

recommended to anyone interested in the study of Jeremiah, particularly, and in biblical prophecy, in general.

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Stone, Michael E. *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. xiv + 242 pp. Paper, \$30.00.

During the last several decades, our understanding of ancient Judaism has become increasingly complicated, nuanced, and refined. Traditional scholarship assumed that most Jews in antiquity adhered to the legalistic worldview found in rabbinic literature and that the early Christian movement—steeped in apocalyptic visions, charisma, and mystical interactions with divine beings—emerged in sharp contrast to its Jewish surroundings. However, literary and archaeological discoveries of the last fifty years have demonstrated that ancient Jewish thought was much more diverse and dynamic than scholars previously imagined. It is now clear that ancient Judaism was not monolithically legalistic, but that Jews in antiquity promoted a variety of beliefs and practices, many of which provided an indigenous context for the development of early Christianity.

One scholar who has greatly expanded our understanding of ancient Jewish diversity is Michael Stone. An expert in largely unknown ancient languages and texts, Stone has, for many years, studied the manuscripts, content, and sociohistorical implications of pseudepigraphical writings. This literature (preserved mostly in Christian circles) often elaborates on biblical stories and expresses ideas not found in mainstream rabbinic Judaism, making it valuable evidence for alternative forms of ancient Jewish thought. Stone's new book—*Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views*—is his most recent contribution to this field of study. As stated in the preface, this book does not present a single and sustained thesis. Rather, it is a collection of studies in which Stone discusses various aspects of Second Temple Judaism in an attempt to challenge traditional assumptions regarding ancient Jewish beliefs and practices (ix), and to reevaluate the origins of early Christianity in light of new textual discoveries (1-4).

Chapter 1 begins with an insightful discussion on the “spectacles of orthodoxy.” For centuries the texts that informed us about ancient Judaism have been the traditional Christian and Jewish canons. However, because these texts were selected by groups whose beliefs and practices eventually became dominant, the traditional canons naturally filtered out worldviews that were not endorsed by the “orthodoxies” of later centuries. In recent decades, however, scholars have been able to recover this diversity of thought through the discovery of noncanonical texts that give voice to individuals,

groups, or movements that were ultimately marginalized (4-16). Challenges in attempting to recover these voices include the incomplete corpus, the complexities of manuscript transmission, and the difficulty in establishing a social context for pseudepigraphic writings. Nevertheless, Stone argues that efforts to provide accessible translations of these texts—such as unpublished papyri, Cairo Genizah manuscripts, and literature preserved in lesser-known languages (such as old-church Slavonic and Armenian)—must be a priority in future studies of ancient Judaism and early Christian origins (16-30).

The remainder of the book is a compilation of studies demonstrating ways in which pseudepigraphic texts help us understand the diverse socioreligious dynamics of ancient Judaism. For example, chapter 2 examines Enochic literature found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and shows how this material challenges the traditional explanation for the origins of sin and suffering. Writings that came to be canonical, such as the book of Genesis, view human disobedience (the transgression of Adam and Eve) as being responsible for evil in this world. However, the Enochic fragments, including parts of *1 Enoch*, claim that fallen angels introduced sin into the world, thus providing an alternative explanation to human suffering (31-33, 51-58). This alternative worldview, Stone suggests, was perpetuated by Jewish priestly circles that were not well represented or remembered by later rabbis. These circles produced and collected numerous texts that were not preserved in the later canon (such as *Jubilees*, *Aramaic Levi*, *11QMelchizedek*, and Noah literature), but that infuse biblical stories with priestly interests and interpretations (33-51).

Chapter 3 examines “Apocalyptic historiography”—the way some texts in this period use patterns, numbers, and the periodization of human history to affirm God’s control over current events and eschatological redemption (59-89). Chapter 4 considers the visionary experiences described in noncanonical texts such as *4 Ezra*; while traditional scholarship has dismissed these reports as pious fiction, Stone considers the possibility that actual ecstatic experience might lie behind this literature (91-121). Chapter 5 reassesses traditional views of the tripartite biblical canon (the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings) in light of the pseudepigrapha and the authoritative books at Qumran; these collections suggest that terminology of “canon” and “bible” are anachronistic for the pre-70 period because different groups of Jews had different lists of texts they viewed as divinely inspired (122-150).

Chapter 6 examines clusters of pseudepigraphic texts based on the biblical figures of Adam, Elijah, and Ezra; because we currently know little concerning the context of these clusters, more work needs to be done to identify the authorship and social setting of these texts (151-171). Finally, chapter 7 treats the transmission of extrabiblical books in antiquity; while the rabbis did not preserve any Jewish literature written between the third century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. (possibly due to ideologies or genres they considered unacceptable), it was Christian circles that preserved this literature

in the ecclesiastical languages of later centuries. Nevertheless, these texts all express ancient Jewish thought and, as such, must be recovered, studied, and contextualized in order to better understand Second Temple Judaism and the origins of early Christianity (172-194).

