

and soteriology. We are provided with just under one page on God as a character in the Gospel (47–48). This compares with fairly lengthy examples throughout the book of the impact the Gospel has made in art and music.

In conclusion, this is a well-written introduction to Matthew. It is ambitious in its scope. It may be a little overly ambitious for those readers whose primary objective is to discover the mind and message of Matthew.

Andrews University

CEDRIC VINE

Chin, Catherine M., and Moulie Vidas, eds. *Late Ancient Knowing: Explorations in Intellectual History*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014. 297 pp. Hardcover, US\$95.00.

While learning modern Hebrew in Jerusalem, I had a teacher who used to say to her students, “If you don’t know, you don’t ask.” Although she was referring to our ignorance, as foreigners, of the complexity of the Hebrew language, her dictum portrays well how humans grow in their intellectual journey. It is probable that if we do not know our history and the strange world of the past (the ancient other), we might not know ourselves properly. *Late Ancient Knowing* is a good collection of essays that will enhance the reader’s perception of this important but mostly neglected past.

Very few, if any, in Late Antiquity questioned autocracy, slavery, or other social institutions. They just assumed them as an integral part of their reality. Were these assumed by Paul and the first Christians? If yes, why? Surely, no one should dismiss the impact of ancient knowing upon the formation of Christianity. The existence of supernatural beings and their action affecting human lives were also unquestioned. Ideas such as these shaped ancient worldview(s), their way of knowing things. Humans, however, are not static, and therefore new knowledge was discovered because of curiosity and because new questions were asked concerning old readings of reality. Societies in the centuries following the life of Jesus underwent not only a religious transformation but an epistemological one that influenced present worldviews. The Christianization of great parts of the Roman and Persian empires opened new ways for their members to see the world. But Christianity was not the only intellectual force shaping ancient epistemology.

Late Ancient Knowing gathers articles with different perspectives, addressing different themes through different kinds of focus. It brings a collection of essays from Jewish, Christian, and Pagan perspectives on thirteen themes: artifact, animal, language, medicine, cosmos, angel, god, emperor, ordo (order), Christianization, cleric, countryside, and demon. These themes will help the reader to see/understand ancient epistemology and shed some light on this fascinating period of human civilization, unfortunately unknown to most of us.

The introduction and afterword summarize major points of the book. Ancient people saw their world as a complex organism, leading them to use different epistemological approaches to try to systematize their knowledge of it. Late Ancient knowing was the “habit of systematization built on

epistemological heterogeneity" (11). There was a tension between the one and the infinity, and tension of the approachable and similar over against the foreign and distant. This tension is evident in the articles about *Cosmos*, *Emperor*, and *Ordo*. But looking carefully, all essays demonstrate that, whereas there was an acknowledgment of the nature of reality as a complex thing and the existence of multiple ways to approach reality in antiquity, intellectuals also had a cultural impulse to bring order to the heterogeneous nature of reality. This epistemological approach led many ancient writers, discussed in the essays, to adapt their epistemological systems to new realities, some more than others. Another major point I perceived is how the understanding of the "other" was a reflection of how humans saw themselves. For example, the ancient discussion about animals and artifacts was also about self-identity. There is a need to define them (the other) in relation to us (humans). And it is the relation between them and us that shapes the identity of both. As Ellen Muehlberger captured in one of the best essays of the book, on angels, ancient people framed reality in ontological circles. While angels, or demons, or emperors were different from me (the common person), they were also like me. But the key point here is that the interaction between these different beings would challenge and transform each other. So, reflecting upon these categories and relations created the possibility of transformation. In other words, the ancient reflection on angels was a reflection on how humans could exceed their expectations, or the rabbis' reflection on artifacts in relation to humans would make human personality extend to objects. As Marx and others postulated, a thing and our ideas of it are extensions of our humanity.

Thus, the way ancient people dealt with their notions of demons, emperors, or clerics was "inherently metaphorical" and about classification, as Gleason synthesizes in her summary article in the afterword. Classifications, however, were "a matter not just of boundaries but also of connection" (287). In the Ancient world, everything was connected differently than the modern compartmentalized approach to understanding reality. I think this is one of the most important lessons the ancients can help us understand, the importance of connections in a complex world. Globalization, with the Internet, has rescued this approach to understanding reality, and I expect that this will have longstanding relevance.

Late Ancient Knowing is not like an encyclopedia or a dictionary that tries to define terms and concepts objectively in order to be consulted quickly. The essays are about specific themes which are explained through subjective lenses. By subjective I mean through the eyes of somebody who lived in Late Antiquity. Most of the articles are written from this perspective of listening carefully to the ancient sources in order to understand the past. As a consequence of this historical methodology—intended or not—few authors use etymology to clarify their themes. Late Ancient medicine, artifacts, and demons are revealed to the postmodern reader, as much as possible, through the recorded experiences of those who lived with the ancient demons and artifacts. The book thus reconstructs this historical past not with an evolutionistic bias of judging the past negatively, by defining precisely the past

in comparison with the present, but its authors are positive and sympathetic to ancient voices. I try to do the same in my review, highlighting what I found most important for a student of Christian history and theology, giving just one or two ideas about each essay. Knowing the past sympathetically can teach us to be more tolerant to different opinions today. Although this work may help us understand the past, it is also important to recognize our limitations in recovering how ancient people lived and thought. This is because the data we have from this period of history (as any other) is not comprehensive. Our reconstructions should be treated as tentative, as Maud Gleason articulates nicely in the afterword.

