

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GEORGE NICKELSBURG'S *JEWISH LITERATURE BETWEEN THE BIBLE AND THE MISHNAH:* RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

RANDALL D. CHESNUTT*

Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981; paperback edition, 1987).

Nowadays the student who needs help navigating the vast and difficult terrain of Jewish literature from the Greco-Roman era has many guidebooks on which to draw. The situation was quite different in 1981 when George Nickelsburg published the masterful handbook reviewed here. The so-called apocryphal works preserved in the Septuagint were readily accessible in convenient texts, translations, and studies, as were the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus. The major Dead Sea Scrolls were finally published, and their revolutionary importance for understanding Judaism around the turn of the eras was steadily coming to light in a torrent of secondary literature, from the most technical studies to popular surveys.

But the works relegated to the amorphous category "pseudepigrapha" were little known and relatively inaccessible. In addition to the thirteen works in Emil Kautzsch's collection in 1900¹ and the seventeen in R.H. Charles' anthology in 1913,² scholars had isolated some three dozen others that did not fit into the better-known corpora but needed somehow to be brought into the discussion of early Judaism and Christian origins. Yet many of these texts were extant only in very late manuscripts and recondite languages, had complex compositional histories and even multiple text forms, and were available only in inferior editions and translations. To be sure, the 1970s

* Pepperdine University.

¹ *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen, 1900).

² *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford, 1913).

had seen a renaissance in the study of the Pseudepigrapha,³ heightened not only by interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls but also by a simultaneous revolution in the study of early rabbinic sources⁴ and by a flurry of archeological discoveries. The stereotype of a monolithic "normative Judaism" was rapidly giving way to a recognition of Jewish pluralism around the turn of the eras, thereby creating an atmosphere conducive to a new appreciation of long-neglected texts. Nevertheless, many texts remained in relative obscurity, even well-known texts needed re-examination in light of the dramatic changes in the larger field, and introductory guides were needed to disseminate the insights of scholarly research to colleagues in cognate areas and to non-specialists.

In producing such a handbook, Nickelsburg was not merely riding a wave of renewed interest in this literature; he was among those who initiated the wave. His 1967 Harvard dissertation, published in revised form in 1972 as *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*,⁵ had already demonstrated impressive skill in creatively and insightfully handling a wide array of "intertestamental" texts. Even more important was Nickelsburg's participation in the Society of Biblical Literature's Pseudepigrapha Group, which began in 1969.⁶ In establishing this group, a small cadre of col-

³ See James H. Charlesworth, "The Renaissance of Pseudepigrapha Studies: The SBL Pseudepigrapha Project," in *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 2 (1971), pp. 107-114; idem, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (Missoula, 1976; revised edition with a supplement, 1981); idem, "A History of Pseudepigrapha Research: The Re-emerging Importance of the Pseudepigrapha," in H. Temporini and W. Haase, eds., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.19.1 (Berlin, 1979), pp. 54-88; and Daniel J. Harrington, "Research on the Jewish Pseudepigrapha During the 1970s," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980), pp. 147-159.

⁴ This revolution was conceived and executed by Jacob Neusner more than by any other. Among his many hundreds of studies, see the following helpful essays: "The History of Earlier Rabbinic Judaism: Some New Approaches," in *History of Religions* 16 (1977), pp. 216-236; "'Judaism' after Moore: A Programmatic Statement," in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 31 (1980), pp. 141-156; and "The Use of Rabbinic Sources for the Study of Ancient Judaism," in W.S. Green, ed., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* (Chico, 1981), vol. 3, pp. 1-17.

⁵ *Harvard Theological Studies* 26 (Cambridge, MA and London, 1972).

⁶ I am indebted to George Nickelsburg for providing me with copies of all of the programs dating back to the inaugural breakfast at the Toronto meeting in 1969, along with many handwritten notes and oral anecdotes. If one of the purposes of the present volume is to suggest worthy projects for George Nickelsburg to undertake, writing a history of the SBL Pseudepigrapha Group could well be added to his list. Under various rubrics (Project, Seminar, Group, and Section) this SBL unit is now well into its fourth decade, making it more than one-fourth as old

leagues that included Nickelsburg created and defined a new discipline that has profoundly affected the study of early Judaism and Christian origins. The various venues for scholarly collaboration and publication in the early years of the Group are cited frequently in Nickelsburg's footnotes, often as the only significant published research on a given text.⁷ Even beyond the specific publications cited, the Pseudepigrapha Group served as a formative context for Nickelsburg's book, a matrix which both shaped and was shaped by his research.⁸

Nickelsburg's purpose was to produce an inductive work that would serve as "a first introduction to the Jewish literature of the so-called intertestamental period" for the informed non-specialist but also an engaging presentation for those who have covered the ground before (p. xi). Absent here is the Christian imperialism of many scholars who exploited the Jewish literature only to enhance the study of Christianity, usually by way of contrast. Nickelsburg was rather committed to studying each piece of literature on its own terms and within its own milieu; his interest was "not simply or primarily in ideas or motifs or in contents in some amorphous sense but in literature which has form and direction" (p. 3). The interest in literature as literature leads him to give regular attention to literary patterns such as the testamentary form, apocalyptic modes of expression, the Deuteronomic scheme of sin-punishment-repentance-salvation, and the typological correspondence between the end-time and

as the Society itself and one of the oldest units in continuous existence. Its history—the history of the emergence of a discipline—needs to be told. As the most regular participant in the Group from its inception to the present, Nickelsburg is the person to tell it.

