

STEVE MASON (ed.), *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, vol. 3: *Judean Antiquities 1–4*, with translation and commentary by Louis H. Feldman. E. J. Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2000. xlv, 582 pp. \$165.00. ISBN 90-04-10679-0.

This volume represents the first in a series of new English translations and commentaries on the writings of Josephus, produced under the auspices of the Brill Josephus project, directed by Steve Mason. Conceived initially as a commentary series, the Brill project eclipses both the standard Loeb Classical Library series, and more recent translations/commentaries in French and German, by the sheer size of commentary provided. This is, indeed, the first large-scale commentary in English—or any other language—on Josephus' works.

In comparison with the relatively idiomatic English of the Loeb, begun under Thackeray in the 1920s and completed by the author of this volume, Louis Feldman, the Brill series aims at a greater degree of literalness and consistency in translation equivalents, to facilitate commentary on the particularities of Josephus' Greek. Literalness embraces the transliteration of proper names—so that we must become familiar with Habramos, Moyses and the 'Chananaians' (Canaanites), for example. An exception to this rule is the treatment of *Ioudaia*, which retains the standard rendering 'Judea', and the *Ioudaioi*, who, for the most part, become 'Judeans'. Thus, Josephus is made to speak of the war waged by us 'Judeans'; his history deals with 'the Judeans' from the beginning; Moses is the lawgiver of the 'Judeans'; even the wilderness generation, who never set foot in Judaea, are 'Judeans'. As exceptions to this general rule, we read of Cleodemus' 'history about the Jews' (1.240), and 'the Jews' as distinct from 'the Arabs' as regards the practice of circumcision (1.214). The question of translation equivalents for the complex range of meanings denoted by *Ioudaios* will become much more of a challenge in later volumes, the word appearing relatively rarely in Books 1–10 of the *Antiquities*. Nevertheless, on such an important issue it would have been helpful to have a fuller explanation of what is intended by the rendering of *Ioudaioi* as 'Judeans' as distinct from 'Jews'; what, in particular, is a first-century reader supposed to have understood by 'Judean'? This point is also crucial, of course, for the designation of Josephus' whole work, the *Ioudaikē Archaialogia*, as 'The Judean Antiquities'.

For a project that puts such a premium on engagement with Josephus' Greek, it is perhaps surprising that, in contrast with the Loeb edition and more recent translation/commentaries in French and German, for example, the Brill series does not provide a corresponding Greek text. In practice, however, the underlying text is little different from that which appears in the Loeb: constructed on the model of the *editio maior* of Niese, with occasional emendations and new readings derived from more recent reconstructions of Josephus' text.

The most distinctive contribution of the series lies in its extensive commentary, reflecting the huge development in Josephus studies since Thackeray began his work. Critical attention is divided between literary and historical issues, with a focus on articulating, as Mason puts it, 'some sense of what Josephus might have expected his first audience to understand'. As series editor, Mason provides a substantial introduction to the *Antiquities* as a whole, dealing with broad contextual issues: presenting the history of interpretation of *Antiquities*; attempting to reconstruct the social context of its production; and outlining content, structure and unifying themes.

First to appear in this series is Louis Feldman's translation and commentary on Books 1–4 of the *Antiquities*,¹ Josephus' account of the five books of Moses, a work of immense importance for the history of early pentateuchal interpretation, and one

¹ See now also a second volume, S. Mason, *Flavius Josephus: Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (2001).

which hitherto has not received the attention it deserves. Feldman has done more than most to counter the general neglect of Josephus as a biblical interpreter, and this commentary provides a very helpful format for bringing together, in particular, the insights of many of Feldman's previous studies of character portraits in Josephus' Pentateuch.

The task of understanding Josephus as a biblical interpreter—and especially of the Pentateuch—is a daunting one. It requires not only the ability to make sense of Josephus in his social, literary and political contexts as a late first-century Hellenistic-Jewish writer, but also of the wider world of 'rewritten Bible' which Josephus inhabits. *Antiquities* 1–4 raises fundamental questions about the nature of Josephus' sources and traditions as well as his own position as a writer and interpreter: which versions of the 'words of Moses' did he know; was he familiar with other sources of rewritten Bible; to what extent did he share in the culture of interpretation that is identified with rabbinic tradition; how did he view himself as an interpreter of Scripture? This commentary series states as its first principle that it does not intend to provide the last word on the interpretation of Josephus. And it is perhaps in that spirit that Feldman's introduction to *Antiquities* 1–4, though wasting no words, is very brief (a mere two pages) and does not say much about such questions. According to his introduction, Feldman's Josephus is familiar with 'the original Hebrew version' of the Pentateuch, the LXX, targums and some 'aggadic' traditions, while on matters of Jewish law Josephus' work is presented as being of interest to students of rabbinic literature. When it comes to the commentary, the Masoretic Text provides the usual standard of comparison, when determining the nature of Josephus' distinctive version of the Pentateuch. Much of the commentary highlights agreements and differences between Josephus and other writers, Jewish and non-Jewish, often as a matter of record rather than as evidence of Josephus' familiarity with such traditions—again, perhaps a feature of the open-ended nature of the approach represented by this series. Among Jewish parallel traditions, Feldman gives great attention to rabbinic literature. In doing so, he reflects a long-established and important line in Josephus scholarship, but also one which raises significant methodological problems—not addressed here—about the status of rabbinic evidence for historical enquiries about an earlier period in which rabbinic tradition does not appear to have dominated. By contrast, a work like the Temple Scroll, undoubtedly a product of the Second Temple Period and one of the most important and substantial witnesses to creative interpretation of the Pentateuch, receives very little attention at all.

In accordance with the stated goals of the project, the commentary also offers notes on the Greek and difficulties of interpretation, draws attention to major themes in Josephus' writings, and highlights characteristics of Josephus' work that appear to point to a hellenised Roman readership. Equipped with extensive indexes and bibliography, this volume is also testament to Feldman's service to Josephus scholarship in providing the reference tools for future generations.

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PHILIP A. HARLAND, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2003. xv, 399 pp. £12.01. ISBN 0800635892.

Harland's aim in this study is to 'provide a new—even revolutionary—angle of vision on the lives of both early Christian congregations and Jewish synagogues' by viewing them against the backdrop of the epigraphic evidence for pagan associations—i.e. the groups that go by titles such as *koinon*, *synodos* and *thia-*