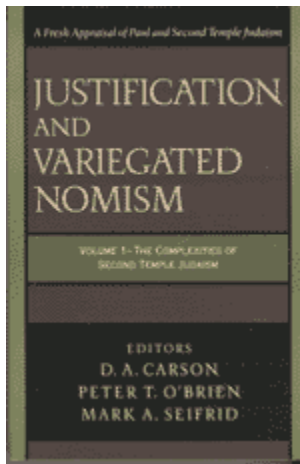


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**Carson, D. A., Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds.**

***Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism***

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. Pp. xiv + 619, Paperback, \$44.99, ISBN 080102272X.

Volume: 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism

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This is the first of a planned two-volume response to the impact that E.P. Sanders's 1977 'Paul and Palestinian Judaism' has had on Pauline Studies over that last 25 years. The aim of this first volume is to determine how pervasive the pattern identified by Sanders as 'Covenantal Nomism' (CN) can be said to exist in the Jewish literature of the Second Temple Period. This is, in many ways, a daunting task, which is revealed in the size of the volume itself. Because of the size, the variety of authors and subjects treated only a cursory summary can be provided.

The volume consists of sixteen chapters of which fourteen are written by a team of international authors most of whom are recognized experts in the field. The areas treated include seven different genres, Josephus, Philo, Targumim, Rabbinic literature, the Pharisees, and the usage of Righteousness language in Early Judaism. Some of the literature and themes examined here represent material not originally considered by Sanders. Some authors interact directly with Sanders others, for a variety of reasons, do not. Treatment of the Jewish material and Sanders's ideas is even-handed. The result is neither a ringing endorsement of Sanders's notion of CN nor is it an outright rejection of it. This may be demonstrated best by a survey of quotes from the authors themselves: "CN is ultimately not very helpful" ... "such a harmonizing approach is of limited value" (Falk, 51, 56); "there are still a number of problems that persist, perhaps not so much with Sanders' basic thesis but with the almost nagging imprecision of the nature of soteriology..."(Enns, 97); "The outcome is not entirely favorable for Sanders thesis" ... "These three testamentary works offer qualified support to the notion that CN was pervasive in Jewish literature from around the turn of the era" (Kugler, 213); "Sanders ... may be overemphasizing Grace" (Alexander, 272); "it is questionable whether CN is an

apt description of any form of Jewish Religion” (McNamara, 355); “it would seem not very useful to speak of Philo as a representative of *CN*.” (Hay, 370); “Overall, our findings are not fundamentally incompatible with those reached in E.P. Sanders’s famous study of 1977” (Bockmuehl, 412). The consensus seems to be that although Sanders provided the initial momentum for the types of studies found in this volume, his ideas need to be reexamined. In many ways, this is certainly the result of the 25 years of scholarship that has occurred since Sanders first published his book and introduced the notion of *CN*. Over those years much has changed in the study and understanding of Jewish literature as Bockmuehl points out (in defense of Sanders) in the case of the DSS (382). The authors in this volume are to be commended for providing new insights and refocusing on old ideas within the framework of new or better-understood material. The contribution of these scholars has the potential of beginning an informed and much needed debate of how NT scholarship should approach Jewish texts.

The remaining two chapters of the book are an introduction and conclusion written by D.A. Carson who is one of the editors. In chapter one he summarizes Sanders’s work and the impact it has had on NT Studies. He then lays out the argument for why a reconsideration of Sanders’s notion of *CN* is needed. In the last chapter he summarizes the contributions of the fourteen contributors, provides a summary of some relevant yet to be published Ph.D. theses and then draws some ‘Concluding Reflections’. It is here where the book turns somewhat polemical towards Sanders. Carson concludes that *CN* is “reductionistic and misleading” (544). He cites the conclusions of the other authors in the volume as a basis for these statements but one does not get the impression that they would have stated their views quite as emphatically as Carson has. Carson closes the book with this: “Examination of Sanders’s covenantal nomism leads one to the conclusion that the New Testament documents, not least Paul, must not be read against this reconstructed background – or, at least, must not be read *exclusively* against this background. It is too doctrinaire, too unsupported by the sources themselves, too reductionistic, too monopolistic.” (548). In the interest of giving Sanders’s ideas a fair treatment it would have been better to leave out this section and allow the remaining essays in the book to serve as the benchmark by which Sanders is measured.

Overall the book will be of great value. It represents a concerted effort to provide a more thorough examination of Sanders’s work albeit 25 years after the fact. Anyone interested in Early Judaism, Paul and the ‘New Perspective on Paul’ should consult it. The comprehensive nature of the indexes is outstanding. It is a pity that each essay does not provide a bibliography as does Philip Davies (132-133). Perhaps the editors of the volume on Paul will take this into consideration.