
The author, both editor of the “Supplements to the JSJ” and member of the editorial board of the JSJ, is an internationally renowned scholar in the field of Hellenistic Judaism. This volume includes twelve essays, published between 2000 and 2005, of which eleven has already appeared elsewhere. On the one hand, the topics and issues in this book are very different, e.g., the reception and re-interpretation of the Exodus motif, messianism in the Septuagint, Hellenistic eschatology, apocalypticism and wisdom or “Anti-Semitism.” On the other hand, all essays have one question in common. In how far was ancient Judaism in Hellenistic times influenced by or addicted to the Greek and Roman culture(s)? In general, this question was already posed by Martin Hengel in his Habilitationsschrift more than thirty years ago. But C., traveling along the ways that Hengel once paved, pushes the question further towards a new hermeneutical tool, i.e., the separation of “cult” and “culture.”

The first two essays refer to the problem of “cult” and “culture,” and prepare a hermeneutical basis for the following more detailed topics. The first chapter, entitled “Hellenistic Judaism in Recent Scholarship” (1-20), reviews central topics like apologetic Jewish literature and the Diaspora situation of the Jews in the light of recent scholarship (Erich S. Gruen, John M. G. Barclay). All in all, C. criticizes Gruen’s picture of a close relationship between Jews and Gentiles in cultural terms (in Gruen’s terminology: “symbiosis, not syncretism”) and finds Barclay’s differentiation into “assimilation,” “acculturation” and “accommodation” helpful, but also too simplistic and antagonistic. Furthermore, for a description of the Jewish encounter with Hellenism in the Diaspora of pre-Roman times the Letter of Aristeas is a good case in point. On the one hand, the whole letter is an appreciation of Judaism, on the other, the author adopted the voice of the Greek culture and affirmed its values (cf. Let. Aris. §§ 16, 132, 139). The argument of the Letter of Aristeas was that Jewish religious convictions, e.g., monotheism and the kashrut, were not un-Hellenic.

The second chapter, entitled “Cult and Culture. The Limits of Hellenization in Judea” (21-43), functions as a keystone for the hermeneutics of “cult” and “culture.” It is no surprise that this article was originally published in a volume that celebrated the 30th anniversary of the edition of Hengel’s Habilitationsschrift. C. discusses and re-evaluates at length the historical background of the Hellenistic reform in Judea. While Hengel favored Elias Bickerman’s view that the reform consisted of converting Jerusalem under the Highpriests Jason and Menelaus into a polis, C.’s argumentation is in line with Victor Tcherikover’s thesis: The religious changes were not the reason but the consequences of the reform in Judea. Furthermore, the contemporary sources (e.g., 2 Maccabees) make a sharp distinction between the Hellenistic reform under Jason and the Antiochean persecution very plausible. Here,
C. relates to Isaak Heinemann and Fergus Millar. Taking at least a prolongation of Hellenistic ideas under the Hasmoneans and Herod into account, also the Palestinian homeland, its history and its sources, provides further hints for a distinction of "cult" and "culture." As C. puts it at the end of this chapter: "Nonetheless, I submit that the most striking thing about the Jewish encounter with Hellenism, both in the Diaspora and in the land of Israel, was the persistence of Jewish separatism in matters of worship and cult. There was a limit to Hellenization, which is best expressed in the distinction between cult and culture" (43).

In the following chapters, C. explores these "limits of Hellenization." Chapter three (44-57) scrutinizes the Exodus-motif in Artapanus', Manetho's and Hecataeus' accounts. Even here, an influence from foreign cultural sources is obvious. Because Manetho and Hecataeus share the motifs of Asiatic foreigners expelled from Egypt, their foundation of Jerusalem and the association of Moses with pestilence. The motifs stem from an independent Egyptian tradition, deriving from the expulsion of the Hyksos and the revolution of Ekhenaten. Chapter four offers some restrictive considerations about Messianism in the LXX Pentateuch (cf. Gen 49:10; Num 23:21; 24:7, 17; Deut 33:5; 58-81). Chapter five gives a re-evaluation of the composition, date and provenance of the third Sibyl (82-98), and chapter six a detailed philological discussion of Philo the Epic Poet's fragment On Abraham (99-111). The seventh chapter, "Joseph and Aseneth: Jewish or Christian?" (112-27), comes along with a very prominent issue in recent scholarly debate. Is a post-biblical writing Jewish or Christian? C. simply strings together central motifs from the two core issues in Joseph and Aseneth: (a) the story of the marriage of Joseph and Aseneth, in which Joseph is portrayed as "the son of God" (Jos. Asen. 6:3[6]) and in which he objects Aseneth by referring to idolatry; (b) the story of the conflict with Pharaoh's son, in which chapters 22-29 refers to the conflict between Onias and Ptolemy Philcon and for which no Christian parallel is at hand. Furthermore, as an argumentum e silentio, the story of intermarriage does not mention baptism. Insofar, Joseph and Aseneth is not only a Jewish source, but it also shows that Hellenistic-Jewish texts fit in with the world of Hellenized Christianity (cf. also Philo of Alexandria). The eighth chapter (128-42) tries to make a coherent order of the "eschatological hodgepodge" of Pseudo-Phocylides' sentences (V. 103-15). A "Postscript" answers the rejoinder to this reading by Pieter van der Horst.

The following chapters deal with the relation between apocalyptic traditions and Hellenistic wisdom. In chapter nine, entitled "The Reinterpretation of Apocalyptic Traditions in the Wisdom of Solomon" (143-58), C. shows that the wisdom is regarded as one of the mysteries of God and not, as in apocalyptic literature, as an angelic revelation. In the next chapter ("The Mysteries of God: Creation and Eschatology in 4QInstruction and the Wisdom of Solomon"; 159-80), C. scrutinizes these "mysteries," esp. the "image" in 4QInstruction, and he concludes that the mystery "concerns the comprehensive plan of God for humanity, and which involves an immortal destiny, grounded in creation in the divine image" (179).