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***Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety. Revised Edition***

George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0800662868. Pp. 256.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Morton, McGill University

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This book will be of most interest to anyone contemplating teaching an undergraduate survey course on the history and literature of early Judaism. *Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety* is an expanded and updated version of their 1983 reader, *Faith and Piety in Early Judaism: Texts and Documents*. The book presents readers with excerpted passages (fairly brief for the most part) from a wide range of early Jewish literature, organized according to topics and accompanied by explanatory comments, thereby providing students and non-specialists alike with the opportunity of making an introductory acquaintance with a category of ancient literature that can be very difficult for non-specialists to access. In this edition the authors have added to their selections from the Dead Sea Scrolls collection and thoroughly revised and updated all of their commentary and accompanying bibliographies. They have also expanded the Index to include most of their citations from the Hebrew Bible, which makes the book very helpful guide to readers interested in the reception and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in a later period.

The book is intended to be complementary to three one-volume introductions to the field written at different times by the authors, but it is not dependent on these other works and can be used apart from them. These three are: Michael E. Stone, *Scriptures, Sects, and Visions: A Profile of Judaism from Ezra to the Jewish Revolts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980; repr. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2005); George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003) and *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). The latter two volumes serve particularly well as textbooks providing a comprehensive introduction to the field in an accessible and attractive fashion. The contents of all three are arranged by topic, as is the reader, but the reader does not follow the particular chapter and section organisation of any one of them. The six chapters of the reader reflect the primary topics, “Sects, Parties, and Tendencies,” “Temple and Cult,” “Ideals of Piety,” “Deliverance, Judgment, and Vindication,” “The Agents of Divine Deliverance,” “Lady Wisdom and Israel,” and the literary excerpts from the primary texts illustrate a number of themes within each of these topics. Each chapter, apart from the first on “Sects, Parties and Tendencies” concludes with excerpts from rabbinic, New Testament and/

or non-canonical Christian literature that illustrate the various ways in which early Jewish ideas and ideals lived on in the two religions that emerged from this period.

In the words of the authors, material is presented “unencumbered by the apparatus of technical scholarship.” This means comparatively few footnotes, which is appropriate in an introductory text-book, but also means that readers will be exposed, not to the range of opinions of scholars in the field on the material covered, but rather the interpretations and conclusions of the authors in plain, non-technical language. This latter feature, plus its relatively short length (some 242 pages in all), make it a very manageable text-book for a one-semester, undergraduate survey course, if the instructor’s objective is a comprehensive overview of the history, most major types of literature, and most major themes, with a final examination at the end of the course on the content covered in readings and lectures—the standard format of the one-semester, introductory survey course in most North American colleges and universities.

Unfortunately, by serving this one pedagogical purpose so very well, the authors necessarily set limits on other purposes. Students are not invited to exercise their own skills in critical reflection on the primary literature, and, perhaps more seriously given the state of scholarship in early Judaism, the authors’ own (albeit highly qualified) interpretations and reconstructions are presented, not as educated opinions, but “fact.” An example of this tendency is the introduction of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Chapter 1, “Sects, Parties and Tendencies.” At the conclusion of an otherwise excellent paragraph devoted to an overview of Josephus’s comments about the Essenes, the authors say, “The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, *which were the library of an Essene community*, supplements Josephus’s description of the Essenes” (22; italics mine). And excerpts from the Damascus Document and the Community Rule in the same chapter are headed, “Essene Texts from Qumran.” To state as a matter of fact that the Dead Sea Scrolls were an Essene library is certainly to overstate the consensus of current scholarship in this area. At the same time, the authors’ comments regarding the *particular* Dead Sea Scroll texts they present here are nicely nuanced. And, to a certain extent, such authorial liberty in presenting the state of scholarship is unavoidable in the composition of a textbook intended for beginners. The question is, of course, to what extent is acceptable, and this judgment can only be made in light of the particular circumstances in which the book might be used, and the aims of the particular instructor. He or she is always free to expand on the information provided in the text and introduce the necessary nuances. But, again, this assumes just one pedagogical purpose, that of an introductory text in a survey course with a qualified instructor, and that is the crux of the problem. In the opening paragraph of the Preface the authors tell us that they “have gathered the material in this way so that it is readily accessible to students and the broader public, *as well as to colleagues who are not specialists in the area of early post-biblical Judaism*”

(italics mine). While the presentation of the material certainly makes it accessible to non-specialist scholars, the *appropriateness* of the material for scholars, especially those who have a serious need for background in this area, is questionable. This is not intended as a criticism of the book on its own merits, simply an observation about the limitations on its uses.

One final comment—and it is, perhaps, a quibble—concerns the terms, “faith” and “piety” in the title of the book. These were prominent in the original edition and are now much less so, having been relegated to the subtitle, but they are nonetheless present. The concepts of “faith” and “piety” (in Greek *pistis* and *eusebeia*) are simply not found in the Hebrew of the period. They are prominent in Greek Jewish writings, including the Septuagint, but were foreign concepts to Semitic Jews of the time. Further, they are words that become laden with tremendous theological baggage once those Jews who follow Jesus of Nazareth separate from “the synagogue,” a complex event which occurs in the period covered by the field of “early Judaism.” The use of these terms in the title thus seems to me to be most unfortunate, and I hope that future editions of this text will omit them altogether. However, given that we have here an excellent textbook that will be a valuable resource to teachers for years to come, this criticism constitutes no more than a footnote by a junior scholar with a particular obsession.

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***This Incredible Need to Believe***

Julia Kristeva. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

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Reviewed by David Kolozyc, McGill University

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Julia Kristeva’s engagement with religion has a long and complex history, and arguably exceeds that of any other influential critical theorist of her generation. During the 1970s, Kristeva published several essays that applied semiotic and psychoanalytic interpretations to Christian art and employed literary criticism to challenge religious ‘monologism’. Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory, developed mainly in the course of the 1980s, recognizes from the very beginning that it is impossible to fully understand the psychic life of the modern subject without addressing the role religious texts or symbols have played in his or her constitution. Kristeva’s early tendency toward psychological reductionism has gradually given way to an approach grounded in a dynamic interplay between psychoanalytic, religious, and literary discourse. This, in turn, has enabled Kristeva to offer some significant insights into the ‘crisis of secularism’ that, in the past decade or so, has emerged as a prominent issue in academic circles as well as in public debate.