

Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling, eds., *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004. xxvi + 929pp. \$49.95, paper.

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Hendrickson Publishers are to be thanked for bringing an important volume from an important series back into print. Though it was published over a decade and a half ago, *Mikra* remains a weighty collection of essays by distinguished scholars. The title of the volume is explained in its Introduction: “*Mikra* primarily denotes the correct reading of the sacred words, as they have been handed down to us through the activities of numerous writers and copyists in the text of Tenakh [sic] *Mikra* (מִקְרָא) further means the way in which the sacred text has always been and ought to be recited . . . and understood by those who have been closely connected with the texts” (XXIII).

The collection of essays intends to trace how the books now comprising the Old Testament became *Mikra*, or Holy Scripture (XXIII). This book is an entire education unto itself, consisting of the following twenty chapters: (1) Aaron Demsky and Meir Bar-Ilan, “Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism” (2) Roger T. Beckwith, “Formation of the Hebrew Bible” (3) Martin Jan Mulder, “The Transmission of the Biblical Text” (4) Charles Perrot, “The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue” (5) Emanuel Tov, “The Septuagint” (6) Abraham Tal, “The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch” (7) Philip S. Alexander, “Jewish Aramaic Translations of the Hebrew Scriptures” (8) Peter B. Dirksen, “The Old Testament Peshitta” (9) Benjamin Kedar, “The Latin Translations” (10) Michael Fishbane, “Use, Authority and Interpretation of Mikra at Qumran” (11) Devorah Dimant, “Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha” (12) Yehoshua Amir, “Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the Writings of Philo” (13) Louis H. Feldman, “Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus” (14) Pieter W. van der Horst, “The Interpretation of the Bible by the Minor Hellenistic Jewish Authors” (15) Rimon Kasher, “The Interpretation of Scripture in Rabbinic Literature” (16) Ruairidh Bóid (M. N. Saraf), “Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Samaritan Tradition” (17) Birger A. Pearson, “Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in Gnostic Literature” (18) E. Earle Ellis, “The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church” (19) E. Earle Ellis, “Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church” (20) William Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation in the Writings of the Church Fathers.”

Much could be said about the value of these essays, but the chapter by Beckwith (ch. 2) and the two by Ellis (chs. 18 and 19) are worth the price of the volume by themselves. Beckwith’s essay is an abstract of his highly acclaimed volume, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, in which he marshals mounds of decisive evidence for the rejection of the “standard view” that the OT was canonized in three stages: “the Pentateuch in the fifth century B.C.E. . . . the Prophets in the third century B.C.E., and the Hagiographa about 90 C.E.” (86). Beckwith shows that the whole OT canon was closed well before the Christian era, 164 B.C.E. at the latest and probably well before that (cf. 56–61). Ellis’s two essays are stimulating and stuffed with

information. There is much here to ponder and pursue in further research. His contributions to the use of the OT in the New are especially helpful.

The republication of the volume presented an opportunity to remedy a minor deficiency and correct typographical errors. The minor deficiency is that the volume does not include a list of contributors providing brief biographical information on each of them—where they studied, where they teach, and perhaps their dates (in the case of any who have died, as has one of the editors, Martin J. Mulder). These essays are by specialists, some of whom are well known, others of whom are not so well known outside their area, and the need for some information on the authors is compounded by the fact that a new generation of younger scholars will now benefit from this volume. The republication of the volume would have been an ideal time to add a list of contributors, and it would have been an opportune time to correct a number of typos (such as the ones on pp. 3 [producing for producing], 146 [where for were], 161 [alle for all], 165 [“the Lagarde” for “de Lagarde”], 181 [hac for has], 182 [(‘) for (’)], 187 [*Basckground* for *Background*], 200 [teh for the], 205 [houdehold for household], 206 [the 9th line of the page has a word at the beginning and end of the line with a large blank space in between], 208 [masn for man; birh for birth; Joly for Holy], 214 [strenght for strength], 307 [is for it], 576 [decedes for decides]). These minor complaints are easily overwhelmed by the value of having this volume back in print.

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