⁷ See, e.g., the working papers published in Nickelsburg, ed., *Studies on the Testament of Moses* (Cambridge, MA, 1973); idem, ed., *Studies on the Testament of Joseph* (Missoula, 1975); idem, ed., *Studies on the Testament of Abraham* (Missoula, 1976); and idem and John J. Collins, eds., *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* (Chico, 1980). See also the various volumes in the Pseudepigrapha Series of the SBL Texts and Translations Project, the numerous papers in the SBL Annual Seminar Papers, and Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, which was written "in recognition of my colleagues in the SBL Pseudepigrapha Group." The fact that many of the works Nickelsburg cites are listed as forthcoming shows that the book was poised on the brink of an even more productive period in the investigation of this literature. Among the frequently-cited works listed as forthcoming are Michael E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Assen, 1984); and James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, 1983–1985).

⁸ In the Preface, Nickelsburg himself recognizes the Pseudepigrapha Group, along with his teaching at the University of Iowa, as the "unfootnoted context" of his work (pp. xii–xiii).

events of primordial or biblical history. He also regularly brings out the extensive appropriation of Biblical language in the works under discussion, as well as a wide range of history-of-religions parallels. Relying on the best scholarship but not hesitating to venture creative suggestions, Nickelsburg offers for every piece of literature under consideration "a possible road map, a grid, an ordering of relationships and emphases as we see them" (p. 4). These are all worthy goals, and the resulting book a veritable *tour de force* which not only filled an obvious need in 1981 but has stood the test of time and remains a useful resource today.

In a work of such scope, naturally there are matters on which to disagree, and we now turn to some of these, first with regard to the treatment of individual documents. Nickelsburg's view that the Testament of Moses was written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and then revised and expanded soon after the death of Herod the Great (pp. 80–83, 212–214) is possible but seems less likely than a date for the entire work in the early decades of the Common Era. *Joseph and Aseneth* seems less suited for the missionary function that Nickelsburg assigns to it (p. 262) than for addressing intramural Jewish concerns. Although generally reticent to suggest that a literary work emanated from a known Jewish faction, Nickelsburg probably overstates the case for associating the Martyrdom of Isaiah with the Qumran sect (pp. 144–145) and especially the evidence for attributing the Psalms of Solomon to the Pharisees (pp. 203, 212).⁹ The view that the author of 2 Maccabees was opposed to the Hasmonean priesthood and wrote directly to refute the pro-Hasmonean propaganda of 1 Maccabees (p. 121)¹⁰ attaches too much weight to hypothetical reconstructions of party propaganda and too little to the broader theological agenda of 2 Maccabees.

Rather than dwell on other issues of the interpretation of individual texts, it will be more productive to address two larger concerns: the choice of what to include and not include in the survey and the arrangement of the material. As to the former, one can cer-

⁹ Especially weak is the contention that "there is little if anything that characterizes them as non-Pharisaic. Among the Jewish sects known to us at this time, it is the Pharisees whom they most closely approximate" (p. 212). But why should a sectarian affiliation be assumed at all?

¹⁰ Here he follows Jonathan Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, Anchor Bible 41 (New York, 1976), pp. 78–89.

tainly understand the exclusion of several well-defined corpora that have been extensively investigated in their own right. Thus, Nickelsburg is justified in leaving aside the Septuagint and the works of Philo and Josephus, although by the same criteria one could omit the Qumran scrolls as well—an option that, happily for all, Nickelsburg did not take. In view of the pre-Mishnaic focus, the exclusion of the Samaritan literature and rabbinic writings is likewise appropriate, however deeply rooted in the earlier periods these materials are. The omission of other works is more difficult to explain except on the pragmatic grounds of space limitation. Thus, the War Scroll and the Temple Scroll are conspicuously absent from the Qumran writings discussed. Other significant lacunae include the Prayer of Manasseh, the Tale of the Three Bodyguards (1 Esdras 3:1–5:6), the Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, Books 4 and 5 of the Sibylline Oracles, the Treatise of Shem, the Apocryphon of Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse of Zephaniah. Also absent are the Jewish authors whose works are partially preserved for us by Eusebius and a few other ancient writers, largely from excerpts mediated to them by Alexander Polyhistor; these include Ezekiel the Tragedian, Philo the Epic Poet, Theodotus, Pseudo-Orpheus, Aristobulus, Demetrius the Chronographer, Aristeeas the Exegete, Eupolemus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, and Artapanus. If works that are Christian in their present form but likely based on a Jewish original are candidates for inclusion, the corpus could be expanded even further, as we shall discuss below.

