the belief that Christ is about to return soon to establish his Kingdom—is one of the most paradoxically long-lived convictions of the Church; and, if we can speak of normative beliefs in an age of so much variety, one that characterized Christians High Church and Low from the first century on well past the fall of the Empire in the West—the best efforts of Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine notwithstanding.

Finally, a small point, but one that is to a patrologist what the abba-business, so nicely done in by Vermes, is to the New Testament scholar: Origen is the last person in the early church whom we should expect to take anything literally. Did he really, in ‘an excess of ascetical enthusiasm’, castrate himself? (p. 198, n. 16)? See H. Chadwick, Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition, p. 68.

But these are the objections of an enthusiast. Vermes has produced an erudite and elegant essay whose value, especially in light of the author’s peerless command of Scrolls material and Aramaic and Hebrew sources, will enrich and aid the serious student in quest of the Jesus of history. And I can only hope that the authority with which he states his judgment that Jesus’ Judaism stands closer to that of the ancient hasidim and the rabbis of the Mishnah than to that of his nearer contemporaries, the covenanters of Qumran, will spare us all further silliness about Jesus and the Scrolls.

Finally, let me close in praise of Pam Vermes, הּ. The author states in his preface that much of the substance and the style of his work has been the fruit of their common collaboration, and that The Religion of Jesus the Jew was no exception. We have her also, then, to thank for the great clarity, learning, and humanistic spirit of this essay:

\[(\text{Prov. 31:31})\]

Boston University

Paula Fredriksen


Of the fourteen essays in this volume, nine are reprints, three of them from this journal, and five others are either new or translations from the Dutch. Those not published in English before are on Pseudo-Phocylides and the New Testament, biblical women in Pseudo-Philo, the Samaritan Diaspora, the Aphrodisias inscription and Nimrod in post-biblical literature. The distinction of van der Horst’s contribution to the study of Hellenistic Judaism is such that this collection may be signalled as a major resource. He has an eye for what is unnoticed and fruitful, seemingly a little out-of-the-way, but, by the end of his investigations, demonstrably important. This is certainly true of the ethical maxims of Pseudo-Phocylides, van der Horst’s original subject of research. And it is equally true of one of his more recent concerns, the evidence, some of it uncertain, for the Samaritan dispersion: this is evidence which ought not to be overlooked in studying the Jewish diaspora, and one might wish for more on the subject.

Van der Horst has long been alert to women’s history, and he makes perceptive observations on the extraordinary role assigned to some female figures in the LAB. It should be noted that the women in that work, along with some of those in Josephus’ Antiquities, are now the subject of a book-length study by Cheryl Anne Brown (No Longer be Silent, 1992). Van der Horst has also been one of the few scholars to deal with Bernadette Brooten’s women leaders in the ancient synagogue, to whose conclusions he is sympathetic.
An interesting short introduction explains lines of development in his thinking; it groups the essays helpfully, and places them within a New Testament agenda and, even more, within a context of current scholarly debate on Judaism. There are valuable comments on the controversy about the origins of Jewish mysticism, to which the papers on Moses’ vision in the Exagoge of Ezekiel, and on the last three chapters of the Testament of Job, make their own particular contribution.

Department of Classics
University of Reading

Tessa Rajak


This introductory handbook will be welcomed by all students of ancient Jewish history. The author surveys over a thousand Jewish funerary inscriptions from Palestine and from the Diaspora in the late Antique period. Considering the evidence as a whole, he assesses the languages of the inscriptions (ch. 2), their terminology, formula and motifs (chs. 3–4). The next chapters deal with Jewish professions, civic and communal functions (ch. 6), the status of women (ch. 7), and notions of death and afterlife (ch. 8)—thus indicating how much about the life and culture of the Jews of late Antiquity can be inferred from these inscriptions. The final chapter (ch. 10) supplies the reader with a small but informative selection of epitaphs, edited with translation and brief commentary.

Rather than an original study, the author presents in this book a balanced account of the current state of epigraphic and historical research. I would praise him for his caution and soundness of judgment. Scholarly debates, concerning for instance the status of ‘women leaders’ in synagogues (pp. 105–9), are presented in a fair and impartial manner. The extent to which the Jews appear to have drawn on pagan epitaphic motifs, as against exhibiting distinctively Jewish traits, is carefully weighed out (in favour of the former, especially in Leontopolis; chs. 3–4). The method suggested for identifying inscriptions as Jewish (pp. 16–18) may appear rather arbitrary, but it is difficult to think of any workable alternative. With much lucidity, the author draws frequent attention to the problems inherent in statistical data or, more generally, to the problems of using inscriptions as historical ‘evidence’, for instance in the context of demography (ch. 5—a speculative, but nevertheless interesting chapter).

Regional variation is frequently emphasised by the author, even though his thematic approach conveys at times a misleading impression of uniformity and consistency (for instance, with reference to communal functions or titles such as that of the archon, in Diaspora communities—pp. 89–98). It may be argued, indeed, that regional variation is likely to constitute a most productive area of study, for whereas the date or authorship of inscriptions can often be contentious, their place of origin is usually, for obvious reasons, unquestionable. However, the author should have taken into account that in sites such as Beth Shearim, where many Diaspora Jews were buried, inscriptions may often be of uncertain place of origin and unrepresentative of local, Palestinian Jewry (see pp. 118–22, 130 and 151–3).

As to the general scope of this work, the author specifies in his preface (p. 7) that his work concerns itself exclusively with the text of the inscriptions, and ignores pictorial representations which often went together with them. The study of palaeography and of onomastics has also been left out, as these topics are adequately treated in other, recent publications (p. 7). It is regrettable, however, that the author does not even refer