

That said, Almond's intellectual biography makes comprehensible for the modern reader the complex and obscure world of prophetic scripture interpretation, and that is a massive accomplishment.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK,
FREDERICTON,
CANADA

GARY K. WAITE

Sceptic and believer in ancient Mediterranean religions. Edited by Babett Edlemann-Singer, Tobias Nicklas, Janet E. Spittler and Luigi Walt. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 443.) Pp. xiv + 336 incl. 5 ills. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. €134. 978 3 16 156305 8

JEH (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046921000877

Compiled from papers presented at various conferences and seminars between 2017 and 2019, this volume includes fourteen brief studies on the topic of 'belief and "un"-belief'; 'un-belief' understood in terms of scepticism, meaning scepticism regarding one's own tradition, not disbelief in the sense of astonishment, as opposed to gullibility (though in the volume 'disbelief' is also used in the sense of 'un-belief' as defined here). Another, perhaps less confusing, phrase used in the volume for this type of scepticism is 'insider doubt'. Questions of terminology are very much a theme in the volume. As the editors write in the introduction, 'all essays in the volume are (on different levels) concerned with problems of terminology and categorization' (p. viii). The chapters discuss cases of this type of religious scepticism ranging from the second millennium BCE to the third century CE, an unusual time frame, which is interesting but has its drawbacks. There is merely one contribution on 'disbelief' in ancient Egypt (chapter ii, following chapter i, which is on 'disbelief and cognate concepts in Roman Antiquity'), discussing a source from the eighteenth century BCE. It is followed by two essays on classical Athens, two on the late Roman republic and the early empire, three from the post-Hellenistic Greek world (on Plutarch, Aelius Aristides and Lucian of Samosata respectively), and three on New Testament writings (Paul, the Synoptics and John). The last two chapters are on 'doubt' in some Nag Hammadi writings and on astrology and magic as ways of 'evading doubt' in the 'Greco-Roman period'. Naturally, a collection such as this cannot be expected to offer a comprehensive overview of religious scepticism and belief in the ancient world. Obviously, it would have been interesting to have had at least one contribution each on, say, the ancient near East and Judaism. As it is, the volume represents a collection that is above all interested in Classical and Hellenistic Greek and Roman religion and early Christianity. Clifford Ando begins with an essay on 'Disbelief and cognate concepts in Roman antiquity' comparing mainly Cicero's *De natura deorum* and Augustine's early works (pp. 1–19). Jan Assmann, writing on 'Ancient Egyptian disbelief in the promises of eternity' (pp. 21–35), observes a weakening of the belief in an everlasting afterlife in some texts dating from the beginning of the second millennium BCE. He concludes that although it would be wrong to assume that there ever arose 'a time of general disbelief' in ancient Egypt, 'the Egyptians did in fact give up ... monumental tomb-building'

in later periods and most of their elaborate mortuary rites (p. 35). Tim Whitmarsh writes about 'The invention of atheism and the invention of religion in classical Athens' (pp. 37–51), which is followed by a chapter on 'Youth, atheism, and (un)belief in late fifth-century Athens', in which Jan N. Bremmer engages with some of Whitmarsh's theses (pp. 53–68). Matthew A. Fox offers a reappraisal of 'disbelief in Rome' (pp. 69–91), which also includes a discussion of the influence of classical texts critical of traditional religion on the Enlightenment. Babett Edelmann-Singer, in her chapter 'Who will worship this man as a god, who will believe in him?' (pp. 93–110), revisits 'Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and the hermeneutical categories of belief and scepticism in emperor cult'. Kai Trampedach writes on 'Plutarch als Apologet des Orakels von Delphi' (pp. 111–26). Janet Downie's essay is on 'Belief and doubt in Aelius Aristides's *Isthmian Oration: To Poseidon*' (pp. 127–46). Inger N. I. Kuin's chapter is entitled 'Loukianos Atheos?' (pp. 147–64) and investigates 'humour and religious doubt in Lucian of Samosata' (p. 147). In 'Skepsis und Christusglaube' (pp. 165–83) Tobias Nicklas explores 'Funktionen, Räume und Impulse des Zweifels bei Paulus' (p. 165). David P. Moessner sees 'Luke as sceptical insider' (pp. 185–201). For Benjamin Schliesser, who offers an interpretation of John xx.24–9 (the story of doubting Thomas), John is 'The Gospel for Sceptics' (pp. 203–25). Under the title 'Why do you doubt?' (pp. 227–41), Anna Van den Kerchove's chapter reflects on 'scepticism and some Nag Hammadi writings' (p. 227). Richard L. Gordon, finally, offers a chapter on 'astrology and magic in the Greco-Roman world' entitled 'Evading doubt' (pp. 243–67). A comprehensive bibliography and a set of detailed indices conclude the volume (pp. 269–335).

