

Reviews

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SELF-DEFINITION, Vol II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman period. Ed. by E P Sanders with A I Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson. SCM. 1981 pp xvi + 485 £15.

Jewish and Christian Self-definition is the general title of a 3-volume collection of articles, of which this is the second. The first volume (1980) was concerned with Christian self-definition in the Second and Third centuries. The second volume concerns aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman period, from the second century before the Common Era, to the second Century of the Common Era. Two of the essays in the second volume would have fitted more easily into the first: J H Charlesworth's discussion of Christian additions to some apocryphal writings, and A F Segal's essay on 'The Ruler of this world' in the Fourth Gospel.

J Blenkinsop's study of Jewish sectarianism distinguishes a new situation in Israel in the Persian period: no longer is national identity defined by land and king, but there are at least two communities, natives and returned exiles, competing as the legitimate heirs of the old Israel. Each group appropriated and interpreted traditions in the light of the prophetic message of judgement and restoration, and the canon of the Hebrew Bible grew out of these conflicting interpretations. Perhaps the pre- and post-exilic dichotomy is pictured too simplistically, but Blenkinsop rightly refutes the thesis of some Old Testament theologians who see the Persian period as a time when the Torah was separated from the Covenant to become an end in itself: on the contrary, Covenant renewal is especially emphasised in this period.

J Goldstein sets Jewish acceptance and rejection of Hellenism alongside conservative Roman attitudes, and shows that in the early period, Jews were open to Hellenistic culture. During and after the critical period of the Maccabean Revolt, Jews excluded Greeks from permanent residence in Judaea proper, gymnasia were not permitted, and some Jews were also suspicious of Greek hippodromes, stadia and theatres. These were always accepted in the Diaspora, however. Other aspects of Hellenistic culture: language, literature and philosophy, were always tolerated by Jews inside and outside Judaea. Goldstein thinks this tolerant attitude was possible because Jewish self-definition was based on the Torah, which sufficed to distinguish Jews from any pagans, whether

Greek or non-Greek. Goldstein's essay should be read alongside E E Urbach's, on self-isolation and self-affirmation in Judaism during the first three centuries C.E. Urbach argues that Judaism during these centuries is better characterised as self-affirmative than, as so often by Christian scholars, in terms of self-isolation. He recognises that the destruction of the unifying bonds of Temple, Sanhedrin and Festival pilgrimages in 70 C.E led to a stricter demand for a single normative set of doctrines and teachings, but he finds no evidence of a demand for isolation valued in itself. Self-affirmation was necessary to safeguard what was regarded as the only true religion, but there was a lively interest in the beliefs and practices of other nations, as well as concern for the moral and religious standards of non-Jewish peoples. Proselytism was encouraged but syncretism feared. It is a pity that Urbach's discussion of the term 'minim' does not take account of discussion in two other papers, by L H Schiffman and by R Kimelman. These two papers form the core of this volume.

Schiffman presents a clear exposition of the Tannaim's teaching on what it meant to be a Jew, and shows how they came to regard Christianity as a separate religion. (The Tannaim are the rabbis whose teaching later formed the Mishnah, c 125 CE). Jewish identity was essentially hereditary: someone who was born a Jew, i.e. who had a Jewish mother, could not cease to be a Jew. People who were not born Jews could become Jews by identifying with the history of the Jewish people: by accepting the Torah with its emphasis on charity and kindness; by males accepting circumcision, becoming sons of Abraham and members of the covenant community; by immersion as a purificatory and initiatory rite; and by bringing a sacrifice, drawing near to the divine presence.

Schiffman makes it clear that neither wrong belief nor wrong practice could exclude a Jew from membership of the Jewish community. The Tannaim warned that certain beliefs and practices would exclude a Jew from the world to come, but this did not mean that such people ceased to be Jews.

