



This is a peer-reviewed, post-print (final draft post-refereeing) version of the following published document, This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in Journal of Theological Studies following peer review. The version of record Esler, Philip F (2015) The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in Early Communities of Faith. Journal of Theological Studies, 66 (1). pp. 359-362. doi:10.1093/jts/flu164 is available online at:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jts/flu164> and is licensed under All Rights Reserved license:

Esler, Philip F ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4889-4889> (2015) The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in Early Communities of Faith. Journal of Theological Studies, 66 (1). pp. 359-362. doi:10.1093/jts/flu164

Official URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jts/flu164>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jts/flu164>
EPrint URI: <https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/3032>

Disclaimer

The University of Gloucestershire has obtained warranties from all depositors as to their title in the material deposited and as to their right to deposit such material.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation or warranties of commercial utility, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or any other warranty, express or implied in respect of any material deposited.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation that the use of the materials will not infringe any patent, copyright, trademark or other property or proprietary rights.

The University of Gloucestershire accepts no liability for any infringement of intellectual property rights in any material deposited but will remove such material from public view pending investigation in the event of an allegation of any such infringement.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR TEXT.

The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in Early Communities of Faith. Edited by CRAIG A. EVANS. Pp. xvi+ 257. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2011. ISBN 978 1 59856 825 7. Paper £19.99.

THE genesis of this collection of essays lies in a series of scholarly meetings at Acadia Divinity College of Acadia University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. There is a strong focus in the essays on the light that *realia*, the remains of material culture, can throw on biblical and extra-biblical texts. This is an important arena for interaction, not only because of the research yields that can result (as we see clearly in these essays), but also because this approach has the capacity to grip the imagination of students and the wider public in ways that a text-only *modus operandi* may not.

The first seven essays (= Part I) are presented under the banner of 'Identity in Jewish and Christian Communities of Faith'. While 'identity' is not theorized here, each essay makes a valuable contribution to its subject.

In 'The Site of Qumran and the Sectarian Communities in the Dead Sea Scrolls' (pp. 9-22) John Collins distils some of the fruits of his deep familiarity with Dead Sea and pseudepigraphical texts into a number of important propositions: that the *yahad* or community behind the Qumran texts were not only represented at Qumran, but were an association dispersed throughout Israel in multiple settlements and that there is no evidence that the headquarters was at Qumran; that the community was not inaugurated by the dispute between the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest but that this came later in its development; and that the site at Qumran was originally a Hasmonean outpost that later became an Essene settlement.

Torleif Elgvin, in 'From the Earthly to the Heavenly Temple' (pp. 23-36), finds in Hebrews and Revelation connections between earthly and heavenly temples similar to those, he argues, that are found in Hebrew Scripture and at Qumran. This is a very detailed essay that perhaps suffers somewhat from an overly homogenized view of the evidence: for example, the

presentation of God and his angels in I Kings 22:19-23 is certainly not a temple scene and the fact that there is actually no temple in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22) is noted (p. 33), but insufficiently addressed.

In 'The Scrolls and the Scriptures on the Margins: Remembered in Canons or Forgotten in Caves' (pp. 37-52),

Dorothy Peters tracks ways in which various documents found at Qumran had different and changing authoritative status, with a trend evident towards a centralization of authority in Moses. The interest of many essays in this book in *realia* surfaces here in factors such as scrolls that were repaired rather than discarded were accorded a continuing status.

Mark Chancey, in 'Disputed Issues in the Study of Cities, Villages, and the Economy in Jesus' Galilee (pp. 53-67) offers a careful account of the current debate concerning the Galilean economy which focuses on whether it was essentially exploitative of the peasantry or whether the system was less harsh, with some benefits flowing from town to country. Chancey stresses the need to get the right balance between social-scientific models and empirical evidence.