More surprising than the omissions is the inclusion of some works that fall outside Nickelsburg's stated parameters. The Book of Daniel is discussed at length in Chaps. 1 and 3 because it relates so closely to the other works considered there. However, the inclusion of this biblical book means that the title *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* is a misnomer. Furthermore, if one biblical writing is to be considered, why not others that fall within Nickelsburg's chronological bounds, such as Ecclesiastes, the Chronicler's History, and some of the post-Exilic Psalms?

The inclusion of the Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 8 is even more surprising. By any Christian definition of "Bible," this once again transgresses the parameters set by the title of the book. By "Bible," of course, Nickelsburg really means "Hebrew Bible," and making this slight adjustment to the title would obviate one objection to the inclusion of Matthew. However, there are other good reasons for leaving Matthew out of this book. Why should one New

Testament writing be included and not others? It is true that Matthew, like 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, took shape in the traumatic aftermath of 70 C.E., but the same can be said of the Revelation of John, which Nickelsburg does not treat. The logic for including Matthew would also seem to call for including in the appropriate sections other very Jewish writings in the New Testament, such as James and even the letters of Paul, the self-styled "Hebrew of Hebrews." Yet Matthew is the sole representative of the New Testament. For the same reasons that Nickelsburg omits Josephus and Philo, it would seem best to omit the New Testament as well.

Substituting "Hebrew Bible" for "Bible" would eliminate yet another problem. By his very title Nickelsburg places the "apocryphal" or "deutero-canonical" works *between* the Bible and the Mishnah, when in the Septuagint and in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, these writings are in fact *part of* the Bible. But because they are not found in the *Hebrew Bible*, all would welcome their inclusion if the title were changed to *Jewish Literature between the Hebrew Bible and the Mishnah*. Even with this adapted title the inclusion of Daniel would represent an anomaly, and it goes without saying that Daniel must be included in any study of the historical periods covered in the first half of this book. Nevertheless, confusion could be minimized if at least some rationale were offered for transgressing the boundaries indicated in the title.

Questions can be raised about the arrangement of the literature as well as its selection. Seven of the nine chapters follow a historical structure in which a succinct survey of a given period in Israel's history is followed by consideration of the various works thought to have been written in that historical context. Such an arrangement is by far the best in spite of its limitations, not the least of which is that we often do not know the date of a work's origin or subsequent redactional history. Nickelsburg is duly cautious and tentative in placing works of uncertain date into a chronological framework, and when the general setting of a work can be determined with some confidence, he is judicious in relating that setting to his reading of the work. Moreover, the historical arrangement allows for attention to the evolutionary development of a number of works. Thus Nickelsburg assigns the Testament of Moses to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and treats it in Chapter 3, but also considers it again in Chapter 6 on the Roman period, when he believes "the work was

dusted off and revised to make it relevant for new times" by means of interpolated allusions to the Hasmonean princes and to Herod and his sons (p. 213).¹¹ The historical format is especially well-suited for laying out the literary evolution of what is now called 1 Enoch. Various component parts of this composite work, all set in their likely historical contexts, and some with long compositional histories of their own, are treated in turn in Chaps. 2, 3, 4, and 6. Here Nickelsburg is at his best, although others will piece together the literary puzzle in different ways. Because we cannot be sure that the pentateuchal form of the work existed before the Ethiopic compilation, it is refreshing that Nickelsburg's presentation is not governed by the structure of the Ethiopic version. Instead he sees a long accumulation of texts and traditions, and attempts to locate these stages within the appropriate historical periods. Already a published authority on the Enochic materials before he wrote this book, Nickelsburg's research on these complex traditions has continued down to the present and has now issued in the publication of the first volume of a massive commentary on 1 Enoch.¹²

Two chapters depart from the historical pattern followed so effectively in the other seven. Chapter 5, "Israel in Egypt," brings several works together on the basis of their likely geographical provenance, and Chapter 7, "The Exposition of Israel's Scriptures," assembles writings of a common literary genre. While one can certainly make a case for arranging the material on the basis of geographical provenance or literary genre, the use of multiple organizing principles generates some confusion. Thus, although the book of Jubilees is a prime example of the "Exposition of Israel's Scriptures," it is placed instead in Chapter 3 among those works written in reaction to the Seleucid crisis and the Maccabean Revolt. Likewise, the Qumran commentaries on Habakkuk, Psalms, Nahum, and Isaiah, as well as the Florilegium or Midrash on the Last Days (4Q174) and the Testimonia or Messianic Anthology (4Q175) are classified under "The Hasmoneans and their Opponents" in Chapter 4 rather than as works of biblical

¹¹ This view is debatable, as we have noted above, but the point here is that the arrangement by historical periods allows for the clear presentation of such reconstructions.

¹² See his *1 Enoch 1* (Minneapolis, 2001), and the responses to it in the present volume, below, pp. 365–423.

exposition. Indeed, of the various Qumran texts that are primarily exegetical in nature, only the Genesis Apocryphon appears in the chapter on "The Exposition of Israel's Scriptures."