The early Christians in Palestine were Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

The Tannaim regarded them as heretics (Jews who had accepted false beliefs) and restricted their influence as Jews, but they did not exclude them from the Jewish community. At Yavneh, the Tannaim, who wanted to unite the people after the war of 70 CE, barred Jewish Christians from officiating as readers in the synagogue by introducing the Birkath ha-minim into the Eighteen Benedictions, and pronounced against the sanctity of Jewish-Christian writings, whether copies of the Jewish scriptures written by Jewish-Christians, or Jewish-Christian texts (the Gospels and Epistles). These measures would naturally encourage Jewish-Christians to hold their own assemblies separate from the synagogue. However, Jewish-Christians were still regarded as Jews by Jews, and were not excluded from the synagogue.

Relations between Jewish-Christians and Jews deteriorated during the Bar Kochba Revolt (135 CE). Jewish-Christians regarded Bar Kochba as a false Messiah, and when they refused to join the revolt, they were attacked by Bar Kochba and some were executed. Because of this, and the general disruption of the war, Jewish-Christian numbers in Palestine declined. After the war, the Romans turned Jerusalem into Aelia Capitolina and banned Jews and Jewish-Christians from entry. The new Christian community in Jerusalem was therefore Gentile. For the first time, Jews in Palestine were faced with Christianity as a Gentile religion. These Gentile Christians did not conform to the definition of a Jew, and from this time, Jews treated Gentile Christianity, the only Christianity that survived, as a separate religion.

Schiffman's thesis about Tannaitic attitudes is independently confirmed by Kim-

elman, who also examines the Amoraic period (2nd-4th centuries CE), and shows that the term 'nosrim' refers not to Gentile Christians (as Schiffman and others suggest) but to the Jewish-Christian sect of the Nazoreans. The study demonstrates that during the Amoraic period, there is no unambiguous evidence that Jews cursed Gentile Christians during the statutory prayers. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that Christians were welcomed in synagogues and received Jewish charity. So the introduction of the Birkath ha-minim does not represent a watershed in Jewish/Christian relations as some Christian scholars have suggested.

Space permits me to do little more than list the other articles. I' Dexinger provides yet another historical reconstruction of Samaritanism and sees the break between Jerusalem and Shechem as occasioned by political and economic factors. B S Jackson gives a detailed but tentative account of possible Roman Law influences on Jewish law. D W Halivni shows that Rabbi Judah's Mishnah was not accepted as a second Bible, that there was opposition to it and that some of its stipulations were ignored. A I Baumgarten reconstructs a history of relations between the followers of Rabbi Hillel and of Rabbi Akiba under the title: the politics of reconciliation.

It will be clear that this volume contains much interesting material, but its coherence would have been greatly improved had contributors taken into account the views of fellow-contributors and had categories and distinctions been worked out in more detail and more systematically. It is surprising that no study of the Septuagint is included. There are indices of passages cited and of authors, but there is no index of subjects.

MARGARET PAMMENT

THE CULT OF SAINTS: its rise and function in Latin Christianity

by Peter Brown, SCM Press, London 1981. £6.95.

The Cult of the Saints contains material first delivered as the Haskell lectures given in the Divinity School at Chicago University in 1978. Its style is that of the orator, full of grace and glory, carrying an audience along into a rich and many-coloured world where a seventeenth century lyric of profane love provides a chapter heading to a discussion of early Christian tombs and present day dealings with a *faiih* in Morocco proves a parallel for appeals to the saints in the late antique world. If at times the rhetoric seems overdone, too rich for the reader, this is the

fault merely of transferring a spoken style of almost magical power to the stark printed page. Some of the glory has necessarily departed, and since this is so, the attention is not so dazzled as it might be in class, and the content of the book has to bear the full weight of criticism.

Mr Brown deals with changes in the concept of the holy in late antiquity, measuring the pagan and Christian elements involved in the world around the Mediterranean and northwards into Gaul in the masterly fashion of the biographer of *St Augustine of Hippo*. Many of the