

of doctrine but to enforce obedience. The createdness question “was merely a convenient pretext” to bring the ulema to heel and to remove them from their position as “spokesmen on religious affairs” who could veto the caliph (pp. 78–79).

Nawas makes a compelling and eloquent argument that requires our attention. To begin understanding the *miḥna*, one must start here. The editors of the series are to be commended for their efforts to gain the larger audience that is its due.

JOHN P. TURNER
COLBY COLLEGE

The Tomb of Jesus and His Family? Exploring Ancient Jewish Tombs near Jerusalem's Walls. Edited by JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH. Grand Rapids, Mich.: WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO., 2013. Pp. xx + 585, illus. \$48 (paper).

The book under review, edited by James Charlesworth of Princeton Theological Seminary, is the latest collection of studies to result from an international conference that he has convened. This collection focuses on a tomb in East Talpiot, south Jerusalem, accidentally uncovered and hastily excavated in 1980 and then brought to new prominence in 2007 by a television documentary and popular book in which it is argued that the tomb was the final resting place of Jesus, his mother Mary, his wife Mary Magdalene, their son Judah, and a number of other family members. Almost all historians and archaeologists reject these identifications. Nevertheless, Charlesworth in 2008 convened a conference in Jerusalem to explore and debate the matter further.

Although the rationale for the conference and the book is dubious, the actual results are for the most part helpful. The essays review the history of the find, a number of relevant sciences (such as petrology, DNA, prosopography, palaeography), and Jewish burial practices of late antiquity. One of the best essays in the volume is by Amos Kloner and Shimon Gibson, two of the three archaeologists who excavated the tomb. (The third and lead archaeologist was the late Joseph Gath.) They recount their work and carefully explain what was recovered. As have many, Kloner and Gibson conclude that “there is nothing to commend the Talpiot tomb as the family tomb of Jesus” (p. 51).

I have space to mention only a few other other contributions. Mordechai Aviam rightly underscores the importance of understanding the differences in Galilean burial practices. Given what we know of Galilean burials, he finds it difficult to believe that “the entire family [of Jesus], whose members probably died over the next thirty or forty years after Jesus, would also adopt the Judean practice of *ossilegium* and be brought to Jerusalem to be buried with Jesus” (p. 111).

Stephen Pfann correctly interprets the “Mary Magdalene” ossuary inscription to read, “Mariame and Mara” (pp. 190–99), not “Mary the Master.” He also concludes that the name “Jesus” was not the original name inscribed on the “Jesus, son of Joseph” ossuary. It appears that another name, perhaps Yudan (short for Yehudah, or Judah), was partially effaced and then incorporated with the later inscribed Yeshua (Jesus). The evidence is quite curious on any reckoning. It seems that the person named Yeshua was placed in an ossuary already occupied by someone else (a brother?). Why this person’s name was then effaced is impossible to say. In any case it seems doubtful that the remains of the most important figure in the family, a figure adored by a growing following, thought by this following to be Israel’s Messiah, would be placed in a very plain ossuary, already occupied by the remains of someone else.

Christopher Rollston reviews several aspects of the relevant science, including statistics, and concludes that “it is certainly not tenable to suggest that the data are sufficient that this is the family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth” (p. 221). He rightly notes that we are hardly in a position to ascertain the true family relationships of the persons whose remains were found in the Talpiot tomb.

Amnon Rosenfeld, Howard Feldman, and Wolfgang Krumbein provide scientific evidence that strongly supports the authenticity of the inscription on the James Ossuary (i.e., “James son of Joseph brother of Jesus”). These scientists further argue that the geochemical footprints of the ossuary are consistent with what is known of the Talpiot tomb. From this they conclude that James Ossuary may have originally derived from the Talpiot tomb, which, if true, significantly increases the odds that the tomb was indeed the tomb of the family of Jesus. No doubt further research will be undertaken.

There is one glaring omission in the book under review: No study explains the prominent pointed gable and circle excised over the tomb’s entrance. This artistic design is found on coins—as far back as the Hasmonean period—ossuaries, monumental tombs, and other forms of Jewish funerary art. It symbolizes the temple and has nothing to do with Jesus and his movement. Given the temple establishment’s opposition to Jesus and his followers, such a symbol would have been a most unlikely choice as adornment for a tomb linked to Jesus or his family.

CRAIG A. EVANS
HOUSTON BIBLE UNIVERSITY

A City from the Dawn of History: Erbil in the Cuneiform Sources. By JOHN MACGINNIS. Philadelphia: OXBOW BOOKS, 2014. Pp. 128, illus. \$45 (paper). [Distributed by Casemate Academic, Havertown, Pa.]

This small attractive book was commissioned by the Kurdistan Regional Government to celebrate the