In 'Children in House Churches in the Light of New Research on Families in the Roman World' (pp. 69-85), Margaret MacDonald surveys recent research on families and household space by classical and New Testament scholars and applies this to how children were incorporated in the house-churches and household management discourse. She rightly indicates that much remains to be done but that by paying more attention to the position of children in the house-churches of the Christ- movement we will be able to rethink our understanding of the families who were part of it.

Craig Evans's essay, 'The Family Buried Together Stays Together: On the Burial of the Executed in Family Tombs' (pp. 87--96), focuses on the question of secondary burial in the first century CE. This was the practice of burying a person in the normal way then, when the flesh had decayed, reburying the bones in

ossuaries or special pits. The particular question here is whether such secondary burial occurred in family graves when the deceased had died a dishonourable death, especially by execution. Evans answers in the affirmative.

Shimon Gibson ('The Trial of Jesus at the Jerusalem Praetorium: New Archaeological Evidence' [pp. 97-118]) argues that a gate excavated by Magen Broshi that gave access to Herod's palace complex in Jerusalem, which he identifies with the Essene Gate, was the site of a Roman tribunal, mentioned by Josephus, and where Jesus was dealt with by Pilate, as recorded in John's Gospel. After one passed through the gate, one entered quite a large area between two fortification walls, with ascending steps, that would have provided an appropriate place for the trial.

Part II of the volume, called 'Interpreting the Scriptures in Jewish and Christian Communities', comprises the remaining six essays. In his essay 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Interpretation of Scripture' (pp. 121-40), George Brooke provides an overview of scriptural interpretation at Qumran. He proposes that there was a distinction between Israelite texts judged as scriptural and those (the group's own works) that depended on them, even though the Hebrew canon was still not finalised. The group saw itself as in continuity with Israel (in a very exclusivist manner) and interpreted Scripture in a variety of ways, some- times focusing on the plain meaning of the scriptural texts but sometimes realizing that they were not to be taken literally. Particularly potent was their sense that these texts were speaking directly to them. Equally arresting was the fact that although they were devoted to Scripture their appropriation of it was not derived from Scripture but from their sense of where they stood in the wider political socio-religious context of their time, believing in a coming eschatological conflict when God would intervene to vindicate them. In that view, of course, they were entirely mistaken.

Keith Bodner, in 'Excavating Ideas: The Qumran Scrolls of Samuel' (pp. 141-51), indicates the numerous ways in which the Samuel scrolls from Qumran (now in DJD 17 of 2005) aid in our understanding of those two books,

extending beyond text-critical matters to the question of literary artistry.

Stephen J. Andrews' essay, 'The Oldest Attested Hebrew Scriptures and the Khirbet Qeiyafa Inscription' (pp. 153-68), offers a balanced assessment of the discussion surrounding an ostrakon found in a controlled excavation in 2008 and dated to the early tenth century BCE that contains ancient script of a Proto-Canaanite kind. Two very different interpretations (a maximalist one by Gershon Galil and a less enthusiastic one by Haggai Misgav) have stoked a very lively discussion. In 'Biblia Hebraica Quinta' (pp. 169-78) James Sanders reviews the fifth edition of the Biblia Hebraica version of the Hebrew Bible in the light of the first five fascicles to appear.

Larry Hurtado's essay, 'What Do the Earliest Christian Manuscripts Tell Us about their Readers' (pp. 179-92), summarizes much of the recent lively and very welcome investigation of how the physical and visual features of early Christian manuscripts aid our understanding of early Christianity, especially on the connections between book culture and group identity. In 'Bold Claims, Wishful Thinking, and Lessons about Dating Manuscripts from Papyrus Egerton 2' (pp. 193-211) Paul Foster critiques the manner in which Papyrus Egerton 2, containing Gospel fragments, was originally assigned a date of origin before the mid-second century CE, far too early, as subsequent analysis has revealed.

In sum, these essays provide valuable and accessible discussions of how our understanding of the nature and identity of the Christ-movement in the first century CE and its ancient Israelite context is being enriched by archaeological and epigraphic research.