

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES

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How the Bible Became Holy. By **Michael L. Satlow.** New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014. ix + 350 pp. \$35.00 cloth.

Satlow employs literary and archaeological evidence to explain how the notion of the Bible's holiness and inspiration developed. His thesis is "that *Jews and Christians gave to the texts that constitute our Bible only very limited and specific kinds of authority until well into the third century CE and beyond*" (italics in original, 3).

Satlow differentiates between three types of authority that may be granted to texts. Normative authority involves submitting to the teachings of a text, i.e., ordering life according to its dictates. Literary authority refers to using a text as a kind of literary model, e.g., the way in which scribes would learn to write by imitating the style and grammar of a document. Oracular authority is the authority to predict the future. Satlow insists that the ancient Hebrews and earliest Christians granted literary and oracular authority to the Bible, but had no real conception of the normative authority of texts. Indeed, the texts that became our Bible were almost entirely unknown by the people generally, hidden away for use by the scribal elite. The few attempts to promote normative authority of these texts over the people failed, succeeding finally only in the third or fourth centuries CE.

While Satlow offers a readable account of the development of the Bible's authority, his argument requires him to adopt many questionable positions outside the mainstream of scholarly consensus, and to engage at points in speculative reconstructions. This is interesting, but not always convincing.

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