

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Albert I. BAUMGARTEN, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 55), E.J. Brill, Leiden 1997, xiii and 240 pp., cloth, ISBN 90 04 10751 7.

Albert Baumgarten's study needs no justification (even though he in fact attempts to supply one on p. 2) since the various sects of the period before 70 are clearly an integral aspect of the religious scene. Sometimes they are given too much prominence, but this does not affect the usefulness nor the importance of a study such as the one here. B. wants, first, to show that the period following the Maccabean revolt and the early years of the Hasmonean kingdom was a good time for the major religious sects to form and, secondly, to explore the reasons for sect formation at this time. The main sects included in the study are the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Qumran. For the sake of the study he rightly treats Qumran and the Essenes separately (even though he thinks there is ultimately a connection). The many sects attested around the turn of the era are not generally discussed because their origin is thought to be clearly related to Roman rule. B. is justified in omitting them in this study in that he has enough to deal with already, but I believe that the full story, in all its complexity, will emerge only when the minor and transient groups are also taken into account (see below).

This is a significant study and has much to teach both in its main concerns and in the detailed data and in the bibliography (the extensive Hebrew language bibliography is especially helpful). For some reason, despite his wide-ranging bibliography B. does not seem to know my *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992; London: SCM, 1994), so I shall refer to it below at various points (as "Grabbe," following by the page number). He is rightly cautious in using rabbinic literature, while his careful but perceptive use of the New Testament is a model for emulation. Yet probably the greatest contribution made by this monograph is in the effective use of the social sciences to enhance our knowledge of the Second Temple period (about which I wish to comment at several points below).

B. begins by giving a definition of sect sufficiently broad and neutral to avoid the question-begging distinctions so often found in discussions of Jewish sects, so that for example the Pharisees are treated on the same footing as other groups (5-11; cf. Grabbe: 465). He rightly recognizes that the mainstream was represented not by some particular group but rather by the temple

(cf. Grabbe: 538-39; also my article, "Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism: What Are the Issues?" *JSJ* 8 [1977] 149-53). The only query I have is that he uses the term "protest" in his definition ("a voluntary association of protest"); although most sects were actively or passively protesting against something in the wider society, the term is capable of misunderstanding. Also, I am not sure that it would apply to the Sadducees.

After his introduction B. develops his argument in six chapters, in which the main argument is set out in chapter 2 and chapters 3-6 demonstrate how various social, political, and intellectual developments contributed to the origin and continuation of the main Jewish sects. As an important tool he makes use of analogies from sectarian movements in other contexts, especially the Puritans of the 17th and 18th centuries in Britain, the Qaraites and Rabbinites, and sectarian developments in modern Israel. In each chapter he usually has a section considering contra-indications, of why sects ceased in the post-70 period. Although some of these are more convincing than others, it is a useful exercise and shows a commendable desire to consider all sides of the question.

Chapter 1 sets the stage, discussing a number of important issues. The relative size of sect membership compared to the total population was very small (cf. the similar estimates in my article, "Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism," cited above). Those who joined sects were of the "middling" sort, i.e., those with a reasonable amount of wealth and education. They were not primarily the poor and oppressed but the literate and elite, the only ones in a position to make the choice to join a sect; they were not the misfits or the incompetent of society as so easily assumed. On the other hand, the differences between the sects were generally minor, and there is little evidence that disagreements about the law were sufficient to create different sects. Indeed, there seems to be have been a body of "floaters" who tried out different sects before making a final choice or even never settling on only one. B. makes the important point that we do not generally have the reaction of outsiders to sectarian members, which means that the perspective in the sources is very narrow.

Chapter 2 discusses the encounter with Hellenism and its effects, but its main aim is to explain why sects arose shortly after the Maccabean revolt. The essential argument is that, after the religious persecutions under Antiochus, many segments of society assumed that independence of Judah under a priestly leader would lead to a return to what they regarded as the correct religious laws and the erection of various social and religious boundaries against Gentiles. That is, they wanted to return to the "old paths" (as they perceived them) which were followed before the advent of Hellenism. It was the disappointment in the failure of the Hasmoneans to enforce these views, regarded as essential by some, that led to disillusion and the formation of sects. The various areas where the sects attempted to return to the "old ways" are discussed at length: food, dress, marriage, commerce, worship, and admonition.

Chapter 3 deals with literacy and its implications. An important change