

***“Written for Our Discipline and Use”: The Construction of Christian and Jewish Identities in Late Ancient Bible Interpretation.*** Edited by **Agneth Siquans**. *Studien zur antiken Schriftauslegung / Studies in Ancient Scriptural Interpretation*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1. Edition, 2021.

This volume examines the complexities of mutual contact, polemic, and group identity in the biblical exegesis of late antique Christianity and Judaism. Editor Agnethe Siquans situates this work in conversation with sociological theory and particularly J. Z. Smith’s argument that the sharpest boundaries are created as a result of closeness, not separation. The thematic and textual foci of the contributions are wide-ranging. The chapters by Harald Buchinger, Agnethe Siquans, Predrag Bukovec, Elisabeth Birnbaum, Anneliese Felber, and Gerhard Langer focus on polemical and vilifying aspects of mutual contact, while the chapters by Marc Hirsham, Bas ter Haar Romeney, Günter Stemberger, and Constanza Cordoni offer more nuanced and indirect examples of collective group formation.

Buchinger examines Origen’s exegesis on Exodus and argues that Origen presents Jewish biblical interpretation as primitive. Siquans compares Jewish and Christian writings on Exodus 2–3 and explores how the authors responded to their specific historical and cultural milieu in their exegesis. Bas ter Haar Romeney upholds the Antiochene-Alexandrian dichotomy and explores the relationship between the exegetical boundary-making of these schools. Bukovec explores the methodology of Aphrahat’s anti-Jewish exegesis and seeks the identity of the Jewish group with which Aphrahat engaged. Stemberger argues that rabbinic literature did not consider Judaism a Mosaic religion and that this designator comes from outside Judaism. Cordoni discusses the significance of the land of Israel in the identity construction of Jews in the Tannaitic, Amoraic, and post-Amoraic periods. Birnbaum analyzes the pointed way that Jerome employed polemic against women, Jews, philosophers, heretics, and church leaders in his exegesis on Ecclesiastes. Felber focuses on the figure of Mary, mother of Jesus as a point of contact between Christianity and Judaism that was used by early patristics to signify dissonance between the traditions. Following Felber’s chapter nicely, Langer argues that rabbinic authors utilized Miriam as an antithesis to Mary.

This compelling collection excels at showing the nebulous nature of identity and the dynamic and sometimes surprising forces that contribute to its formation. It will be of interest to anyone wishing to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon in late antiquity.

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