
If, as Joshua Schwartz states at the beginning of this book, the history of the Jewish communities of the late-Roman and Byzantine darom has 'long been a sealed book to scholars' (p. 9), it is because they have been misled by the concentration of the rabbinic sources on those areas of northern Palestine where the more influential rabbinic schools were to be found. It has been tempting for historians of late-Roman Palestine to see Galilee as the only important centre of Jewish life simply because it was there that the nasi held for a time some sort of political power and because it was there that rabbinic texts were edited, but Schwartz's detailed, careful and judicious discussion of the scattered evidence for the settlements in Judaea shows convincingly that they should no longer be ignored.

Schwartz's great achievement lies in the demonstration that Jews lived in considerable numbers in much of the area and for most of the period with which he treats. He does not minimise the effects of the Bar Kochba war on the region, but he claims that recovery was already beginning in the second century and was well advanced by the third (pp. 42–7). The evidence is culled mainly from rabbinic sources, which on the whole Schwartz takes at face value, but patristic material is also used and is found to tie in rather well with the observations of the rabbis; I suspect that Eusebius knew Judaea better than Galilee. Schwartz is well aware of the extensive archaeological data, particularly from recent surface surveys (pp. 20–4, 44), but he prefers not to rely on it too heavily except in the (not entirely convincing) estimates of population based on settlement size (p. 61).

On the wider issues raised by his study Schwartz is cautious and conservative, and tends to examine his material through the prism of conventional historical categories. So, for instance, the population is divided into Jews, Samaritans, Christians and pagans (pp. 25–32), reflecting the presumption found both in the rabbis and in Eusebius that religious affiliation was the primary element in the self-definition of pagans as much as the more self-aware religious groups. Many tantalising problems thus remain unsolved. How many of the Christians found in the area in the fifth century were descended from indigenous Jews, and how many came from outside? To what extent did Jews in the south enjoy closer economic and cultural ties with pagan and Christian neighbours than their compatriots in the larger communities in the north? Such questions are perhaps unanswerable; Schwartz's method prevents them being asked in the first place.

This methodological approach in no way affects the main bulk of the book, which analyses Jewish settlement region by region (pp. 51–203), but another assumption has wider ramifications. In a long chapter and eight appendices Schwartz discusses the evidence for rabbinic sages either as visitors or as residents in the darom (pp. 207–77), and in a further appendix attached to the introduction (pp. 47–8) he
dismisses the claims of Goodenough that the motifs found on the mosaic synagogue floors in increasing numbers in the region reflect a non-rabbinic mystical Judaism. Schwartz is doubtless right that nothing should be conjectured on the basis of art alone, but the development of a separate religious consciousness in Judæa during these formative years of rabbinic Judaism should still be considered as a possibility.

In examining how the sages in Judæa related to the wider public Schwartz relies entirely on the rabbinic material itself (pp. 227–32), but in a brief and interesting discussion of the Jews and Judaism known to Jerome in late-fourth century Bethlehem (pp. 195–200) Schwartz himself shows how much can be prised from this source, and I suspect that much more could be done. Schwartz’s sterling demonstration of the size and importance of the Judæan community shows that such a study could be well worthwhile.

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Collecting his evidence from papyri, inscriptions, coins, archaeological remains and literary sources, Professor Robert Grant has written what he describes as an institutional and doctrinal history of early Christianity for the non-specialist and student. Though he does not state it in his rather brief preface (there is no introduction), it appears that this study aims to discuss and trace Christian theological expressions from the earliest New Testament formulations to the developed doctrines of the fourth century, within the broader philosophical discussions of the ancient world. To this end, he sets out to describe the various religious systems of the Graeco-Roman world and to suggest resemblances between pagan philosophical and rhetorical statements about gods and Christian theological reflections, especially with regard to Christ and the Trinity. In describing the matrix of the Christian theological / philosophical speculation, Grant also attempts to delineate how the growth of orthodoxy was characterized by the claim to apostolic and authoritative succession and by the limiting of the range of opinions.

The book is divided into three sections, the first two of which provide background information on various Graeco-Roman religious systems and selected gods, and the last being a general discussion of a number of topics centered around the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. In all sections, Professor Grant takes as his starting-point the New Testament, and when relevant, antecedents in the Old Testament and Judaism. Thus, for example, in his sections on the first Christian missions, he begins by recounting six incidents in Acts where Paul and his companions encountered the pagan world. In this regard, it is unfortunate that Professor Grant does not distinguish the Jewish magician Bar-Jesus from the other devotees of ‘pagan’ gods. Was Judaism, even in a form which Paul vehemently charged as false and demonic (Acts 13:6–12), ever considered by anyone in the first century as ‘pagan’? In places where the author refers to Old Testament and Jewish precursors, there is scanty discussion and rather much reliance upon G. F. Moore (e.g. pp. 98, 136). Is Philo representative of Jewish philosophy in the first century A.D. (cf. pp. 84 ff.)? Further, the burgeoning field of inter-testamental studies has made important contributions which, whether in agreement or not, should be noted (e.g. ‘son of man’, pp. 98 ff.).