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*Outside the Bible* is a massive work—three large volumes which together comprise over 3,300 pages. The project assembles a vast selection of ancient Jewish writings. Scholars and students within the field of biblical studies will recognize this work as somewhat similar to Charlesworth’s *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1985). The book under review includes translations of texts, along with helpful introductory essays, as in Charlesworth. And some texts are available in both sources, such as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *1 Enoch*, and the *Life of Adam and Eve*. But *Outside the Bible* does not simply rehash the Charlesworth volume. Unlike *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, the present volume has a commentary structure, with the main text at the top and extensive line by line exposition below, a format that is of great assistance to the reader. Moreover, the volume under review has numerous texts that are not in Charlesworth. Major writings from the Dead Sea Scrolls are included, such as the *War Scroll*, the *Temple Scroll*, and the *Community Rule*. There are also extensive selections from Philo, Josephus, and the Septuagint.

The inclusion of texts from the Septuagint may give pause. Why does a work entitled *Outside the Bible* include texts that are biblical? The question of what is “outside” and what is “inside” the Bible of course depends on whose Bible we are talking about. The brief introduction to the work states that the material it includes “will be quite new to Jewish readers” (xv). While *Outside the Bible* is obviously of interest to scholars of ancient Judaism, it presumes a Jewish lay audience. The Bible in mind is the Tanakh, the scriptures of Judaism. The description of other texts as being “outside” this domain recalls the Hebrew term for ancient non-canonical Jewish texts, הכתבים החיצונים (“the outside books”). So understood, the Septuagint is “outside” the (Hebrew) Bible. Understanding the contemporary Jewish *Sitz im Leben* of the work also makes intelligible why it includes texts such as the Wisdom of Solomon, Ben Sira, Judith, and Tobit, which are very much not “outside” the Bible for Catholic readers of scripture.

While increasing the public’s knowledge of ancient Jewish texts is a laudable goal, it must be acknowledged that “Outside the Bible” is a somewhat awkward rubric. Aside from the fact that different readers assume different canons of scripture, it is a negative category, defined primarily in terms of what it is not. Everything except the Bible is outside the Bible. The volume, while it includes a vast amount of material, is not, and could not be, comprehensive. Many
Qumran texts are not contained in the volume, including several which are, to use the language of the subtitle of the work, “related to scripture,” such as most of the pesharim or the Apocryphon of Jeremiah. Other ancient Jewish texts which are in Charlesworth are not in the present volume, including Ahiqar, 2 Enoch, 3 Enoch, the Testament of Solomon, and the Sibylline Oracles.

Outside the Bible does not simply want to make ancient texts that are unfamiliar to a Jewish audience more accessible. The scholars who present and explicate these “outside” books seek to put these writings “back into their original Jewish context: they were written by and for Jews and their main concern was with Jewish life, Jewish Scripture, and the Jewish religion” (xv). This attitude helps explain why Outside the Bible, somewhat ironically, is very much driven by a biblical focus. Texts that have an interpretative or exegetical concern dominate the volume. The relationship of the assembled texts to scripture shapes the structure of the volume to a greater extent than their genre (xvii). The categories into which the material is organized include, for example, “The Bible Translated into Greek (the Septuagint),” “Sustained Biblical Commentaries: Retellings and Pesharim,” “Interpretative Texts Centering on Biblical Figures,” “Stories Set in Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times,” and “Historical Writings Set in Post-Biblical Times.” The selections from Josephus and Philo also highlight their interest in scriptural interpretation. It is certainly not my intent to complain about the exegetical focus of the material. This theme is indeed a major feature of early Judaism. But the volume gives the impression that this theme is essentially the only one. For example, “apocalypse” is not a category used for organizing texts (in contrast to the Charlesworth volume), even though the apocalyptic tradition is a major component of late Second Temple Judaism. The apocalyptic text 1 Enoch thus is not in a section on apocalyptic or eschatological texts but is rather in the section entitled “Interpretative Texts Centering on Biblical Figures” (1359–1452).

The volume’s interest in Jewish scriptures as an organizing principle is shaped by a conception of canon that fits that of modern readers more than that of the ancient texts themselves. While it is important to make these texts intelligible to a lay audience, contemporary conceptions of canon are anachronistic when applied to ancient literature. The fact that scripture in the late Second Temple period was, while authoritative, also pluriform and variegated could have at times been more evident in the present volume. The 4QReworked Pentateuch texts, which are increasingly being recognized as Hebrew biblical texts that are different from more established text-types (Tov), are not included. An overly rigid conception of canon shapes the book’s presentation of the famous Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 of Qumran (2095–2105). This manuscript includes psalms that are in our modern Psalter along with others that are