Nicholas H. Taylor*

This collection of essays, all but one in English, is the published proceedings of a conference held in Berlin in 2018. Most of the contributors are eminent scholars in the fields of Biblical or Jewish Studies, while others are less well-known outside their areas of specialisation, but the material presented is nonetheless of high quality.

Given the nature of the sources, the complex and sometimes bitter relations between groups, and the inevitably anachronistic ways in which labels have been applied, defining Judaism and, similarly, Christianity appropriately is problematic. Identity unselfconsciously derived from location, language, kinship, and cult may indeed not be clearly or consciously defined until it is challenged through exile, social change, or political upheaval, and traumatic disruption in ties to land, people, and deities is experienced as a crisis in identity. The opening chapters explore these issues in distinctive ways, before turning to ways in which contested identity and power influenced the final redactions of the books of the Hebrew Bible.

Peter Schäfer explores the vexed question of whether Judaism can be considered a single movement or entity, with some vigorous critique of factors that have influenced modern scholarship. He argues the complex interaction of ethnicity, cult, and culture defined a common identity, which could be sustained with the Torah compensating for the loss of the temple and alienation from the land.

Benedikt Hensel discusses the complex and deeply contested issues surrounding the redaction of the Pentateuch during the second temple period. His focus is on the dynamic between Jerusalem and Gerizim/Samaria in the formation of the Deuteronomic and Priestly traditions, giving rather less attention to the diversity of movements defined by their relationship with, or claims to, Jerusalem and the temple, and the variants in the textual tradition which these tensions may reflect.

* Nicholas H. Taylor, Tutor, Scottish Episcopal Institute; Honorary Fellow, New College, University of Edinburgh; Rector, St Aidan’s, Clarkston, Scottish Episcopal Church, 8 Golf Road, Clarkston G76 7LZ, United Kingdom, nhtaylor@dunelm.org.uk.
Sebastian Grätz focuses on Ezra, the hegemony established by returning exiles, and the construction of history and heritage to redefine identity and assert legitimacy against the claims of other descendants of the people of pre-exilic Israel and Judah, most particularly those for whom Gerizim became the locus of identity and election.

Stefan Schorch explores further the origins of the Samaritans and their theological tradition. The place of Gerizim in Samaritan creation, flood, and patriarchal traditions is compared with extra-biblical motifs preserved or reflected in other sources, including the rabbinic literature.

Karel van der Toorn discusses the Jews of Elephantine in Egypt. He argues strongly that the records of this community provide a distinctive insight into Judaism of the Persian period. Notwithstanding the direction taken by later orthodoxy, with its unambiguous monotheism and the exclusive and hegemonic claims of the Jerusalem temple, the Jews of Elephantine were in no way idiosyncratic, but, despite geographical location at the periphery of the diaspora, integral to what remained an inclusive and diverse, albeit dispersed, culture conscious of its common identity.

Charlotte Hempel argues that the Dead Sea Scrolls represent, not so much a separatist or disenfranchised group, as a diverse movement, predominantly perhaps of priestly character, fully engaged in the halakhic and other debates which concerned other Jews engaged in worship, interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures, and calculating dates for the calendar during the Roman period.

Also engaged with the Dead Sea Scrolls, John Collins argues for the probability that the community at Qumran is to be identified with the Essenes described by Josephus, or rather as one of several such Essene communities. However incomplete or inadequate Josephus’ account, the scrolls are compatible with the notion of a celibate community pursuing holiness and purity in particular ways, and the existence of such movements within Judaism is attested also in Philo’s account of the Therapeutae.

Robert Kugler examines papyri excavated at Herakleopolis to elucidate not only legal reasoning in texts but ways in which the Torah and its interpretation defined the lives and economic activities of Egyptian Jews during the Hellenistic period.

Lutz Doering explores ways in which Torah and temple are understood in Judaean texts from Jubilees to 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. The notions are contested and dynamic, and it is not self-evident that the temple is the central institution of Judaism throughout the period reflected in this study, so writings of the post-70 era can envisage no terrestrial restoration,
but rather an emphasis on observance of Torah while the eschatological
temple is relegated to a celestial realm.

Gabriele Boccaccini discusses forgiveness of sins in the Enoch tra-
dition and argues that early Christianity reinterpreted motifs from this
tradition and applied them to John the Baptist and to Jesus. The Jesus
movement is not to be understood as Enochic, but rather as a response to
issues prominent in the Enoch tradition.

Maren Niehoff explores temple and Torah motifs in the writings of
Philo of Alexandria, with attention both to his allegorical works and to
the later and more immediate account of his mission on behalf of the Jews
of Alexandria to the emperor Gaius. At a time when he became aware
that the temple was under threat, Philo was able to elevate and emphasise
its centrality to Judaism, notwithstanding having used the notion with
very much more fluidity when writing for elitist Jewish intellectuals in
Alexandria and in similar settings.

Martin Goodman turns attention to the former Pharisee and Christian
apostle Paul. He argues that, while Saul/Paul’s career as a Pharisee, and
his persecution of the early Church, demonstrate a degree of violence and
intolerance that was possible, this was nonetheless unusual within the
breadth of Judaism of the period.

Adela Yarbro Collins studies the figure of Jesus of Nazareth in the
Gospel of Mark. She argues for a complex figure, embodying a variety
of traditional roles, but in distinctive ways, not least messiahship. The
Markan Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah is commensurate with what
is known of the Pharisees and what is reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls,
whatever differences and conflicts may be reflected in the gospel text. The
temple is not rejected, its sanctity is upheld, and its destruction does not
imply the permanent obsolescence of the cult.

René Bloch studies the Jewish diaspora as reflected in Latin texts. He
argues that *Iudaeus* and *Iudaicus* alike reference ethnic, geographical, and
religious aspects of Jewish identity in diaspora settings, and cannot be
reduced to geographical origins or cultural observances.

Werner Eck discusses the attestation of Jewish communities in what
is now central and western Europe and argues for a very much more wide-
spread Jewish presence during the latter centuries of Roman rule than has
hitherto been appreciated.

Shaye Cohen explores Judaism in Antioch as reflected in the rabbinic
literature and the polemical homilies of John Chrysostom. He argues
that, while the rabbis have little direct knowledge of Antiochene Jewry,
the community reflected in the Talmudim and other literature has some
verisimilitude. On the other hand, Chrysostom shows little grasp of the Judaism of his day, but his polemics must have been accorded some credibility by his Christian audience. He tentatively suggests that Antioch may have contained both a community of Jews oriented towards the rabbis and the patriarchate, and a more assimilated community, integrated into the cosmopolitan society of the Greek city.

Catherine Hezser discusses the contested figure of David in Jewish and Christian art of the early centuries of the common era, with particular attention to Orphic motifs in portrayals of David as a musician. Diverse ways in which the Bathsheba episode is interpreted, with David’s penitence portrayed as proto-Christian rather than Jewish, and Davidic descent and messiahship ultimately appropriated by the dominant cadres in the rabbinate, are explored.

This diversity of studies will reward the patient non-specialist reader, and also engage the specialist. Many of the chapters, at the very least, will be referred to in scholarship for decades to come. The editors are to be thanked for bringing this collection together and making it available in this format.