Other works that do appear in the chapter on biblical exposition could as well be included elsewhere. Thus, the Testament of Job and Joseph and Aseneth—if Nickelsburg is right that they were composed in Egypt—would fit nicely in the chapter on "Israel in Egypt." Pseudo-Philo's Book of Biblical Antiquities could well be placed among the works spawned by the tragedy of 66–70 c.e. considered in Chapter 8, especially since Nickelsburg discerns certain features that "would be especially appropriate during or after the chaos of the years 66–70" (p. 268). Moreover, if works of the "exposition" genre are to be taken out of the historical arrangement for separate treatment, why not also apocalyptic works, wisdom texts, and other generic groupings?

The title of Chapter 1, "Tales of the Dispersion," suggests that its contents are likewise determined by genre rather than by historical period. Indeed, the Additions to Daniel (Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men) are placed in Chapter 1 because of their fictional setting and genre even though by virtue of their likely dates of composition they belong in the Seleucid or Hasmonean periods treated in Chapters 3 and 4. Certainly they date later than the Astronomical Book of Enoch (I Enoch 72–82), the Book of the Watchers (I Enoch 1–36), and Ben Sira, all of which are treated in Chapter 2 under the heading "Palestine in the Wake of Alexander the Great." On the other hand, the deferment of Judith and Baruch until Chapter 4 shows that the historical setting of these two works in the Hasmonean period has trumped their fictional setting as "Tales of the Diaspora."

No system of classifying this diverse literature is without its difficulties, and Nickelsburg is to be applauded for cutting through traditional but problematic categories such as Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and examining the various works within their respective historical contexts. Nevertheless, some anomalies could have been avoided by dispensing with the competing organizational principles and adhering more consistently to the single system of historical sequence which he follows in most chapters. At the very least, if the works of Egyptian provenance are to be removed from the chronological framework and assembled in one chapter, that chapter should begin with the same kind of historical sketch that introduces the other chapters.

Nickelsburg foregoes such a survey “[b]ecause we are dealing with a long time-span and in view of the many complexities involved in reconstructing the history of Egyptian Judaism during this period” (p. 162). The data are admittedly complex, but no more so than the other historical settings which he reconstructs so deftly. In fact, given the extensive data on Egyptian Judaism (especially Philo’s works and the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*),¹³ there may be even more potential here than in some of the other historical sketches to contextualize a number of Jewish literary works.

It would be unfair to evaluate Nickelsburg’s book in the light of developments in the two decades since its publication, and thus far I have carefully avoided reference to such developments. However, in closing it seems appropriate to mention a few recent developments that should be taken into account if and when a revised edition is published. The first and most obvious is the sheer volume of material that now vies for consideration. Among primary sources one thinks of the long-awaited and extremely important Qumran text, “Some Precepts of the Torah” (4QMMT), which is finally available in a composite edition as well as in texts and translations of the overlapping fragments.¹⁴ The extant fragments from Hellenistic Jewish authors mentioned above as having been bypassed by Nickelsburg are now readily accessible. Translations and preliminary studies of these important fragments are assembled in Charlesworth’s *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*,¹⁵ and a comprehensive collection with critical texts, translations, and detailed analyses is provided in Carl Holladay’s monumental *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*.¹⁶ Secondary literature on all of the texts and topics covered by Nickelsburg has also mushroomed in recent years. One need only peruse the massive bibliographies by Andreas Lehnardt,¹⁷ Lorenzo DiTomasso,¹⁸

¹³ Victor A. Tcherikover with Alexander Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1957–1964).

¹⁴ See Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4*, vol. 5, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 10 (Oxford, 1994). Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 77–85, provides a rendering of the composite text as well as a translation of the six individual manuscripts.

¹⁵ Vol. 2, pp. 773–919.

¹⁶ 4 vols. (Chico, and Atlanta, 1983–1996). A fifth and final volume is in preparation.

¹⁷ *Bibliographie zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (Gütersloh, 1999).

¹⁸ *A Bibliography of Pseudepigrapha Research 1850–1999* (Sheffield, 2001).

or Florentino García Martínez and Donald W. Parry,¹⁹ or review the spate of anthologies produced in the 1980s and 1990s,²⁰ to sense the magnitude of scholarly interest in the literature surveyed by Nickelsburg. Bibliographical updating alone will be a sizeable undertaking if and when he revises his book, even where his own views are not appreciably altered.

One current trend with which Nickelsburg will have to grapple in a new edition of his book is the tendency to take more seriously the Christian setting of many of our "pseudepigraphical" texts in their extant forms. As Robert A. Kraft has emphasized, we have been so concerned with recovering the *original* language, provenance, and form of a given text that we have been inattentive to the language and setting of the *surviving* text as valuable bits of historical information in their own right, and perhaps even as clues to who produced it.²¹ Closely related is the increased awareness of how difficult it is to distinguish Jewish and Christian texts, and Jewish and Christian elements within texts. It is entirely conceivable that a self-consciously Christian author, drawing on the shared Jewish heritage, could have composed a work without saying anything distinctively Christian—in which case we would be unable to recognize its Christian origin. That early Jewish sources and traditions lie embedded in many works that are Christian in their preserved form is not in doubt; what is questionable is our ability to extract those materials with such surgical precision that they provide independent witnesses to earlier, even pre-Christian, forms of Judaism. The situation is far more complicated than Adolf Harnack's canon, "whatever is not clearly Christian is Jewish,"²² would suggest.

