

as far as this reviewer could tell, was up-to-date; and the presentation of sometimes involved theories about individual texts, whether these relate to the origins of *1 Clement*, the angel and spirit Christology of *Hermas*, or the purpose of *Diognetus* (Michael Bird and Kirsten Mackerras) are all dealt with in a careful measured way.

Although this book is only introductory in the sense that all *Cambridge Companions* are, the present reviewer emerged from reading it with a renewed sense of the fascinating nature of the Apostolic Fathers. Diverse in content, form and tone, and deeply enigmatic, precisely because so much about their origins remains opaque, they touch upon all the major issues of the study of early Christianity in often intriguing ways, though they barely allow the prudent scholar to arrive at any firm conclusions on these matters, in the end doing little more than making plain to us in complex ways the true nature of our ignorance, as we acknowledge how little we know about Papias's significant five-book work, *The exposition of dominical sayings*, or we wonder to what extent we can generalise from *Barnabas's* presentation of the interpretation of Torah to Ignatius' presentation of the threefold ministry. The editors, not least in their decision to combine dedicated discussion of individual texts with engagement with more wide-ranging subjects, have succeeded in making it clear why these texts remain so intriguing and merit much more study than they have in fact received, especially when compared with the contents of the New Testament in whose shadow, perhaps wrongly, they are traditionally studied.

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The shepherd of Hermas. A literary, historical, and theological handbook. By Jonathan Lookadoo. Pp. xii + 295 incl. 1 table. London–New York: T&T Clark, 2021. £85. 978 0 5676 9791 2

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This judicious guidebook provides a valuable introduction to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, useful for researchers at both the beginning and advanced levels. The book comprises two parts. Part 1, 'Introducing the *Shepherd of Hermas*', begins with an overarching introduction to the *Shepherd* (chapter i), before delving more deeply into its textual transmission (chapter ii), reception history (chapter iii) and provenance and readership (chapter iv). These chapters may offer less to the advanced scholar of the *Shepherd*, but will be particularly useful for beginning researchers looking for a general orientation to the text and its history.

Chapter ii's overview of the manuscript history of the *Shepherd* is particularly helpful, rightly supporting Lookadoo's claim that the *Shepherd* 'is one of the most widely attested early Christian texts' (p. 25). Chapter iii nicely supplements this textual history through an overview of the early reception of the *Shepherd*, from roughly the second through the fifth centuries. Lookadoo rightly concludes that the *Shepherd* was 'widely, though not universally' regarded as authoritative among early Christian readers (p. 52), pointing to early favourable reception among Church Fathers as well as its inclusion in early copies of the New Testament (for example in the Codex Sinaiticus). The *Handbook's* treatment here proves informative and inspirational: Lookadoo subtly calls for scholars to

recognise the early and enduring significance of the *Shepherd*, and thus accept it as integral to understanding early Christianity.

Part II, 'Studying the *Shepherd of Hermas*', provides closer analysis of the *Shepherd*'s images and metaphors (chs v, xi, xii), major characters (ch. vi), relevant literary contexts (chs vii, viii), theology and Christology (chapter ix) and views on sin and repentance (ch. x). This part of the book will be especially useful to scholars seeking a deeper dive into the *Shepherd*'s intricacies. Lookadoo's tracing of parallels with Jewish and Greco-Roman literature represents the strongest and most distinctive aspect of the *Handbook*, distinguishing it from past introductory treatments that have primarily viewed the *Shepherd* through intra-Christian literary lenses. Lookadoo is judicious here, pointing to compelling parallels without stretching the connections into claims of dependence (see, for example, p. 116). 'The *Shepherd* is a text that is fully at home in a Greco-Roman literary setting', Lookadoo fittingly concludes (p. 118). The *Handbook*'s careful identification of parallels with literary texts, moreover, serves as a corrective to previous treatments of the *Shepherd*, which have dismissed the literary nature of the text in favour of a purely 'oral' provenance.

Lookadoo's attempt at reaching a dual audience at times leads to uneven results. The *Handbook* includes some rather self-evident claims (for example that 'Jews had a particularly strong influence on early Christians', p. 111; the statement that 'authority' in the *Shepherd* 'legitimizes the message that is shared', p. 107) that will perplex the more advanced reader. On the other hand, Lookadoo's finely-detailed distinctions between terms (for example, the discussion of 'multisemy' versus 'polysemy', p. 73) may remain unclear to beginning readers. The *Handbook* leaves some areas relatively underexplored: for example Lookadoo discusses the role of a certain Clement in helping Hermas disseminate the *Shepherd*, but does not include discussion on previous scholarly speculations that this person may have some connection to the otherwise-known Christian figure, Clement of Rome (pp. 104–5). The logic behind the organisation of part II, with its close analyses of specific chapters or verses (chs v, xi, xii) bracketing more general treatments of themes and contexts (chs vii–xi), is never satisfactorily explained, though it does not detract from the individual chapters' utility.

These relatively minor criticisms should not diminish Lookadoo's overarching achievement: this is an eminently useful guidebook to a piece of early Christian literature that merits more serious attention. Lookadoo throughout deftly interweaves reviews of previous scholarship with his own perspective, never allowing the latter to dominate. Similarly, the *Handbook* nicely balances the contextualisation of the *Shepherd* against its cultural backdrops alongside due attention to the text's distinctive features. The *Handbook*'s greatest credit is that it takes the *Shepherd* seriously as a piece of Christian literature. Lookadoo fully appreciates the complex and innovative aspects of *Shepherd*, never dismissing it as too 'simplistic' or the product of an 'uneducated mind' (as have previous commentators), but recognising it as a text worthy of detailed study. This will surely inspire future readers to approach the *Shepherd* similarly; they would do well to start their investigations under Lookadoo's guidance.

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