

The volume contains eight chapters, the first five of which were previously published and are here “lightly revised” (Preface). The essays are the following: (1) “Historical Observations on the Relationship between Letter and Spirit”; (2) “The Prophet and the Law in Early Judaism and the New Testament”; (3) “The Trials of Jesus and Jeremiah”; (4) “*Testes Singulares* in Early Jewish Law and the New Testament”; (5) “Susanna and the Singular History of Singular Witnesses”; (6) “The Jewish Background to the Prodigal Son: An Unresolved Problem”; (7) “Risk-Taking Shepherds”; and (8) “‘Holier than Thou’? Marriage and Divorce in the Scrolls, the New Testament and Early Rabbinic Sources.”

On issues of method, J.’s study is balanced, conservative in suggesting when a literary/historical parallel is in fact a parallel (see, e.g., p. 55 and pp. 70-79), and correctly warns against interpreting NT texts in terms of later halakah (p. 114). J. is at his best when analyzing texts through the prism of law. In “The Jewish Background to the Prodigal Son,” J. discusses the possible legal background(s) of Luke 15:11-32. His comparisons to mishnaic law and the Elephantine papyri are significant methodological models for the study of comparative law. For example, J. attempts to clarify the parable’s (legal) ambiguities, ultimately suggesting that it be understood as part of the continuum of law from the Bible to the rabbis.

Perhaps less convincing—if still insightful—are some of the literary and theological discourses. For example, in the first chapter J. argues that the original division between Judaism and Christianity was over which form of communication, text or inspiration, was most acceptable for transmission of the divine message to humanity. Although J. may overstate the impact of the opposition between (the authority of) text versus inspiration, it is reasonable that as one factor among many, such a dichotomy did contribute to significant theological differences between early Judaism and Christianity.

Among J.’s stronger literary arguments is the discussion of the trials of Jesus and Jeremiah. In chap. 3, based on conceptions of interbiblical interpretation, J. suggests that Jer 26:1-24 serves as the basis for the judicial process found in the trial of Jesus (according to J., an original thesis). To his credit, J. uses the NT to reconstruct the history of pre-mishnaic Jewish law. In his discussion of John 10, J. suggests that the original meaning of *śākīr* in Exod 22:14 survived in the NT (μῠθωρός), whereas the rabbis adopted a different interpretation (p. 157).

Generally, J. uses the classical scholarly studies and critical editions of rabbinic literature. Some recent scholarship remains untapped, however. Use of M. Sabato’s *A Yemenite Manuscript of Tractate Sanhedrin and Its Place in the Text Tradition* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1998) would have enriched the analysis of text-critical issues for the many texts from *Sanhedrin* discussed in this work. For example, in discussing variants to *Sanh.* 91a, J. links the *hapax legomenon* אגטין (found in one manuscript and the printed edition) to the Jephthah story in Judg 11:1-7 to show biblical precedent for connecting disinheritance by means of an advance gift and divorce terminology (אגטין looks like גטין, the plural of גט [gēt], a divorce document). A remarkably creative suggestion [!], but not necessarily grounded in textual evidence. The versions of *Sanh.* 91a and their medieval interpretations strongly suggest אגטין (in J.’s words, “no doubt a corruption of *gittin*” [p. 125]) is a scribal error for “*legatin/legaton*,” a loanword for Latin *legatum* (“legacy”), a thesis J. rejects. The graphic similarity between א and ל and the common interchangeability/indistinguishability of ו and ם most likely caused the shift from אגטין to אגטון to אגטין/אגטין. Moreover, a Yemenite *Sanhedrin* manuscript defines the word as “gifts” (cited by J., p. 125 n. 46), and

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Bernard Jackson, a leading voice in the study of Jewish law in comparative context, presents a stimulating study of value to scholars of both Judaism and Christianity. The studies address legal, literary, and theological issues in the NT in light of possible parallels in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran literature, Elephantine papyri, halakic literature, and midrash.

one Geonic authority states explicitly that the word means "*legato*" (on the last two points, see Sabato, p. 139 and nn. 73-74). This evidence actually supports J.'s thesis—if for different reasons than J. chooses—that disinheritance by means of an advance gift may be present in some streams of ancient Jewish law. A few other discussions of text-critical/philological issues are also unconvincing (see [among others] the discussion of *ʿahēr* versus *ʿehād* in CD, where J. assigns significant legal meaning to the potential difference between reading *dalet* or *resh*, two characters often indistinguishable among the writings of scribes from antiquity to the advent of printing). At times, J. discusses Jewish law in distinct periods as "normative" (pp. 2, 15, 21) or "mainstream" (pp. 69, 190), when the evidence for such normativity is not conclusive.

Essays on Halakhah in the New Testament makes meaningful methodological contributions to the study of ancient law and literature in comparative context. J.'s attempts to understand difficult NT texts through the prism of what he calls *interpretatio hebraica* coupled with his substantive legal analyses make this book a significant contribution.

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