The problem is most acute and consequential in the case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, which are patently Christian

¹⁹ *A Bibliography of the Finds in the Desert of Judah 1970–95* (Leiden, 1996).

²⁰ See a partial list by James H. Charlesworth in his Preface to DiTomasso, *Bibliography*, p. 23.

²¹ "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity," in John C. Reeves, ed., *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Atlanta, 1994), p. 76, n. 3. See also p. 63: "Clearly the pseudepigrapha, including those of demonstrable Jewish origin, have had a long association with Christianity and deserve more than passing attention in that context. Once their setting in Christianity has been recognized more clearly, it may be possible to pose more carefully the questions of origin and early transmission."

²² *Geschichte des altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, 2 vols. in 4 (Leipzig, 1893; 2nd ed. repr., Leipzig, 1958), vol. 1.2, p. 861.

in their present form but relate in some way to Aramaic and Hebrew testaments found at Qumran and in the Cairo Geniza. Whether the extant Testaments represent a basically Jewish work that has been interpolated with explicit Christological references and otherwise adapted by Christians, or a Christian composition that makes extensive use of Jewish traditions, is a long-standing debate that Nickelsburg says “[w]e shall not attempt here to decide” (p. 234). It is unfortunate that two further decades of discussion have yielded no consensus on this thorny issue.²³ Whatever Nickelsburg’s current thinking on the issue, he will need to consider carefully how best to treat the Testaments in any subsequent incarnation of his book. It is difficult to know what more he can do; already he has separated the Testaments out of the historical framework and treated them along with other works under “The Exposition of Israel’s Scriptures” with the explanation: “The time and place of their composition are difficult to ascertain, and we must therefore interpret them without reference to these data” (p. 231). Perhaps placing the Testaments in a chapter or excursus or appendix on Christian works that appear to recycle early Jewish compositions would be in order, although, as is noted earlier, the use of multiple organizing principles creates confusion. Moreover, the limits of such a section would be exceedingly difficult to define,²⁴ as many of the same issues arise in other works that Nickelsburg considers (Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, 3 Baruch, and The *Paraleipomena* of Jeremiah [4 Baruch]) and numerous others

²³ Marinus de Jonge, long-time champion of Christian authorship of the Testaments, now allows that they preserve more Jewish material than he previously acknowledged, but still concentrates on the final form of the text and remains skeptical of efforts to get behind it to a pre-Christian composition. See H.W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden, 1985). Robert A. Kugler’s recent “conversion” may signal a trend in this direction. Kugler’s earlier work on the compositional history of the Testament of Levi put him squarely within the camp of those who assume a pre-Christian form of the Testaments as a whole and who labor to recover its contents (*From Patriarch to Priest: The Levi-Priestly Tradition from Aramaic Levi to Testament of Levi* [Atlanta, 1996]). Now, however, he leans more toward de Jonge’s view that “we most profitably focus our attention on the Christian composition that remains to us. . . . There is too much still to discover by studying the *Testaments* as a Christian work to squander much effort on the search for ‘origins’” (*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* [Sheffield, 2001], p. 7).

²⁴ Obviously a section with as broad a title as Harnack’s category “Jewish Literature Appropriated, and Sometimes Reworked, by Christians” (*Geschichte des altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, vol. 1.2, pp. 845–865) would be impractical in that would encompass most if not all of the works in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha!

that he does not (e.g., the Lives of the Prophets, the Testament of Solomon, Jannes and Jambres, and the History of the Rechabites).

Another problem—and it is not Nickelsburg's alone but a perennial challenge to all who work with this literature—is the paucity of reliable research on the pseudepigrapha preserved in Old Church Slavonic, especially 2 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Abraham. With regard to 2 Enoch, Nickelsburg is probably correct that the shorter of the recensions is “the more original” and that Greek is the original language (p. 185). However, it should be emphasized that he is dependent here on the work of André Vaillant²⁵ which is quite dated and in serious need of reassessment. There are substantial divergences not only between the two major recensions, but also within the manuscripts of both recensions. In our present state of knowledge we should exclude neither the possibility that the longer recension preserves some ancient readings, perhaps even original ones, nor the possibility of a Semitic substratum for at least part of the work.²⁶ Moreover, the methodological problem discussed above—the difficulty of recovering ancient Jewish works from texts preserved only in very late Christian forms—arises once again in the case of the Slavonic pseudepigrapha. Our manuscripts of both 2 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Abraham date from the fourteenth century and later, and the extent to which the sect of the Bogomils reshaped these works as they “preserved” them is unknown. The unusual combination of skills needed to clarify these issues—which includes, at a minimum, expertise in ancient Judaism, in Slavic dialects, and in the medieval sect of the Bogomils—is in short supply. Nickelsburg acknowledges the need for help on 2 Enoch from such rare experts when he writes: “For the brave who are prepared to work in ancient Slavic dialects, this little-studied work holds considerable promise” (p. 188). In the meantime, the first century C.E. Jewish setting to which he assigns both 2 Enoch and the Testament of Abraham, while quite plausible, must be regarded as tentative.

