

in the exilic and post-exilic times' (Williamson), were biblical prohibitions held more lightly than the religious elites would have preferred (and moderns would like to think)? Such issues aside, this is a thought-provoking, exemplary and highly commendable work on developing our understanding of Jewish art in antiquity.

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A HISTORY OF THE JEWS

SCHWARTZ (S.) *The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad*. Pp. xii + 190. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Paper, £17.99, US\$29.99 (Cased, £45, US\$75). ISBN: 978-1-107-66929-1 (978-1-107-04127-1 hbk).

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The book under review appears in the 'Key Themes in Ancient History' series, whose expressed goal is 'to provide readable, informed and original studies of various basic topics, designed in the first instance for students and teachers of Classics and Ancient History' (p. ii). It is gratifying to see this series include an introduction on the ancient Jews from the pen of S. For as S. notes (pp. 17–18), while the Jews constituted a sizable and significant minority in the Graeco-Roman world, they have been sorely neglected by the vast majority of classicists and ancient historians.

The book divides, quite neatly, into six chapters, each devoted to a particular historical period: 'Beginnings to 200 BCE'; 'Maccabean Revolt and Hasmonean Dynasty'; 'Herod to Florus'; 'The Jewish Revolts, 66–135 CE'; 'Jews in the High Roman Empire'; and 'Jews under Christian Rule'. The treatment, accordingly, is essentially historical-chronological, as S. proceeds from one epoch to the next, with an emphasis placed on the various revolts (Maccabean, Great Revolt, Diaspora, Bar-Kokhba) and their aftermaths.

In selecting S. to write this book, the series editor has chosen someone well suited to the task, for he controls the Greek and Latin sources masterfully, and he is able to integrate the Hebrew and Aramaic sources as well. None the less, I have serious issues with the overall treatment.

As we know from S.'s earlier publications, and as he himself admits in the current volume (p. 102), he takes a minimalist view regarding both the sources and the trajectory of Jewish life. Comments such as 'Josephus' coverage of earlier periods is spotty and unusually unreliable' (p. 17); 'a single dubious and hard-to-parse statement by Josephus' (p. 103); 'There is only one dubious story, told by Origen' (p. 105); 'in the unlikely event that we can trust the reports in *Acts*' (p. 108) pepper the narrative. While I am not advocating a naïve acceptance of the ancient sources, clearly if one holds such an extremely sceptical position, then, yes, there may be little that one can say about subject x, y or z.

The consequences of the minimalist view on the literary sources can be balanced by attention to the epigraphic sources, though unfortunately S. does not take full advantage of these valuable inscriptions (scores of which are gathered in convenient fashion by M. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: a Diasporan Sourcebook* [1998]). These epigraphs attest to a vibrant Jewish society under both domains, with individual Jews engaged as potters, weavers, butchers, musicians, perfumers, conveyors, bankers, financiers, retailers, doctors, advocates, silk-mercers, goldsmiths, tent-makers,

wine-merchants, wool-merchants, vine-dressers, pearl-setters, etc. The reader of S.'s book does not acquire this information.

Nor is the geographical extent of the ancient Jews realised in this book. One looks in vain for mention of the synagogues at Delos and Ostia Antica (both first century C.E.), the outstanding archaeological finds from Dura Europus, the presence of Jews in Cologne as early as 321 C.E., etc.

Passing reference is made to Himyar (p. 148), though without fully amplifying the significance of the Jewish community there. S. mentions the conversion of the Himyarite rulers to Judaism in the fourth century C.E., but he neglects to cite the wealth of documentation forthcoming from both Hebrew and South Arabian inscriptions (including bilingual ones). In addition, the reader should be informed that one of the catacombs in Bet She'arim (mentioned on p. 121) includes a section for the burial of the Himyarites, thereby demonstrating that certain members of this remote Jewish community were able to arrange for their burials at a distance of 3,200 km.

Another lacuna relates to Arabia: S. fails to discuss the recently discovered Nabatean inscription from Taymā', an epitaph of one Isaiah son of Joseph, city-councillor, erected by his brothers Amram and 'šmw, dated to 203 C.E. While scholars had assumed the presence of Jews in northern Arabia at this relatively early date, no direct evidence of this sort was forthcoming.

To return to the northern reaches of the Roman Empire: S. is silent on the recent discovery of the Jewish amulet with the words *Shema' Yiśra'el* ('Hear O Israel') written in Greek letters, found near Carnuntum (third century C.E.).

Equally striking is the lack of attention to the hundreds of stepped pools (be they ritual baths or whatever) found at virtually every farm, estate and village in Judaea from c. 125 B.C.E. onwards. While scholars differ in their interpretation of the archaeological data and what they may teach us about Jewish life of the period, clearly these pools represent a significant piece of evidence for our consideration. S.'s only relevant comments on the topic are the rather dismissive remark on pp. 84–5 n. 10, and a reference to the Sepphoris finds on p. 112.

