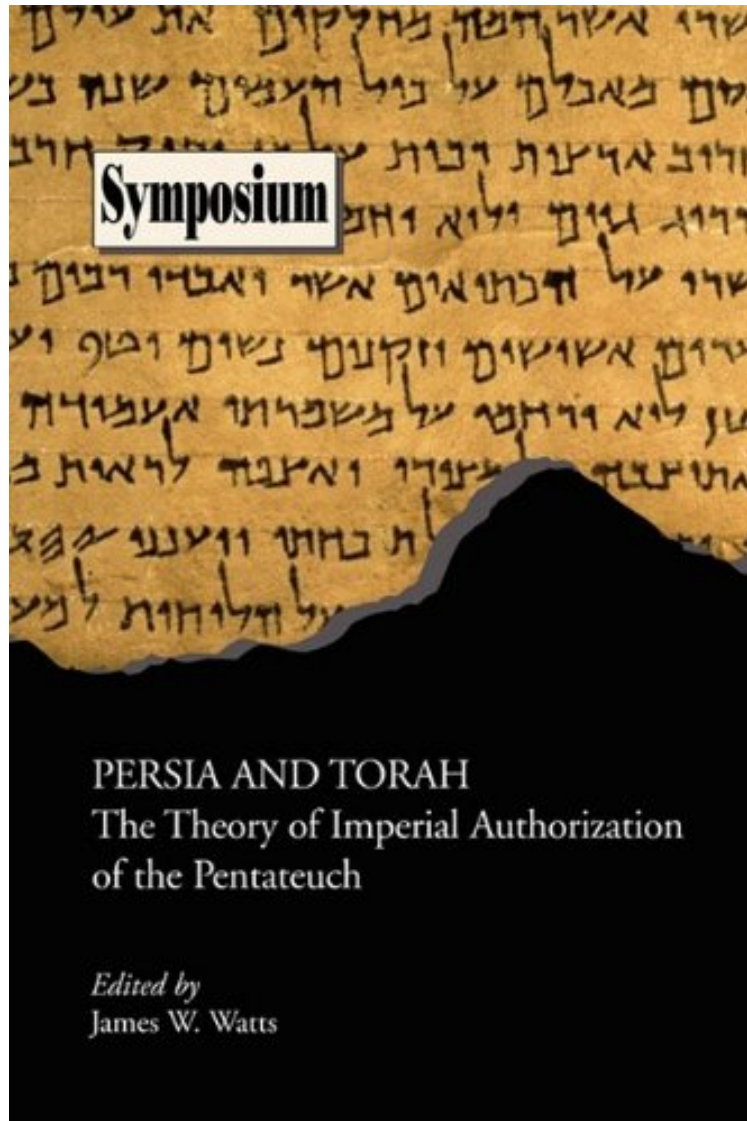


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(Symposium Series (Society of Biblical Literature))

Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch (Symposium Series (Society of Biblical Literature))

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From Society of Biblical Literature : Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch (Symposium Series (Society of Biblical Literature)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the

Pentateuch (Symposium Series (Society of Biblical Literature)):

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A Worthy Read By Virgil Brown The blurb on the back cover of this book says that it is the "first thorough evaluation in English of the theory that the Persian Empire authorized" the formation of the Pentateuch. This is a subject that is of great interest to me. During the early 1990s, I jettisoned the use of the Documentary Hypothesis altogether. Among other things, it was too subjective. There was no agreement upon the number of sources nor even what constituted a source. Instead I adopted a theory that the Pentateuch was amalgamated during the time of Ezra. The Persians found this advantageous for the political stability of the western portion of their empire, and the Judeans found that a common literature preserved and strengthened their culture. Moreover there was a historical parallel to this in the recording of Sumerian literature in the first quarter of the second millennium. P and T begins with an article by Peter Frei on the definition of Persian imperial authorization. I will inject here that Frei would not accept my historical parallel. The rest of P and T is a series of papers (or verisimilar papers) delivered at the SBL meeting in Nashville in 2000. Joseph Blenkinsopp questions 1) whether the compilation of the Pentateuch during the Persian Period is a case of imperial authorization as defined by Frei, and 2) whether we are speaking of the Pentateuch as a whole or merely the legal content. Liz Fried argues that if Ezra had a genuine commission, that commission would have been to appoint judges who would have judged according to the "data" (the Persian word for "laws") of the king. Lester Grabbe follows with an essay which I consider to be a good example of bad writing among academics. In this case the reader is asked to read only 18 pages in order to find out what Grabbe has to say. For some reason academics do not often write by presenting their thesis and then substantiating it. In Grabbe's case one must wait until the end of his essay to hear that 1) he does not think there is any evidence to support religious cults within their empire, 2) he questions the validity of any role by Judah in defending the western border of the empire, 3) he finds the approval of the request of Udjahorresne to be a typical reward for services rendered, 4) the Pentateuch was put into shape during the Persian Period, 5) the tradition of Ezra as a lawgiver founders, and 6) if there was any imperial authorization, it would have been permission to teach the decrees of the king. Grabbe does not write with the idea of assertion followed by evidence. These six conclusions derive from three questions at the beginning of his essay. The above should suffice to introduce the reader to Persia and Torah although there are still three fine essays which I have not addressed including one by Donald Redford. Each of these essays is a worthy read by itself. Together they offer diverse approaches to a captivating idea that is finding more acceptance in the United States, i.e. the Pentateuch was formulated during the Persian Period.