

Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 92. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002. 518 pp. ISBN 3 16 147831 2.

In this new reference book Reinhard Pummer aims to collect and present to the public all sources pertaining to Samaritans from their inception down to the Arabic conquest around the middle of the seventh century, as they are found in the writings of Early Christian authors. The Christian authors are organized chronologically, from Hegesippus in the second century to Nicephorus Callistus in the 14th century, so that the sources in the book span more than a thousand years. The texts are presented in their original languages, which include Armenian, old Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic Arabic, Latin and Greek.

As its name suggests, the project embodied in this book was strongly influenced by the seminal work of the late Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem 1976-84). And indeed, for scholars who are acquainted with Stern's study, to open this book is to revisit familiar territory. Like Stern, Pummer prefaces the presentation of the relevant texts with an introduction, followed by the text in its original language and a translation (taken from another publication). The choice of name and format also hint at the ambitious character of the project Pummer has undertaken. He has decided to fill a void in the available scholarly anthologies, creating a body of data for the history of the Samaritans during the late Roman and Byzantine periods, when information about them from Jewish sources becomes sparse and enigmatic, and for which their own late chronicles are unreliable. For this period, information from Christian sources becomes indispensable. Yet it is scattered and hidden in an enormous corpus of writing that would take a lifetime for a single scholar to traverse. And this, it seems, is exactly the length of time that it has taken Pummer to achieve his goal. This book is without doubt a *magnum opus*.

In his introduction to each author Pummer gives a brief biography and then commences to describe his references to Samaritans. He discusses the source of the information and assesses it. If the reference is problematic, Pummer points out the difficulties, discusses them, refers the reader to further bibliography on the topic, and when necessary passes his own careful and informed judgment. The discussions are concise and clear, never losing sight of the issue at hand. They are easy to read and entice the reader further into the text. Although no more than a reference book, intended to be consulted on occasion in order to confirm a point of research, this work is a great read in and of itself.

All these comments will by now have made it clear to the reader that I consider this book an invaluable addition to the library of any scholar of late antiquity. In the following lines I wish to raise some questions that reading the book does not seem to have answered. They are of minor importance in comparison with the value of the entire corpus, but attention to them may improve future printings.

In his introduction Pummer carefully lays out the criteria according to which sources were selected and discarded. He discusses at length the difference between a Samaritan, namely a (Pagan, Christian or even Jewish) inhabitant of the city and region of Samaria, and a Samaritan, namely a member of the religious association of this name (1-2). Pummer makes it clear that in this collection only matters pertaining to the latter are included. Yet the reader may easily get the impression that the distinction Pummer makes is modern, and was not obvious to the ancient writers themselves. I base this claim on observations of the kinds of decisions Pummer himself had to make along the way, not all of them consistent.

For example, Pummer devoted pages 2-4 to the special case of Simon Magus. He concluded that, although Simon comes from the region of Samaria, there is nothing specifically Samaritan about him or his doctrines, and thus he decided not to include in the present corpus the numerous references to him scattered throughout Christian literature. I think it would have been useful to the reader had Pummer here appended a list of those Patristic references to Simon Magus that are not

included, so that s/he can decide for him/herself whether Pummer's judgments are valid. Here is one example. Pummer includes references to Simon Magus in the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, because in the Homilies the latter is described as 'of Samaritan ethnicity' (*Samareus to ethnos*) and it is claimed that he denied the centrality of Jerusalem in favor of Mount Gerizim, a typical Samaritan theological attribute (source no. 47). According to Pummer's own criteria the inclusion of this source is understandable. However, he also included passage 2.7.1-3 in the Recognitions (no. 50), because it is considered a parallel to the above mentioned passage in the Homilies. Yet according to his own criteria, this source is irrelevant, because it mentions neither Simon's Samaritan ethnicity nor Mount Gerizim. Thus, although according to the Homilies Simon Magus was a Samaritan, according to the Recognitions, he may not have been.

A similar problem can be detected with reference to Justin Martyr. Because he says of himself that he was born in Neapolis (Sichem), the chief city of the Samaritans, Pummer discusses in detail the possibility that he was himself a Samaritan and concludes that he was not (14-27). Thus, he does not include in his excerpts from Justin those where the latter mentions his possible Samarian origin (e.g. *Dialogue with Trypho* 120.6) mentioned on 14. The one reference to Justin's possibly Samaritan origin that Pummer omits in this introduction (but mentions later) is Epiphanius' designation of him as 'Samaritan by birth' (*Samareus to genos*) (132). This suggests that Epiphanius may have known something of Justin that we do not. And even if he was mistaken, as Pummer obviously thinks, this is no reason to deprive the reader of those references where such assertions are made. In such cases, it is up to the reader to make up his mind for him/herself. Yet Pummer decided not just to refrain from mentioning Epiphanius' assertion in his discussion of Justin's possible Samaritan origin (*Haereses* 46.1.1-2), but also not to include it among the passages about Samaritans from Epiphanius quoted in the book.