This review is from the perspective of how this book can be useful for teaching, for I believe worldview formation is the goal of education. And since Judeo-Christian documents have played a major role in shaping Western civilizations and modern thought, it is especially important for Christians to understand the society of the formative periods of our faith. Pastor-teachers will find these essays on ancient epistemology very useful for teaching. I read this book with this goal in mind, and the immediate questions that I imagined my students asking were, What is Late Ancient? and When was it? The book does not give a precise answer to this inquiry, maybe because no clear historical boundaries can be set. Most authors focus their discussion on personalities of the fourth and fifth century CE, while some explore the theme from the second to the eighth century CE.

So what are some tendencies one can perceive by reading this collection of articles about Late Ancient societies? First, that ancient knowledge is about self-identification. When Porphyry and his contemporaries wrote about medicine or the rabbis about artifacts of life, they were also writing as much (and maybe more so) about themselves. The reflection on the “other,” be it angels, gods, animals, emperor, or demons helped ancient humans to create self-identity. Another tendency I noticed by reading this book was to see how Porphyry (ca. 234–305) seems to be a main representative thinker of antiquity. He is clearly the main author described in chapters two to four, and he appears in other chapters as well. These chapters could be easily used to introduce Porphyry’s ideas in comparison with Christian thinkers of the same period to teach how Christian faith developed along the ideas systematized by this pagan philosopher. In contrast, I noticed that Paul and his anthropology, with the concept of the human nature of sin, is absent in the discussion of the whole book. Since most articles are about Christian themes and perspectives on epistemology, this extremely important worldview could have been a helpful part of the conversation about how ancients saw themselves and knew reality.

According to the introduction, written by the editors Catherine Chin and Moulie Vidas, the author of each chapter should have asked two questions about the theme explored: What did Late Ancient people know about it, and How was that knowledge expressed in people’s actions? (3). This purpose is very good, but the chapters do not all answer these questions clearly. Thus, the division into two parts, *Finding Order* (chs. 1–7) and *Putting Things in Order* (chs. 8–14), seems to be unnecessary. I would place together the

chapters on demons, God, and angels, marking them as distinct from the chapters on artifact, cosmos, and language. Overall, the book approaches a somewhat neglected field in history, Late Ancient epistemology, that should be understood by those studying the origins and development of Jewish and Christian ideas, which shaped Western culture.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

RODRIGO DE GALIZA BARBOSA

deClaissé-Walford, Nancy, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. xxii + 1051pp. Hardcover, US\$60.00.

This New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT) volume on the Psalms is the result of the combined insights and expertise of three excellent biblical scholars: Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. True to the evangelical tradition of NICOT, which delicately balances the use of standard critical methodologies with humble respect and admiration for the biblical text as God's inspired Word (xv), the authors draw on historical, form-critical, canonical, and theological approaches, and pay attention to the text's literary features, theological themes, and practical implications for the life of modern readers. The book does not delve much into technical issues (such as literary structure, date, and original setting) that are usually treated extensively in some commentaries. Rather, it focuses on the linguistic features and theological message of each psalm in particular, and the whole Psalter in general.

The authors offer a comprehensive fifty-one-page introduction to orient readers to the Psalter with regard to some key issues: the title, text, translation, authorship, superscriptions, and date of the Psalms, the main approaches to the study of the Psalms (form-critical, historical, and canonical approaches), the main poetic features of the Psalms (parallelism and evocative language), the overview of themes and theology, and the outline of the Psalter. Some issues are discussed in more detail than others. For example, the authors devote seventeen pages to the canonical shape of the Psalter (five pages to form criticism and historical approaches). This is done to both shed more light on this recent approach to the Psalms (championed in the mid-twentieth century) and set the tone for the authors' method. The authors approach the Psalter canonically, meaning that they pay careful attention to the division of the Psalter into five distinct books and its "story line" (from the reign of King David through the Babylonian exile to the return to the land and rebuilding of the temple). This reviewer believes that certain matters deserve additional attention in the introduction. For example, themes and theology of the Psalms are given only two pages. The authors provide a helpful overview of leading scholars and their methods and approaches to the theology of the Psalter, but this book would have been enriched by a fresh exposition of the theology of the Psalter that would demonstrate the dynamic of the encounter and fellowship between God and his people in the Psalms. The introduction comes with a useful five-page bibliography of secondary sources.