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Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World

Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt

edited by

Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz
& Stephanie Gripentrog



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PREFACE

Identity and related issues are widely debated in current scholarship on culture and history, as also in biblical studies. Scholars study how ethnic or religious identities were formed and how individuals understood themselves in relation to, or in conflict with, different group identities; how boundaries were marked or merged; and how new ways of self-definition were formed under the influence of political and cultural challenges.

The study of the literature and the various groups within Judaism of the late Second Temple period is a most fertile field for studying such identity matters, and one which is also of crucial significance for the subsequent history of Jews and Christians. How could different groups develop and maintain their identity within the challenge of Hellenistic and early Roman culture? Was there a common 'Jewish' identity, and how could it be defined? What about the images of 'others'? And how could some of those 'others' adopt a Jewish lifestyle or identity, at the same time that other others, from within, abandoned their inherited identity? Finally, how were the world-views and beliefs of the emerging groups of Jesus-followers related to different aspects of Jewish identity?

In the present volume some of the crucial issues of the formation and development of Jewish identity in the Greco-Roman period are discussed. Some of the questions discussed are the appropriate translation of the Greek word *Ἰουδαῖος*, the relation between Jewish and universal identity in Philo, the status of women and the question of their conversion to Judaism, the participation of non-Jews in the temple cult, the relation between voluntary associations and the Qumran community, the problem and practice of Emperor worship in Judaea, the adoption of common habits by the Jewish communities in the diaspora and the integration of some Jews within Alexandrian society and the image of Egypt and the Nile as 'others' in Philo. Two articles enter the debate as to whether and to what extent Jewish identity had an ongoing influence within early Christianity, in the conceptual world of Paul and in the rules known as the Apostolic Decree.

Most of the articles collected in this volume were presented at two sessions of the 'Münchener Bibelwissenschaftliche Symposien' held under the same title on July 15th, 2003 and May 11th, 2004, when the