

Potential for violence is thus diminished by neutralizing religions' capacities to highlight social differences and justify combative politics (255). Kurtz hopes this will enable new permutations and forms of religious life that facilitate constructive conflict (242). This proposal is a double-bind, since the advocacy of openness to invention accompanies an unqualified imperative for secularization. This book will comfortably stimulate students and scholars. Assessing its global potential, however, is beyond the scope of this review.

Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts

Matt Jackson-McCabe, ed. Augsburg Fortress, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.

ISBN: 978-0-8006-3865-8. Pp. 400.

Reviewed by Meredith Warren, McGill University

Jewish Christianity Reconsidered is a good introduction to the complex problems surrounding the subject of Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism. As a collection of articles, the book presents its readers with varying opinions on the current state of research. While many scholars included in this volume have similar views, the occasional dissonance allows for a dialogue to occur, which is precisely what is needed, in my view, to move forward on the subject of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity at this early time. The book is divided into two sections, the first dealing with religious groups, and the second with texts, although there is some overlap, as is to be expected. Each essay deals with a different topic, evaluating the content of a text or the descriptions of a group in other works in order to tease out its contributions to the scholarly debate. The groups include the Jerusalem church, the Christ-believing Jews whom Paul opposes, the Johannine community, the Ebionites, and the Nazarenes. The texts include Q, Matthew, James, Revelation, the *Didache*, and the Pseudo-Clementines. In each case, the author defines what is meant for Jewish-Christianity and then analyses the evidence to determine what can be said about a particular text or community.

One main focus of the volume is the terminology around Early Judaism and Christianity. The problems of terminology for Jewish Christianity are legion. First there is the question of what Jewish Christianity denotes. Second, whether Judaism and Christianity at this point are distinguished enough from each other to warrant a special designation for those branches of Christianity which seem "more" Jewish. Third, there is the question of what actually makes something Jewish, or Christian, or one of these things as opposed to the other. While the first essay in this volume, "What's in a Name" by Matt Jackson-McCabe, gives a good introduction to the

issues, each individual author whose work makes up the volume contributes his or her own conclusions or questions on the subject. This sometimes produces a discordant feeling to the text, but this is ultimately helpful and allows the reader to understand the difficulties and complexities of the problem. Some articles retain the terminology used around this subject, but, recognizing the problematic nature of the subject itself, hold these terms at arm's length, using the evidence we have to keep their problems in mind. This, I think, is a more productive way of keeping a critical view of the subject than creating new, and potentially more problematic, terms for the same concepts. In fact, by creating a new word for Jewish Christianity, in some way the problems in this field of study are effaced rather than resolved. Patrick J. Hartin makes this mistake, in my view, in choosing to use the terms "members of the house of Israel" and "followers of Jesus" (205). While Hartin acknowledges and recognizes that the categories of Jewish and Christian are problematic and anachronistic (204) especially with regard to the Letter of James, it seems to me that particularly the category "members of the house of Israel" is at least as problematic for the study of Jewish religious movements in this time period.

Jerry L. Sumney is perhaps more successful in his renaming of the categories. Rather than create new terms to designate two seemingly opposed groups whose identities may not even have been fixed, Sumney chooses to employ the adjective "Christ-believing" and apply this to either Jews or gentiles in order to avoid using the anachronistic "Christian" (58). While his article avoids the question of Jewish identity, the topic is brought up in Petri Luomanen's discussion of Ebionites and Nazarenes (81). Luomanen goes as far as to present his criteria for Jewish or Christian identity, based, given his topic, in the Church fathers' texts; these criteria are not put forward as exclusive, but rather as useful tools for examining ancient religious groups. Luomanen's suggestion that scholars should adjust expectations about the definitions of these groups depending on context is one that bears keeping in mind (115).

Especially for a student just entering the fray, this book allows for a first-hand glance into the issues with which scholars struggle while at the same time explaining and discussing the major identity issues in a clear manner. What is missing, however, is a solid conclusion to knit together the questions and problems that arose throughout. As it stands, the book ends with a discussion of the Pseudo-Clementines whose conclusion draws no general conclusions for the larger topic of study. The reader is forced to return to the introduction in order to make sense of it all. In the end, while the conclusions and quality of the articles in the volume vary, the book as a whole is a good study. Because of the disagreements between authors and the challenges involved in choosing terminology the reader is able to grasp the problems involved in this topic more thoroughly.