Space permits reference to only one other matter of contemporary methodological concern: the assignment of works to a specific

²⁵ *Le Livre des secrets d'Hénoch: Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris, 1952; repr., 1976).

²⁶ See Christfried Böttrich, “Recent Studies in the Slavonic Book of Enoch,” in *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 9 (1991), pp. 35–42; and especially idem, *Das slavisch Henochbuch* (Gütersloh, 1995).

date and provenance on the basis of supposed covert allusions to contemporary circumstances. Thus Nickelsburg sees the myth of supernatural procreation in the watchers' revolt in 1 Enoch 6–11 as “a parody of the claims of divine procreation attached to certain of the Diadochi” (p. 52); the oracles against the watchers in 1 Enoch 12–16 are in fact talking about the defiled Jerusalem priesthood of the author's own time (p. 54); adaptations to the biblical text in Jubilees reflect the issues of the Hellenistic reform in second century B.C.E. Jerusalem (pp. 76–79); the figures and events in the dream visions in 1 Enoch 83–90 have precise counterparts in the era of Seleucid rule and the Maccabean revolt (pp. 93–94); and Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Judith “may be understood as a figure for Antiochus IV” (p. 108). In addition to the general postmodern skepticism about such inferences, Eric S. Gruen has recently challenged this approach on the basis of the creative artistry, playful imagination, and sardonic wit with which ancient Jewish authors manipulated their materials in order to give Jewish readers pride in their heritage and amusement in its novel reformulation. The pervasive comic element, he insists, means that we cannot link the literary productions to partisan politics and current events as easily as is commonly supposed. Works distinguished more by inventive imagination for purposes of amusement than by veiled allusions to current events for serious apologetic or polemical purposes could have originated in any number of circumstances, and they resist consignment to a specific date and provenance.²⁷ Gruen draws a false dichotomy in calling for a choice between historical correspondences and literary imagination. He also fails to allow adequately for the apocalyptic perspective wherein events in the earthly and historical realm have counterparts in the heavenly and mythical realm. Even so, his caveat is well taken. Rarely do the works in question provide simple allegory with precise historical equivalents, in spite of the incessant scholarly quest to find exactly that. This is not to call into question any one of Nickelsburg's historical judgments or his approach in general. Indeed, he shows great restraint in this regard, often declining to draw historical connections where others have done so, and acknowledging the provisional nature of many of the historical connections

²⁷ *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1998).

that he does draw (e.g., pp. 52, 64, 108, 149). Nevertheless, Gruen provides a timely caution to Nickelsburg and all others who try to infer social and historical contexts from literary texts. Even our most assured reconstructions are just that—reconstructions—and therefore remain subject to constant review and revision.

More telling than all of the criticisms that can be leveled against Nickelsburg's book is the fact that we are still talking about the book more than two decades after its publication. In a field in which change has been so rapid and dramatic, this is truly remarkable. As a textbook for college and seminary courses on early Jewish literature, the book has not yet been superseded. As a reference tool it remains a first stop for many—including specialists in the field—who set out to study the material in greater depth. That so many are still learning from it, reacting to it, building on it, and—at least in the case of the present essay—quibbling about how to fine-tune it, is perhaps the highest commendation of this outstanding book and its deserving author.

RESPONSE TO RANDALL CHESNUTT

A

The subtitle for the first part of this response might be "The Anatomy of a Book, or How I came to Shape the Book as I Did." As Randall Chesnutt notes, my purpose was to create a first introduction to a literature that was largely unknown to students and to many colleagues who focused their work on the Hebrew Bible and/or the New Testament. Titling the book was itself a problem. I wanted to avoid the term "intertestamental literature," because it brought with it Christian presuppositions about the "New Testament." Reference to "the Greco-Roman period" would introduce a point of reference extrinsic to Judaism, and "the Second Temple period" would imply the inclusion of much of the Hebrew Bible. The title I chose was suggested by a collection of the same name edited by Willem van Unnik.¹ In the context of "Jewish Literature," the term "Bible" seemed appropriate and its referent, obvious. The unqualified noun was also a reminder that some (viz., the Jews) could construe the Bible without a New Testament. The term "Tanakh" would hardly have worked for a non-Jewish potential readership.

What to include or exclude was a major problem. Given the time-frame of my coverage, I could not exclude Daniel, even though it is part of both the Jewish and Christian Bibles. Certainly, I might have included Qoheleth, but I was excluding some non-canonical works, and this text seemed less germane and necessary to the book's exposition than Daniel. The date of the post-exilic Psalms was and is a disputed issue, and the Chronicler seemed too early and also less germane. I included a brief discussion of Matthew almost as an appendix, in the hope that a comparison of its treatment of the destruction of Jerusalem with that in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra would be instructive for some Christian readers. (See my later treatment of this subject, above, pp. 3–16.) The Apocalypse of John would not have made the same point, much less the Pauline corpus!

¹ W.C. van Unnik, *La littérature juive entre Tenak et Mishna: Quelques problèmes* (Leiden, 1974).