This book represents a valuable contribution to the study of ancient Jewish thought in its various manifestations. Stone's work on these topics draws attention to lesser-known texts and concepts that existed on the socioreligious landscape of ancient Judaism, and he exemplifies a solid methodology for integrating this material into biblical and postbiblical studies. As he has done for years, Stone continues to articulate Jewish diversity and contextualize early Christian origins in a way that will greatly benefit students and scholars. *Ancient Judaism* summarizes many of Stone's contributions and is a worthwhile read that will provide readers with a helpful introduction to the latest scholarship being done on a variety of issues.

Because this book is a compilation of loosely connected (and often condensed) studies, however, some of the chapters prove to be more informative than others. For example, Stone's discussions of "orthodoxy" and visionary experience contain highly original and thought-provoking insights that have the potential to push scholarship in interesting and new directions. In regard to the latter topic, his argument for taking religious experience seriously in our evaluation of ancient literature could have far-reaching implications for visionary texts not covered in this study, such as the Apocalypse of John and the mystical *hekhalot* corpus. In this way, *Ancient Judaism* offers fresh and cutting-edge research that can be applied in various aspects of scholarship.

However, other chapters—such as Stone's treatments of apocalyptic historiography and the traditional canon—simply restate observations and conclusions that have been treated at length by others. These chapters might serve as helpful introductions for readers with little or no background in these issues, but they will not provide many new or original insights for readers already familiar with this field of study. In these instances, readers who want depth and originality should consult more detailed studies by Stone and others. On some topics, such as the transmission of pseudepigrapha, Stone raises interesting issues, but does not offer any real conclusions. Instead, these are left to be treated by future studies or scholars. While the limited data might not always allow for a definitive solution to these issues, Stone's personal suggestions (even if tentative) might have facilitated future discussion in an even more helpful way.

These final observations are not meant to minimize Stone's work or contribution to the field, which is considerable. They merely serve to highlight the strengths and limitations of his latest book. Ultimately, he succeeds in bringing to the attention of his readers the diversity of ancient Jewish thought and the larger religious world that gave rise to early Christianity. *Ancient Judaism*

provides interesting new insights, a good overview of recent scholarship, and a helpful introduction to current methodologies that will benefit student and scholar alike. Stone is to be congratulated on a new book and thanked for a career in helping us better understand the rich diversity of ancient Jewish texts, beliefs, and practices.

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Murray, Stuart. *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith*. Third Way Collection. Foreword Gregory A. Boyd. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010. 191 pp. Paper, \$13.99.

In recent years, there has developed in Britain, Ireland, and America a growing interest in Anabaptist beliefs and values. Believers from many faiths are finding in Anabaptism attractive qualities they wish to integrate into their own faith and practice. *The Naked Anabaptist* offers a view of Anabaptist faith and lifestyle, stripped of the historic and cultural aspects associated with its history since the sixteenth century, and clothed for its current twenty-first-century context (135).

Author Stuart Murray [Williams] holds a Ph.D. in Anabaptist hermeneutics and is a cofounder of the Anabaptist Network in Britain and Ireland, which provides resources for “Christians interested in the Anabaptist tradition—study groups, conferences, a journal, newsletters, a theology forum, and an extensive website” (www.anabaptistnetwork.com).

The Anabaptist Network serves growing numbers of “neo-Anabaptists” and “hyphenated Anabaptists.” The former identify themselves as Anabaptists, but do not belong to any of the historical faith communities directly descended from sixteenth-century Anabaptism (Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, Hutterites, Amish, Brethren in Christ, and Church of the Brethren). The term “hyphenated Anabaptists” denotes, for example, Baptist-Anabaptists and Methodist-Anabaptists—who “find inspiration and resources in the Anabaptist tradition,” but retain membership in other denominations (18, 34).

Phrases such as “after Christendom” and “post-Christendom” refer to the present marginalization of Christianity in European society. The author argues that this “demise of imperial Christianity” presents a rare opportunity for rethinking the church’s relationship to politics and society (19).

The book has eight chapters. Chapter 1, “Uncovering Anabaptists,” addresses the variety of neo-Anabaptists and debunks common myths about them. Chapter 2, “The Essence of Anabaptism,” sets forth seven “Anabaptist core convictions”: (1) they follow Jesus as well as worship him; (2) their hermeneutic is Jesus-centered in the context of a community of faith; (3) Christendom distorted the gospel and marginalized Jesus; (4) the