There is much to learn from this volume, although – perhaps due to its theme – it is, as the editors themselves admit in the introduction, throwing up more questions than it is offering answers. What the volume shows, however, is that the words 'scepticism', 'doubt', 'disbelief' and 'unbelief' denote aspects of a general human state of mind not restricted to 'religion'. This is well expressed in the first words of the title, 'Sceptic and believer', a juncture that includes every conscious human being. The rest of the title is more problematic. Whether 'ancient Mediterranean religions' existed has recently been called in doubt. Some contributions engage with this question. The resulting picture is a complex one: it seems that some forms of scepticism were indeed aimed at 'religion/s'. But what does that mean in each case? Was the existence of a tradition or culture in its entirety called in doubt, or of part of that culture, or merely of certain (corrupt) beliefs and practices within that culture? Atheism, for example, it turns out in the light of this, seems not to be a form of scepticism but more a kind of 'fideism', an attempt to replace scepticism (aimed at religion) with an alternative certainty. 'Evading doubt' is a similar phenomenon, as the final chapter demonstrates. It can be the function of religion itself, however broadly or narrowly one defines that concept, or of alternatives such as magic, astrology, perhaps science. Doubt, disbelief, unbelief, hesitation to belief, a critical state of mind, a questioning, protesting, attitude towards the human condition in general and towards the specific cultural conditions in which a protagonist gives expression to such a state of mind, is, as this volume well shows, essential to what it has always meant for humans to be human. It may have preceded religion and it certainly remained inherently part of

religion, at least in the cases of ancient Mediterranean religion discussed in this volume.

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

JOSEF LÖSSL

Modern and ancient literary criticism of the Gospels. Edited by Robert Matthew Calhoun, David P. Moessner and Tobias Nicklas. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 451.) Pp. xvi+619 incl. 8 figs. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. €169. 978 3 16 159413 7

JEH (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046921000804

This volume of twenty essays (nineteen in English, one in German) is a collection of papers given at a conference at Texas Christian University in 2018 in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary, and third edition, of Richard Burridge's *What are the Gospels?* (Waco, Tx 2018). The volume is divided into three broad categories: (1.) 'The Question of Genre and the Gospels'; (2.) 'Mark as Narrative in the Light of Ancient and Modern Criticism'; and (3.) 'The Growth of the Gospel Tradition in Early Christian Literary Culture'. These categories accurately represent the contents of the work, with parts I and II more cohesive than part III.

Following a brief introduction, the volume opens with a chapter by Burridge, 'The Gospels and ancient biography' (pp. 9–56). This piece summarises the opening chapter of his third edition, which outlines the reception of his work over the past two decades. Both Michel Beth Dinkler, in 'What is a genre?' (pp. 77–96), and Elizabeth E. Shively, in 'A critique of Richard Burridge's genre theory' (pp. 97–112), specifically address the question of genre and genre theory. Dinkler and Shively, mobilising Foucault and cognitive prototype theory, respectively, challenge the need by scholars to identify a work's (often-single) genre and encourage the adoption of new theoretical frames.

Some contributors reassess the priority of genre theory and question the view of the Gospels as biography. Cilliers Breytenbach, 'The Gospel according to Mark' (pp. 179–200), challenges the presupposition of a biography genre in the first century, arguing that analytical comparison needs to precede illustrative comparison (i.e., comparing Mark with possible generically-related texts). Thomas R. Hatina, in 'Intertextual transformation of Jesus' (pp. 417–40), views John's Gospel through the lens of social commemoration and ideological mythmaking (or 'mnemomythic reception process'), which, he argues, undermines reading John emically as a *bios*.

Literary readings of the Gospels dominate this volume, but scholars adopt a variety of approaches. In 'The Kijé effect' (pp. 273–305), C. Clifton Black applies a narratological reading of Mark, arguing that the parallels and duplication of events in the crucifixion narrative (Mark xiv–xvi) show that Mark was a 'stylist with considerable ability' (p. 303). Wolfgang Grünstäudl, 'Continuity and discontinuity in Luke's Gospel' (pp. 381–96), re-evaluates the claim that Luke ix.51 is the literary hinge of the Gospel and argues that Luke ix–x should be read as a unit because of narrative repetitions. John A. Darr's audience-orientated (or 'pragmatic') approach, in 'Reading Luke-Acts as scriptural history and philosophical biography' (pp. 397–416), highlights the importance of the genre-readings lens(es) for ancient authors, especially in light of the 'primacy effect'.