What to include or exclude among the non-canonical Jewish literature was a more complex problem. For completeness, I probably should have included what I omitted of the Apocrypha: the Story of the Guardsmen in 1 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. In fact, since then I have discussed both texts elsewhere.² Among the Scrolls, I should have included the War Scroll, the only currently available major Scroll I omitted. The English translation of Yadin's edition of the Temple Scroll appeared three years after my book, and to my knowledge there was no other English translation available. As to the other texts mentioned by Chesnutt, I exercised my judgment as to which among the texts that were then readily available worked best in a first introduction. Charlesworth's two volume collection appeared only in 1983 and Sparks' edition, in 1984. Of the works not included the Charles's edition of the Pseudepigrapha, I chose, with one exception, texts that had been discussed in the SBL Pseudepigrapha Group. There were translations (and some texts) and some discussion within the framework of modern critical scholarship.

The organization of the book was the main problem, and no resolution of it would be totally satisfactory. The easiest and least controversial approach was to group the texts by genre. This approach, however, ignored a fundamental fact about the texts; they were historical artifacts created in time and place and for specific purposes.³ To the extent that one could determine these specifics, one better understood the texts. In addition, I wanted to create a textbook that would work well in the classroom. My conscious model was Bernhard Anderson's *Understanding the Old Testament* and, perhaps, John Bright's *Kingdom of God*. Both, with their historically oriented approach, had brought the books of the Hebrew Bible to life for me when, as a seminary student, I had first taken up the serious study of the texts. Thus, both as a scholar and a teacher, I felt that a historical organization of the texts was the right approach for the kind of book I was writing.

² Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten," pp. 131–135; idem, "The Prayer of Manasseh," in John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 770–773.

³ For an excellent reference work that treats this literature by genres, see Michael E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Assen and Philadelphia, 1983). The organization by genres works well (and is probably the only viable approach) in a multi-authored volume that is part of a set that has a discreet volume dedicated to the history of the period.

The approach brought with it considerable risk and some tactical problems. While many of the works I would treat could be situated in time and place with a fair amount of certainty, the elusive character of others created a distinct problem. How would they fit into the organization of the book? In the end, my organization of the book was both applauded for its effort and criticized in some of its details. Twenty years later this is reflected in Chesnutt's response.

The texts treated in chapters 2 to 4 and 6, 8, and 9 work well in such a historical framework, although there are points of uncertainty and dispute. The problems in the book's organization lie especially in chapters 1, 5, and 7, in part because they appear to break the flow of the book's historical exposition. The texts in chapters 1 and 5 have in common their geographical grouping. They are set in and/or emanate from the eastern diaspora and Egypt respectively. By default this means—and I should have stated this explicitly in the book—that chapters 2 to 4 and 6, 8, and 9 are arranged chronologically according to the history of *Palestinian Judaism*. Having said this, I want to emphasize that chapters 1 and 5 do not totally break the book's historical paradigm. The texts in the core of Daniel 1–6 may be the oldest that I treat in the book, and arguably they belong at the beginning. The others are difficult to place in time, although Tobit is chronologically preceded in chapter 2 only by the earliest strata in 1 Enoch. The texts in chapter 5 are set in Egypt, but they are organized in historical sequence, and that sequence begins after the latest certainly datable book in chapter 1. Thus, although this is not explicit in the book (and it should have been) chapters 1–6 and 8–9 were organized sequentially, as best as I was able to do it. That I alternated geographic locations in the sequence of the book has some precedent in the Book of Tobit, or more relevantly, in historical textbooks that one could cite. To have intermingled texts from Palestine, the eastern diaspora, and Egypt along a single time line would have been more confusing than Chesnutt finds the present arrangement.

The main problem in the book's arrangement is chapter 7, both with respect to its content and its placement. It consists almost exclusively of a set of left-overs, *paraleipomena*, if you will, that are too interesting and important to omit from the book, but that cannot be placed in a certain time frame. The exception is Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*. In my penultimate draft, I had put it in chapter 8, but I moved it into chapter 7 with other works of a similar character.

Since I felt that it could be placed either before or after 70 c.e., I did not want to prejudice its interpretation by grouping it with a set of post-70 c.e. texts. So I placed it at the end of chapter 7, as close to chapter 8 as I could! As with chapters 1 and 5, dating does play something of a role in the placement of chapter 7. None of the texts in that chapter, except the Genesis Apocryphon, which I put there for genre reasons, is clearly earlier than the texts in chapter 6. So there is some rationale for the respective placement of chapters 1, 5, and 7.

As to the content of chapter 7, I agree with Chesnutt that "The Exposition of Israel's Scriptures" is a misnomer, because it wrongly implies that texts discussed in the other chapters are not such. An appropriate title would have been "Retelling Stories from Israel's History (agreeing with the Priestly redactor that Adam and Eve belong in that history). A more serious problem with the texts is the uncertainty of their provenance. The Genesis Apocryphon and Pseudo-Philo are clearly Jewish. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, with their frequent explicit christological references are a special case; the Christian doxology at the end of the Testament of Abraham is less of a problem. But what of this text and the others? When and where were they written, and in what cases are they arguably Jewish or Christian? Their "Old Testament" content and their lack of internal Christian references do not guarantee their Jewish provenance any more than the same facts indicate that Handel's dramatic oratorios were written by a Jew. With respect to this issue, as Chesnutt notes, we are all in the debt of Robert Kraft and his repeated insistence that we start with the texts as we receive them—on manuscripts that are the products of Christian scribes. So where does one place them in this book and how does one treat them? That they should remain is clear to me. They transmit interesting and important traditions of Jewish origin (at least), and they tend to be excluded from traditional histories of Christian literature (to the extent they belong in that company).

