

*Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*; Edited with Introductions, Translations and Commentaries by M. Stern. Vol. I: From Herodotus to Plutarch. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974. pp. xviii + 576. \$25.

This volume represents the first half of a great enterprise, a new and expanded version of Reinach's *Textes d'auteurs grecs et latins relatifs au Judaïsme*. The work is by any standards an outstanding success, and will have an established and central place in the literature of the subject — indeed of more than one subject, for it will also serve both as an exposition of many aspects of ancient ethnographical writing and as an introduction to much of the best modern scholarship of the past century and a half.

Such is Stern's mastery of these two themes that one wishes that he had allowed himself a rather more expansive introduction both to survey his ancient and modern material and to explain in more detail the principles and procedures which he has adopted. The essential principle of choice, that 'Greek and Latin authors' excludes those who were either Jewish or Christian, is indeed alluded to. But we could have wished for a foretaste of the many remarkable essays on pagan views of Judaism which are scattered throughout the book, and perhaps for something which in the nature of the case could not be included in the individual commentaries, a general discussion of Josephus' *Contra Apionem*. We may look forward to J.N. Sevenster's forthcoming work on ancient anti-semitism, and may now turn on a broader plane to Momigliano's *Alien Wisdom: the Limits of Hellenization* (1975). But one would still wish to have had Stern's views on the overall development of pagan comprehension, or incomprehension, of Judaism, and the effect on it of the growth of Christianity. In compensation we may look forward to his discussion of Tacitus' strange and confused references to the Jews, in the first part of Volume II.

The Introduction does make clear that passages relating to Judaea are

also included. But it does not justify this decision, which seems to me mistaken. It is obviously correct, for instance, with regard to Pliny the Elder's description of Judaea, its sub-divisions, cities and products (no. 204), which is integral to our understanding of the history of the area, and where Stern's discussion is masterly (not least in his reserved and balanced treatment of the evidence of Pliny for the identification of Qumran as Essene). But elsewhere, as with a fragment of Eratosthenes (no. 23) or of Crinagoras (no. 78), the evidence belongs more clearly in a collection of geographical sources, and does not significantly concern either Jews or Judaism. The inclusion of such passages makes the work longer, and therefore more expensive, as does the lavish procedure of repeating, with translation, passages which involve more than one ancient author (especially *Contra Apionem* ii, 83–4, which appears on pp. 115; 118; 216; 224; 239 and 268). Similarly, the references are given in elaborate and extended style which could easily have been more economical.

However, *superflua non nocent*, and the essential point is not merely the richness of the learning which is made available in this volume, but, more important, the sensitivity, balance and objectivity with which it is employed. Though a significant proportion of the passage discussed are anti-semitic in tone, the treatment is dispassionate, and is marked by a serious effort to understand how the authors came to conceive things as they did, and by an avoidance of over-complex explanations for conceptions which in fact rested, typically of Antiquity, on simple verbal similarities (Sabazios-Sabbath) or associations (*Herodis dies* as the Sabbath, no. 190). Among a wealth of good things, three sections, each really amounting to an article in itself, deserve especial mention: the treatment of Hecataeus, with its consideration of the limits of what was known of the Jews in the Greek world of the late fourth century BC, and the use of ethnographical *topoi* in characterising them (pp. 20–44); and the admirably balanced discussions, first of Apion and the question of Jewish rights in Alexandria (pp. 389–416), and second of Antonius' grants to Cleopatra (pp. 369–71).

A few omissions or errors deserve comment:

- p. 32. For circumcision as practised by neighbouring peoples, there is the invaluable testimony of Bardesanes that it was the custom in Nabataea until banned by the Romans after the

- conquest; see H.J.W. Drijvers, *Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa* (1965) 56–7.
- p. 40. For the Exechias mentioned by Hecataeus as High Priest note the coins published by L.Y. Rahmani in *IEJ* 21 (1971) 158–60, giving him the title ha-Pehah (governor). Hecataeus' reference *may* thus reflect in a confused way a real person of the late fourth century.
- p. 51. For the statement that Judaea was the official name of the area in the early Hellenistic period it would have been useful to quote the confirmation offered by the Yehud coins of the fourth and early third centuries.
- p. 100. Some readers will not recognise in 'Siracides' the author of what they know as *Ecclesiasticus*.
- pp. 131–3. (no. 40) Whether or not the fragment attributed to Ocellus Lucanus actually embodies some Jewish thought, it is not in any sense *on* Jews or Judaism, and ought not to have been included.
- p. 280. The discussion of Philo, in *Flacc.* 74, on the genarch, or ethnarch, of Alexandria, does not take account of the demonstration by J.R. Rea, *Chronique d'Egypte* 43 (1968) 365–6, that the passage does not show an iterated prefecture by Magius Maximus.
- p. 307. On the titles of Aristoboulos I and Jannaeus a further reference to the numismatic evidence would have been useful: essentially Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (1967), ch. 3; B. Kanael, *Jahrb. f. Num. u. Geldgesch.* 17 (1967) 167ff.; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* 1 (1973) 603–4.
- p. 321. By a passing slip, Horace himself, rather than his father, is described as a freedman.
- p. 490. Though the reviewer appreciates the simple reference to *JRS* 53 (1963) 30 on the *fiscus*' exploitation of the balsam-plantations near Jericho, the matter is alas more complicated, and not of purely academic importance. For the steps or circumstances by which formerly royal properties came into the ownership, or at least control, of the *fiscus* would be relevant, if they could be understood, to wider aspects of the

history of Judaea. For a different view, not easy to follow, P. Baldacci in *Parola del Passato* 24 (1969) 349–400.

These points represent a rather small harvest to gather from a detailed work of over 500 pages; and the reviewer knows all too well how hard it is to keep control of individual items of data in a complex work of this kind. But Stern's greatest achievement is not that his work is accurate and scholarly, that it is on a massive scale, or that it fills a need. For it is something more than that, a demonstration of what scholarship should be, dispassionate and balanced, not forcing conclusions, not claiming delusive novelties, but conscious of limits and of a debt to the past. As such, its message is much more significant than the sum of its parts. It is, moreover, a historical fact worth dwelling on in its own right, that perhaps the finest expression in the twentieth century of what was best in the German scholarship of the nineteenth should have come from a man born in Poland, but writing in English in Jerusalem.

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