

John Carroll University Carroll Collected

Theology & Religious Studies

4-1988

Review of Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters, edited by Robert A. Kraft and George Nickelsburg.

John R. Spencer

John Carroll University, spencer@jcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://collected.jcu.edu/theo_rels-facpub

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Spencer, John R., "Review of Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters, edited by Robert A. Kraft and George Nickelsburg." (1988). *Theology & Religious Studies*. 59.
http://collected.jcu.edu/theo_rels-facpub/59

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Carroll Collected. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theology & Religious Studies by an authorized administrator of Carroll Collected. For more information, please contact connell@jcu.edu.

Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters, edited by Robert A. Kraft and George Nickelsburg. *The Bible and its Modern Interpreters*. 2/SBL Centennial Publications Fortress Press, Philadelphia/Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1986. 494 pp. n.p.

This volume is a worthy and helpful addition to *The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* series, which is edited by Douglas A. Knight. The first of the series, *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, was published in 1985 (see the review in *INTERPRETATION* 40 standing the Samaritans; and John G. [1986], p.302). The third and last volume will be *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*.

The focus of this volume is on recent studies concerning the development and nature of what is labeled "Early Judaism," covering the period between 330 B C E, the time of Alexander, and 138 CE, the end of the Bar Kochba revolt. The volume looks at how scholarship has blossomed in this field in recent years (1980 is the terminus for the literature under discussion), primarily based on new data which has become available since 1945. To describe this, twenty-two scholars have been invited to write twenty articles. Each article seeks to present some overview of the field, make some comments on methodological development, and to raise questions about the direction in which research should (or needs) to go. This overall aim is prominently set forth on the fly of the book's dust jacket.

The volume opens with an article by the editors entitled "Introduction: The Modern Study of Early Judaism." Its aim is to define the scope of the volume and the issues to be addressed.

Part One, "Early Judaism in its Historical Setting," contains four articles. Here Shaye J. D. Cohen discusses the political and social history of the Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity; Gary G. Portón calls attention to the diversity that characterized postbiblical Judaism; James D. Purvis treats the evidence now available for better understanding the Samaritans; and John G. Gager deals with the problem of the presence in early Christianity of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.

Part Two, "Recent Discoveries," also contains four articles. In them, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor focuses attention on the Qumran documents; Sebastian P. Brock discusses biblical, nonbiblical, and even non-Jewish manuscript discoveries; Eric M. Meyers and A. Thomas Kraabel review archaeological, iconographical and other data from the second century C E and later; and Yaakov Meshorer details the work of Jewish numismatics from the Persian period to the Bar Kochba revolt.

Part Three, "The Literature," is the longest section of the volume and contains nine articles. In this section, the following scholars write on the following subjects:

Emanuel Tov on Jewish Greek Scriptures; Daniel J. Harrington on "*midrash*" or "*haggadah*"; Maurya P. Hogan on the "*peshanm*"; Anitra Bingham Kolenkow on the literary genre of "testament"; John J. Collins on "testamentary literature" and on "apocalyptic literature"; Robert Doran on "narrative literature"; Burton L. Mack and Roland E. Murphy on "wis- dom literature"; James H. Charlesworth on "Jewish hymns, odes, and prayers"; and Anthony J. Saldarmi on "rabbinic Judaism."

The volume closes with two maps, an appendix of "Bibliographies and Text Editions for Early Jewish Source Materials," and an index of modern authors. As was indicated earlier, this is a solid, well-edited, and useful volume. It not only provides an overview of recent scholarship, but it also provides excellent bibliographies for those who wish to pursue particular topics. It succeeds admirably in informing the reader of "the state of the questions" relative to Early Judaism.

JOHN R. SPENCER
John Carroll University