REVIEW

Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds.

The Jewish Annotated New Testament

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The Jewish Annotated New Testament is a landmark publication, not only for what it accomplishes but also—perhaps more importantly—for what it represents. Annotated versions of the Christian Bible have a long tradition and are widely available; *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (to stay within the same publishing house) is a well-known example. Also available from Oxford is *The Jewish Study Bible*, based on the Jewish Publication Society's translation of the Tanakh. Both volumes contain the biblical text in English translation, together with other elements of the genre: introductions to each book; section-by-section notes and comments at the bottom or side of each page; maps and charts (and, in the case of the *NOAB*, short sidebar notes); and longer explanatory essays on various topics. It is surely not a coincidence that one of the editors of both the *NOAB* and the *JSB* was Marc Zvi Brettler, the co-editor (along with Amy-Jill Levine) of *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*.

While it follows a similar format, what sets this new work apart is that it is, in several respects, a Jewish edition of the Christian New Testament. In the first place, it is Jewish in that all of the contributors—some fifty in all—identify themselves as Jewish. Some are New Testament specialists; many of them specialize in some aspect of Judaism in the Second Temple period and late antiquity; all of them are experts in some pertinent area of Jewish studies. Second, it aims to place the New Testament in a Jewish context, highlighting aspects of the New Testament that are illuminated by a knowledge of Judaism of the period and drawing out connections between the New Testament and later Jewish literature. Third, it is directed in part to a Jewish readership, with the aim of helping Jews to overcome any residual reluctance to explore this Christian book. For example, authors address the various apparently anti-Judaic statements, themes, and interpretations that underlie much of this reluctance. The work is thus addressed to a mixed audience—Jews, Christians, and other interested non-Jews.

After a brief preface by the editors in which they describe the nature and purpose of the work and a helpful list of abbreviations, the volume moves directly to the New Testament itself. For each of the twenty-seven writings (even the very brief ones), there is an introduction (usually a page or two, but sometimes longer), followed by the text itself, with section-by-section annotations at the bottom of the page and a number of sidebar notes and maps. This is followed by a set of thirty articles on various pertinent topics, a number of helpful charts and lists (e.g., Tannaitic and Amoraitic Rabbis; chapter and verse differences between the Hebrew Tanakh and standard English translations; divisions and tractates of the Mishnah and related works), a glossary (everything from "AD" to "Zohar"), and an index.

In the introductions, annotations, and sidebar notes, the individual commentators (a different one for each New Testament writing) are generally successful in addressing the mix of intended readers of the *JANT*, within the necessary constraints of the genre of the study Bible. Most of the

introductions deal in one way or another with the relationship between the writing under discussion and particular Jewish concerns or material, but only in some cases does this appear within distinct subsections (e.g., "Matthew and Judaism"; "Jews and Judaism" [John]; "Reading Revelation as a Jewish Text"). The needs of the reader might have been better served if there had been more uniformity in the structure of the introductory sections. The annotations contain a wealth of pertinent and helpful information, though more thorough cross-referencing (to the essays and glossary) would have enhanced the usefulness of the volume as a whole. While the article on the "Translation of the Bible" starts with a good discussion of Matthew's use of Is 7:14, for example, there is no cross-reference to this article in the section on Matthew, either in the annotations or in the sidebar on the Virgin birth.

The essays at the end of the volume, which represent a stellar line-up of authors, are without exception highly informative and very helpful. While it may be invidious to single out only a few of them, I hope the contributors will forgive me if I mention the essays written by the co-editors. Levine's "Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made about Early Judaism" is something that I will recommend to all my students, especially those who are training for Christian ministry. Brettler's "The New Testament between the Tanakh and Rabbinic Literature" does a very nice job of portraying the New Testament and the literature of rabbinic Judaism as analogous enterprises of "appropriat[ing] and interpret[ing] the Tanakh" (p. 505).

Still, looking at the essays as a whole, one notes a number of gaps and overlaps. For example, why is there an essay on "Paul and Judaism" but not, say, on "The Synoptic Gospels and Judaism" or "John and Judaism"? At the same time, there is a fair degree of overlap, in topics at least, among various essays (e.g., "Judaism and Jewishness" and "*Ioudaios*"). One gets the impression that the selection of topics is due more to the interests of the available authors than to an overall plan of the topics that would be most helpful to the intended readership. Of course, the editors of any multi-author project inevitably face challenges of this sort, and so it is better to be grateful for the essays that appear than to lament those that might have been included.

I approach this volume as a Gentile, a Christian, and a scholar with a particular set of interests, most prominent among which are these: the inclusion of Gentiles within the early Christian movement; the so-called "parting of the ways" between early "Christianity" and "Judaism" (both terms require careful definition and qualification); and the history of anti-Judaic interpretation of scripture (both the New Testament and the Christian "Old Testament") by Christians. From this perspective, let me make a few observations by way of conclusion.

First, while the early Christian movement was characterized by its interest in including non-Jews within its communities, this did not make them unique in the Jewish world. Many other Jews in the first century C.E. were also interested in finding a place for non-Jews within their Torah-centered frame of reference, and early Christian disputes over the terms by which Gentiles might be included mirrored in many respects debates that were already happening within the Jewish community more broadly. More attention might have been paid in the volume—both in the annotations and the essays—to this aspect of Judaism and its significance for the understanding of early Christianity.

Second, while "the parting of the ways" might not be the most accurate model for understanding the emergence of Christianity as a socio-religious phenomenon separate from Judaism, it nevertheless draws attention to the Jewish character of the Christian movement at its outset—a renewal movement entirely within the Jewish world. It thus at least poses the question of why the two ended up as separate and distinct. The issue is touched on, especially in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert's "Judaizers, Jewish Christians, and Others" and Claudia Setzer's "Jewish Responses

to Believers in Jesus," though neither essay title indicates this, and it could well have warranted an essay of its own.

Finally, in their introductory essay, the editors make reference to Krister Stendahl and one of his rules for interreligious dialogue: adherents of any one religion should learn to cultivate a "holy envy," that is, an appreciation for elements of another religion that one recognizes as beautiful or meaningful. As a Christian with a long-standing interest in understanding the Jewish roots of my own tradition, I hope that I have come to develop such a "holy envy." Be that as it may, I can nevertheless say without question that, the more I have investigated the ways in which Christians have interpreted their own scriptures, I have developed a "holy shame" for the extent to which my fellow Christians have felt the need to buttress their own beliefs by misrepresenting, denouncing, and slandering their Jewish cousins. Among the strengths of this volume are the ways in which it both quietly calls attention to such anti-Jewish interpretations and demonstrates a kind of "holy envy"—in the authors' respectful and generous interpretations of Christian Scripture—that Christians would do well to emulate when studying Judaism. For these reasons and more, this volume is to be warmly and enthusiastically welcomed.