

BOOK REVIEW

Collins, John J., and Daniel C. Harlow (eds.), *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). xxxiv + 467 pp. Pbk. USD35.00.

John J. Collins of Yale Divinity School and Daniel C. Harlow of Calvin College have collaborated once again, this time offering a fresh introduction to the history, literature and scholarly discussion of early Judaism. The articles in this volume were taken from *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), which they co-edited. Unlike the dictionary, however, which was designed as a reference volume, the articles for this volume were selected and arranged in such a way as to provide students and biblical scholars alike with a structured, comprehensive and cogent introduction to the current *status quaestionis* of research in the area of early Judaism. The list of contributors for the volume is, in general, first rate, and the scholarship presented throughout is mature. Some articles bear particular mentioning in this review as standout essays.

Collins's opening essay provides a masterful overview of the development of scholarship on early Judaism from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the present day. He rightly characterizes much of modern scholarship on Judaism as being a recovery of essential sources, such as the rabbinic material, the Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Collins deftly examines the early contributions of Emil Schürer, Wilhelm Bousset and others, and probes the ensuing methodological debates regarding the place of the rabbinic material and the Pseudepigrapha in the various historical reconstructions of Judaism. His essay provides a fascinating introduction, and sets the bar for the rest of the volume.

James VanderKam's essay, 'Judaism in the Land of Israel', discusses how the land of Israel remained a powerful religious and cultural symbol for Jews, even though most Jews living in the Diaspora were not compelled to return. He also discusses the development of

synagogues in the Diaspora, beginning in the third century BCE, and their subsequent spread into Palestine, claiming that the evidence seems to indicate that the synagogue had not become a rival to the temple in Jerusalem, but a complement to it. Additionally, VanderKam notes the influence of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes on Palestinian Judaism from the time of the Hasmoneans onward, and discusses the various types of religious literature that would have been significant for Palestinian Jews of that era. While VanderKam acknowledges that there was a great deal of religious variety within Judaism, he sides ultimately with E.P. Sanders's contention that there was a 'common Judaism' that united Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora.

Erich Gruen's essay, 'Judaism in the Diaspora', is a suitable accompaniment to VanderKam's contribution. Against older scholarship, Gruen demonstrates that, while the Jerusalem temple's destruction amounted to the 'eradication of the center' of Jewish identity (p. 95), and while the notion of removal from the Promised Land remained embedded in the cultural and religious history of Judaism, the preponderance of evidence from the sources stands against the idea that most Jews in the Diaspora longed to return to Palestine. While life in the Diaspora presented its challenges, Gruen avers that it was not full of constant misery or desperate longing to return home. Rather, Gruen shows that Jews embraced life in the Diaspora, participated in every socio-economic sphere of the Greco-Roman world and even held positions of considerable power and influence in some places. Such conclusions stand in agreement with Martin Hengel's work on Diaspora Judaism. Gruen thus makes a compelling case that Jews in the Diaspora were able to retain their distinctive religious and cultural identity, and that they did not find themselves relegated to a ghettoized existence, facts that are confirmed by the presence of multiple synagogues outside of Palestine.

James Kugel's essay, 'Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation', is another standout contribution. Kugel cogently traces the development of the Hebrew Bible throughout the exilic and post-exilic periods, and with this, the rise of various methods of reading and interpretation. Kugel, taking a cue from Michael Fishbane's classic work on inner-biblical exegesis, discusses well the development of this interpretive tradition within the biblical text and how this tradition relates to other forms of biblical interpretation that were known to have been practiced in early Judaism. He describes four underlying hermeneutical

assumptions that governed much of what he calls a 'highly ideological (and idealistic) form of exegesis' (p. 164): (1) Scriptural texts were seen as cryptic; (2) Scripture, while written hundreds of years earlier, was seen as relevant to the present day; (3) Scripture was seen as having a unified message; and (4) Scripture was believed to be divinely inspired. Kugel also discusses the development of the interpretive process, the role of the scribal sage as interpreter and how various interpretations eventually acquired special authority in later Jewish tradition (i.e. the Mishnah). While Kugel should not have neglected to interact with David Instone-Brewer's *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE* (TSAJ, 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), he nevertheless has provided a competent introduction to this topic.

Loren Stuckenbruck's essay provides a very helpful introduction to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. He traces the history of the Apocrypha, their composition and their usage within the Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. He then briefly discusses the different Apocryphal lists found in various codices of the Greek Bible (i.e. Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus) in order to clarify the oft-confusing issue of its organization and the unfortunately misleading usage of the terms *apocrypha*, *apocryphal* and *apocryphon*. Stuckenbruck then turns his attention to the Pseudepigrapha and similarly attempts to clarify the sometimes-confounding nature of their terminology and organization. Additionally, Stuckenbruck analyzes the increased scholarly interest in the Pseudepigrapha after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the methodological question of how 'Jewish' or 'Christian' the Pseudepigrapha are and the role of pseudepigraphy in Jewish religious literature. A more extensive discussion of the formation of modern critical editions of the Pseudepigrapha and how these have impacted scholarship on Judaism would have enhanced the essay (he broaches the topic in his conclusion), but it is still a useful contribution as it stands.