The absence of these references is, however, understandable. In some cases Pummer's decision not to include certain texts or certain authors in his citations is much harder to explain. For example, on 137, in his discussion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Pummer mentions Augustine of Hippo, who refers to Samaritans in a discussion of circumcision. That this reference is relevant to Samaritans and not inhabitants of Samaria is obvious from the context, and in footnote no. 125 Pummer cites it in full. Yet nowhere in the book is there a chapter dedicated to Augustine. Considering the size of Augustine's extant literary output, the reader becomes suspicious of this solitary reference. Undoubtedly, in light of this reference, Pummer should have included a chapter about him. But in the absence of such a chapter one wonders whether Augustine had anything else to say about Samaritans, which Pummer failed to mention. This puzzle remains unanswered.

Similar references to texts about Samaritans found in the writings of less well-known Christian authors, who also did not merit a chapter in the book, are scattered throughout. On 186, Pummer discusses Jerome's reference to a Jewish-Samaritan war against Rome in the year 193-4, and goes on to say that this war is also mentioned by Michael the Syrian, Pseudo-Dionysius and Bar-Hebraeus. Michael the Syrian is also mentioned on 267 with reference to the Samaritan revolt in the year 555. On 215 Pummer mentions the Armenian Ananias of Širak, who wrote about the Samaritan calculations of Passover. On 234 he mentions John Rufus, who recounts a story about the healing of a blind Samaritan. On 318 and 378 he mentions John of Ephesus, who describes a Samaritan revolt in 572. My own research has led me to conclude that John of Ephesus also mentions Samaritans in his *Historiae* 1:41 and 2.29. Yet to none of these does Pummer devote a chapter in his book.

In his discussion of Maximus the Confessor (352) Pummer refers to a derogatory biography composed about this Christian theologian by one of his detractors. In this biography it is alleged that Maximus was the illegitimate son of a Samaritan. The text is in Syriac and was published in 1973 by Sebastian Brock. Yet after discussing the text, Pummer does not quote it.

And one final note. In his introduction Pummer specifically states that 'the Roman-Byzantine laws on Samaritans are not part of the present corpus' (5), and so one is not surprised to find that

no references to such documents are found in the book. Nowhere does he state that he will not be including minutes from various Christian councils that took place during the Byzantine period. Yet on 320, where he records the public reading of the letter of Simon the Stylite the Younger at the Council of Nicaea, he mentions the fact that this letter elicited the response of John, Legate of the East and of Constantine the Bishop of Constantia. For these he refers the reader to G.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 13.164. This collection consists of 53 volumes and must include more than one reference to Samaritans in the Byzantine period. Had Pummer intended not to deal with these documents, he should have stated so in his introduction.

I am fully aware that there may be perfectly simple and logical explanations for all these omissions. However, I did not find them either in the introduction or in the study. To include them or explain their absence in a later edition would be an improvement.

I stress again that notwithstanding these comments I find Pummer's book an invaluable contribution to the study of Samaritans and Samaritanism.

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Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (eds.), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*. Rochester, NY and Woodbridge: University of Rochester Press, 2003. x + 283 pp. ISBN 1 58046 125 5.

In 1933, Arthur Darby Nock published his groundbreaking book *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, that was to become the most influential study of conversion in the twentieth century, and the starting point for many a generation of scholars. Nock, so it seems, had quite a clear view on what conversion means. 'By conversion', he wrote, 'we mean the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning point which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right. It is seen at its fullest in the positive response of a man to the choice set before him by the prophetic religions' (7). The three models of conversion Nock had in mind were those of Justin Martyr, Arnobius, and Augustine of Hippo. However, since the publication of Nock's seminal work, there has been an immense increase of scholarly interest in the various meanings and practicalities of conversion. This resurgence of interest has resulted in the publication of hundreds, if not thousands, of studies, as well as in a better understanding of conversion. Far from adopting the rather narrow Nockian view of conversion, scholars nowadays attempt to portray conversion as a complex and multi-layered process, which operates in many ways and means different things to different people. No study reflects this intellectual development in the understanding of conversion better than the book under review.

Seven of the eight papers collected by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton under the title *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing* were presented at a symposium at Princeton's Davis Center for Historical Studies in 1999. The editors, in an extremely wise move, did not attempt to harmonise the viewpoints or to force upon the authors an overarching theory, and the result is an exceptionally eloquent witness of the development in scholarly research on conversion in the last few decades. The various papers discuss a whole range of issues and sources, and thus present the reader with a panoramic view of a variety of theories and methodologies. There are some very good papers in this collection, with many thought-provoking ideas, and the following brief survey does less than justice to many of them. The collection opens with Susanna Elm's paper, in which she examines three orations on baptism by Gregory Nazianzus, and manages to demonstrate nicely how he used the vocabulary of 'inscription' to denote the moment that initiated the process of conversion. In a strange paper