B

That scholarship in this field has increased geometrically and changed in dramatic fashion since I published this book is attested by some of Chesnutt's comments, not least his observation that whole books

are now required to contain the bibliography. So have some of my own thinking and opinions changed. But my fundamental approach to the texts remains the same. First, we should treat the texts as historical artifacts, although we should heed Erich Gruen's caution. Second, we should respect the literary shape of the texts and take it seriously as a means into what the author was trying to convey. I resist any post-modern relativism that would claim that such demonstrable literary order is pure accident and/or irrelevant.

The careful and substantial scholarship of Marinus de Jonge and his students places the burden of proof on anyone who wishes to argue for a Jewish *Vorlage* of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. That the work transmits traditions of Jewish origin is clear from the Qumran Scrolls and other Jewish texts. However, different from the other texts in my chapter 7, christological references are integrated into this text at numerous places. Even if there was a Jewish *Vorlage* for the collection, no scholar's reconstruction of that text has thus far gained a consensus. So why not treat its present form as an attestation of the pluriform shape of the early Christian tradition?

As I have emphasized in other responses in this volume, we need to recognize and try to give shape to the religious and social variety of early Judaism. Hasidim, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots are no longer tenable as an exhaustive descriptive scheme. Thus, I would not argue for the Pharisaic provenance of the Psalms of Solomon, and I actually stopped short of such a positive identification in the book. The Martyrdom of Isaiah is different issue; the work has many similarities to the Qumran sect, though, to set the record straight, I did not and do not "associate" the text with that group.

Other texts that I treated in the book involve different kinds of problems and issues. Careful literary criticism remains an important tool, where it is relevant, and I still date an early form of the Testament of Moses to Antiochan times, having read no compelling argument to the contrary. Randall Chesnutt, Ross Kramer, and others have substantially enhanced the discussion of Joseph and Aseneth, though I still find this tantalizing text elusive in many respects. One may argue for possible Bogmil influences in the literature preserved in Slavic languages, but where I have tied certain specifics of the Apocalypse of Abraham to the period around 70 C.E., I find nothing that does not fit that Jewish provenance. The accessible publication of the fragmentary Hellenistic Jewish authors enriches our understanding of the variety in early Judaism and also indicates

where other authors and texts are not quite unique. But the fragmentary character of the works limits our ability to interpret the texts.

The case of 2 Maccabees nicely illustrates the complexity and difficulties in trying to determine the “message” and purpose of an ancient text. First, since 2 Maccabees is an epitome of a larger five volume work (by Jason of Cyrene) that is no longer extant, we cannot be absolutely certain how much of 2 Maccabees the author has complete investment in and what parts of it are vestigial remains of the earlier work. So we must take it as it is. Second, one can find in the text a number of repeated motifs and emphases. Which one controls the exposition, and how do the others relate to it logically and in the author’s set of priorities? Robert Doran, who wrote after my book was published, is correct in emphasizing the Temple.⁴ As I had also noted, the Temple is an element that, from start to finish, provides content for this author’s deployment of the Deuteronomic historical scheme. So it is central. Also important is the figure of Judas Maccabeus, who is God’s agent for the deliverance of Israel and the restoration of the Temple. In this context it is surprising that one hears nothing about Mattathias, the progenitor of the priestly dynasty that presided over that Temple. Judas’s companions are just that and not his brothers, and where the brothers (who would become high priests) are mentioned, it is not in a good light. Conversely, the martyrs—Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother—play major roles, precisely at the point where Mattathias is the pivotal figure in 1 Maccabees. It is probably too much to say that *the purpose* of the book is to “set straight” the facts about the Hasmoneans, but that the author was “opposed to” or displeased with the Hasmonean dynasty seems evident to me.

Last, but not least, while the full publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls will not revolutionize the study of early Judaism and early Christianity to the extent that the publication of the first Scrolls did, the mass of new material will help us better to understand the finer and, in some cases, the larger contours of Judaism in the centuries around the turn of the era.

⁴ Robert Doran, *Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees* (Washington, D.C., 1981).

In short, in twenty years our knowledge of the history and literature of this period has exploded, and we are now left to pick up the pieces. Alas, for all that has been accomplished, the laborers are few. The canonical Scriptures and the "canonical" periods still get the lion's share of the work, and this is understandable for a number of reasons. However, from the viewpoint of humanistic scholarship and the history of religions, the period under consideration promises a great deal indeed. Moreover, different from biblical scholarship, there remains a good deal of untouched ground to turn over, and this offers the opportunity for fresh, exciting, and imaginative scholarship. As a bonus, this work will enrich the study of the Bible (however one defines it) and the history of the religious traditions that it attests.