In his essay, Jürgen Zangenberg offers a review of the latest research on the material culture of Judaism preserved in archaeological remains, papyri and inscriptions. He begins by profiling the situation in Palestine during the Hellenistic era, and uses archaeological finds in order to provide a clearer picture of Jewish life within specific regions such as the coastal plain, Transjordan, Jerusalem, Samaria, Galilee and Perea. Zangenberg similarly uses the material culture of early Judaism to describe Palestinian Jewish life during the Hasmonean and Herodian

periods. He then turns his attention to profiling Diaspora Jewish life in the Hellenistic and Roman periods—a much more difficult task, given the notoriously fragmentary nature of the historical sources from that era. Discoveries of the remnants of a number of synagogues, in particular, have proven vital for reconstructing Jewish life outside of Palestine. A variety of issues is discussed, including Herod's building programs, excavations at Qumran, synagogue finds, coins, funerary inscriptions, ossuaries and stone jars (*miqva'ot*). One wishes that Zangenberg should have explored more deeply the need for utilizing sociological modeling along with archaeology for the purpose of reconstructing and interpreting the history of early Judaism and Christianity (Douglas Oakman and others have shown this to be a significant issue). However, Zangenberg demonstrates well the inestimable value of archaeology for supplementing the oft-incomplete information from historical sources, especially in the case of Diaspora Judaism.

In addition to the essays discussed above, a number of other topics important to the history of early Judaism also receive some treatment, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus and other Jewish literature written in Greek. The work concludes with two interesting essays, one tracing the history of early Judaism and Christianity (Daniel Harlow), the other looking at the history of early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism (Lawrence Schiffman).

There are, of course, a few areas where the volume suffers. One notable instance is found in Daniel Harlow's essay, where a number of questionable assertions are made. For instance, Harlow claims that there were forms of Christianity in the first century in which Jesus was acknowledged simply as a miracle worker or great teacher rather than as the divine Son of God (p. 393). This provocative claim is interesting, since no supporting evidence is given (because there is none), and it fails to engage with significant historical work on early Christian devotion (e.g. Larry Hurtado). Harlow also makes the unsubstantiated claim that the Pauline churches were not at all Jewish, even though there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that there were at least some Jews in Paul's churches. Additionally, he flatly asserts that the Jesus movement was 'overwhelmingly' Gentile by the end of the first century, even though this is a debatable point. Perhaps the Pauline churches were predominately Gentile at the turn of the century, but would this have been true of Christian communities remaining in

Palestine, Syrian Antioch or the Mesopotamian Diaspora? This issue is never addressed and thus unfortunately leads Harlow to provide an oversimplified explanation for the so-called 'parting of the ways' between Christianity and Judaism.

Another issue with this volume is that, as with most books on early Judaism, Christianity is unfortunately treated as being derivative rather than formative for Judaism. For instance, none of the contributors really deals with the New Testament *as* Second Temple Jewish literature in any significant way. Rather, the New Testament is typically used for comparative analysis only. It must be admitted that the decision to make a hard distinction between the New Testament writings and other early Jewish literature must be made on terms that are confessional rather than historical. This oversight is regrettable, especially given the critical work of people like Richard Bauckham and David Aune, who each have made a compelling case that the New Testament writings ought to be viewed as part of the literature of early Judaism, even with the due consideration given to their association with Christianity. Related to this issue is the fact that the contributors do not directly address how early Christianity had impacted the development of what would eventually become Rabbinic Judaism. Daniel Harlow and Lawrence Schiffman each might have approached this topic in their essay contributions, yet it goes unexplored. Further, the volume would also have benefitted from a deeper engagement with social-scientific scholarship on early Judaism and Christianity.

Concerning formalistic matters, there are some interesting plates included in the middle of the book. However, the photos are in black-and-white and not of the best quality. Also, while bibliographical information is provided after each essay, a complete bibliography at the end of the book would have been a useful addition.

All critical comments aside, however, Collins and Harlow have given us a commendable volume. Edited collections of essays can sometimes seem disjointed and yield mixed results. Notwithstanding the problems discussed in this review, that criticism cannot be leveled against this book. The essays included do an exemplary job of reflecting the current research available within the study of early Judaism. As previously mentioned, the scholarship presented by the contributors is mature, and topics are generally covered in a thorough and even-handed manner. Also, even though the contributors have each approached their topics with their own scholarly perspectives (which is to be expected, of

course), the essays flow together very well both topically and stylistically. Overall, the editors have made fine choices in how they have selected and organized the essays for this book, and because of this, they have succeeded in providing a cogent and comprehensive introduction to Judaism in the Second Temple era. While there certainly are a number of good, single-authored works that would be useful for a course on early Judaism, this edited volume by Collins and Harlow could serve as a fine text for a graduate-level seminar on the subject.

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