences are also mentioned, but are put in perspective in relation to the very large number of similarities and exact parallels. However, other theories concerning who the scrolls' authors may have been and concerning the relationship between the settlement at Qumran and the scrolls which were found in the caves are not ignored but are given a fair treatment. The community's beliefs are also discussed, under the headings: 'Predeterminism', 'The Two Ways', 'The Community of the New Covenant', 'Scriptural Interpretation', 'Worship' and 'The End and the Messiahs'.

VanderKam's two remaining chapters are devoted to a discussion of the relationship between the scrolls and the study of the Old and New Testaments. In connection with the former, the discussion of the importance of the scrolls for the textual criticism of the Old Testament is particularly helpful. In connection with the New Testament, the relationship between the scrolls and Christianity is given a fair, balanced discussion, with such recent allegations as that the Qumran community were a group of Christians following their crucified Davidic Messiah carefully and honestly evaluated and debunked.

Scholars looking for new and ground-breaking suggestions are likely to be disappointed; scholars looking for a balanced and thorough textbook to recommend to their students, on the other hand, will be delighted and will probably feel (as a number of prominent reviewers have already stated in no uncertain terms) that VanderKam has looked for. This is not to say that the number of instances, such as the question of Similitudes of Enoch, the Book of Giants and the student and lecturer alike will probably wish had been provided than the brief treatments in particular case, for example, his treatment p. 38). However, any that are overshadowed by VanderKam's lucid treatments of most important subjects, p. shows VanderKam to be a master of sum of information and, without assuming anything through the most important foundation of the Scrolls. Students (and their lecturers). in related fields who are in need of a balanced reference work, will all welcome the author's expressed aim (p. xi) is to follow in Luk's footsteps with "an orderly account" of the scrolls' author and his attempt to do so can only be deep.
VanderKam has provided just what they have been looking for. This is not to say that the book is without shortcomings. In a number of instances, such as the question of the relationship between the Similitudes of Enoch, the Book of Giants and the rest of the Enochic corpus, student and lecturer alike will probably wish that something more substantial had been provided than the brief treatment given by VanderKam (in this particular case, for example, his treatment covers less than two short paragraphs on p. 38). However, any minor failings one might detect are overshadowed by VanderKam’s lucid style and generally useful and fair treatments of most important subjects, provided in a way that on the whole shows VanderKam to be a master of summary. providing just the right amount of information and, without assuming any prior knowledge, brings the reader through the most important foundation topics in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Students (and their lecturers), interested laypeople, and scholars in related fields who are in need of a brief but thorough introduction and reference work, will all welcome the arrival of VanderKam’s book. His expressed aim (p. xi) is to follow in Luke’s footsteps and provide his reader with “an orderly account” of the scrolls’ discovery, contents and publication, and his attempt to do so can only be deemed a great success.

James F. McGrath