As these points demonstrate, in general, the book is weak in its use of archaeological sources, which have so much to offer regarding ancient Jewish history and society. This observation, I am sorry to report, belies S.'s remark, 'I have also made an effort to summarize the most relevant new archaeology of the past decade' (p. ix).

The book focuses more on the Roman period than the Hellenistic one, but given its title and scope, one would have hoped for a better treatment of the Jewish–Hellenistic symbiosis, especially in Alexandria (for a bare nod, see p. 154). Philo is discussed, but the Septuagint, and what it represents, is not. The eight dedicatory inscriptions of prayer-houses (*proseuchê*) from Ptolemaic Egypt, half of which include the name of the reigning monarch, receive no attention. No mention is made of the wealth of Jewish-Hellenistic literature, for example the works of Philo the Poet and Ezekiel the Tragedian. As with the list of professions above, these belletristic works speak volumes about the Jewish engagement with Hellenistic culture.

I understand that the monographs in this series are on the slender side, so that certain topics inevitably must receive a curtailed treatment. But the points which I raise here are important and hence deserve at least a mention if not a more sustained discussion.

I also would challenge several specific statements in the book. S. refers to Hebrew script as 'syllabic' (p. 20), though clearly it is an alphabet, or else the latter term becomes meaningless. I have no idea on what grounds S. states that the Shechem area is 'the most important wheat-growing valley in the country' (p. 52). S. overstates the extent to which Aramaic influenced the Hebrew of the Bar-Kokhba letters (p. 95) and the Mishnah

(p. 142); his comments reflect older scholarship, as opposed to the more recent work of U. Mor and M. Bar-Asher, respectively. Without justification, S. avers that the men interred at Bet She‘arim who claimed the title ‘rabbi’ ‘were probably just like the people the rabbis denounced as rich patriarchal lackeys’ (p. 121).

Finally, I must take issue with the *Tendenz* that surfaces throughout the book. Is the reference to Andreas Serrano’s *Piss Christ* photograph (p. 1) really necessary to contextualise the study of ancient Jews? What purpose is there in the mention of Ramallah as the northern boundary of Yehud/Judaea (p. 19 n. 1; see also p. 93)? The city did not exist during the Graeco-Roman period, whereas nearby Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), on the southern outskirts of Ramallah, includes strata from this time period (see also 1 Maccabees 3:46). What gain is there to call Yehezkel Kaufmann the ‘Zionist Bible scholar’ (p. 21 n. 4) or to refer to ‘Zionist scholarship’ generally (p. 44)? The expression ‘fingers crossed’ with reference to Jewish religious practice (p. 80) seems rather infelicitous. One can only imagine what agenda or ideology underlies the comment that Shu‘afat, a village 5 km north of Jerusalem, to which many Jews apparently fled in the wake of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., ‘is near the site of a modern Palestinian refugee camp’ (p. 84). Lastly, this reader at least is puzzled by the use of artwork adorning a Christian basilica for the book cover, as opposed to a specimen of specifically Jewish art (e.g. from the aforementioned Dura Europus).

The scholar already familiar with Jewish history in the Graeco-Roman period may gain some insights from this book – but the intended audience of this monograph, appearing as it does in the ‘Key Themes’ series, may need to look elsewhere for initiation into the subject.

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THE FAUSTINAS

LEVICK (B. M.) *Faustina I and II. Imperial Women of the Golden Age*. Pp. xii+ 248, ills, maps. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Cased, £41.99, US\$65. ISBN: 978-0-19-537941-9.

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Roman scholarship needs more biographies of the kind L. has produced over the years. Her works on Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Vespasian and Julia Domna provide a good and extensive overview of the periods discussed and are useful for all scholars and students interested in Roman history.¹ L.’s newest book on the Faustinas and the Antonine period is a welcome addition to this list. Both Faustina I and II, as L. calls them, were married to an emperor, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius respectively. In contrast to the barren marriages of their predecessors, Trajan and Hadrian, which forced Roman emperorship into a succession of emperors being adopted by their predecessors, the marriages of Pius and Marcus Aurelius were fecund. Yet, L.’s book does more than explore the maternal achievements of these women. She also focuses on their roles as mediators, their involvement in palace politics and their public role during their lifetime as well as after their death. In her analysis, L. frequently compares the position of the *Faustinae* with the position of

¹*Tiberius: the Politician* (1976 [2nd edition 1999]); *Claudius* (1990); *Vespasian* (1999); *Julia Domna: Syrian Empress* (2007); *Augustus: Image and Substance* (2010).

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