

major omission. The effort to cite a broader range of authors and secondary sources also disappears in Chapter 5, where the citations are limited almost exclusively to works by New Testament scholars, even with reference to topics like resistance to Hellenism in the Roman Near East.

The limited range of citations makes Chapter 5 the least successful in the book. Too little evidence is presented to demonstrate the chapter's claims about the relative insignificance of Greco-Roman influences on the development of early Christologies. Bird suggests that Greeks and Romans were much less interested in divine intermediary figures than were Jews and Christians. But the chapter's discussion ignores or glosses over many signs of Greco-Roman interest in intermediary figures. Daemons and daemonology are barely mentioned, even though the word "daemons" appears in the title of the chapter. I was also baffled to read the suggestion that there was little interest among Greeks and Romans in the practice of ritual incubation a few lines before mention of the healing sanctuaries of Asclepius (395). Chapter 5's claims about the limited influence of Greco-Roman ideas on the development of early Christologies require significant reconsideration.

The earlier chapters are more successful. Chapter 1's attempt to problematize Jesus's divinity is helpful and convincing, using an effective blend of Christian, Jewish, and Greco-Roman sources. The same pattern continues in the second through fourth chapters, which continue the dialogue between sources effectively. Special mention must be made of the taxonomies and lists in Chapter 4, which should provide a useful starting point for much future research on Christology with reference to intermediary figures.

I have questions about the intended audience of the book. Some discussions assume no prior knowledge from readers, with helpful definitions and examples provided, for instance, in the introduction of the concept of divine ontology. Greek and Hebrew words are always transliterated, which also suggests a desire to be accessible to nonspecialist readers. But untranslated phrases and sentences in German also appear with some frequency, sometimes even in the body text. And much is taken for granted about trends within New Testament scholarship. The ideal reader therefore seems to be someone who knows some German and little to no Greek and Hebrew, but who is also familiar with significant developments in scholarship on the New Testament.

The merits of the book are still real, particularly in the moments when it brings together Christian, Jewish, and Greco-Roman sources on the topic of divine ontology. Bird succeeds in demonstrating that the divinity of Jesus needs to be problematized, and that Christian interest in divine ontology was already present in the first century.

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*The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers.* Edited by Michael F. Bird and Scott D. Harrower. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xiv + 372 pp. \$34.99 paper.

This "companion" to the "intriguing" and "enigmatic" "para-apostolic and post-apostolic" collection of writings known as the "Apostolic Fathers" (AF) is one of the

best introductions to this corpus available. One major reason for such an estimation is its breadth of coverage: whereas most introductions to the AF consist of chapters on the individual documents included in the collection, fully one half of this volume is given over to discussions of issues and topics that are important for understanding them in their (largely) second-century social and religious contexts.

Harrower's brief introduction notes both the artificiality and value of the collection (though he does not adequately deal with the tension between the artificiality of the collection and the claim that the AF "are representative of the growth and diversification of early Christian communities"), and then offers short overviews of each chapter. Then come nine thematic or topical chapters: 1. "The Roman Empire in the Era of the Apostolic Fathers" (Michael J. Svigel); 2. "The Image of Jews and Judaism in the Apostolic Fathers" (Philip Alexander); 3. "Second-Century Diversity" (David E. Wilhite); 4. "The Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers" (Stephen E. Young); 5. "The Text of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers" (Paul Foster); 6. "The Reception of Paul, Peter, and James in the Apostolic Fathers" (Benjamin Edsall); 7. "Between Ekklesia and State: The Apostolic Fathers and the Roman Empire" (Andrew Gregory); 8. "Church, Church Ministry, and Church Order" (David J. Downs); and 9. "The Apostolic Mothers" (Clare K. Rothschild, who discusses sixteen women and mentions several others).

The chapters by Alexander and Wilhite are outstanding. The former offers a concise, authoritative, and geographically inclusive account that acknowledges the "dismissive and aggressive" attitude toward Judaism of many of the documents, during a time when "classic Christian anti-Judaism was forged" and, in the particular case of Barnabas, contextualizes without excusing that document's supersessionism. Wilhite offers a nuanced discussion of the challenges of defining and measuring diversity and sketches the multiple scholarly interpretive paradigms that have shaped the discussion. The subsequent essays are all very good and well-nuanced as they deal with their assigned topic. Less effective is the first essay, which (contra the implication of the chapter's title) creates a timeline structured around the chronology of the emperors on which it then places the various documents; moreover, the dates supplied in this chapter for some of the documents stand in considerable tension with the discussion of those documents in later chapters in the volume (e.g., the unwarranted claim that "it is hardly doubted" that *1 Clement* is Domitianic [p. 17]). The "empire," however, is more than the emperors; and attention to the social, religious, and urban contexts of the early Christian movement would be welcome.

Chapters 10–17 cover the individual documents: 10. *1 and 2 Clement* (Janelle Peters); 11. "The Letters of Ignatius" (Jonathon Lookadoo); 12. "Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*" (Paul A. Hartog); 13. "*Didache*" (Clayton N. Jefford); 14. "*The Epistle of Barnabas*" (Reidar Hvalvik); 15. "*The Shepherd of Hermas* as Early Christian Apocalypse" (Dan Batovici); 16. "*The Epistle to Diognetus* and the Fragment of Quadratus" (Michael F. Bird and Kirsten H. Mackerras); and 17. "The Fragments of Papias" (Stephen C. Carlson). Each deals (in varying order) with the expected topics (authorship, date, key themes, etc.). These chapters are uniformly well-done, and in some chapters are unmatched: for example, Batovici's coverage of the manuscript evidence for the text of the *Shepherd*, or Carlson's chapter on the fragments of Papias, which summarizes his recent monumental monograph. The occasional blip (e.g., the absence of any discussion of what Polycarp means by the term "righteousness" in Pol. *Phil.*, where it is a major topic

and is used in a non-Pauline sense) do not distract from the overall high quality of these chapters.

Production or editorial slips are rare but do occasionally affect the sense: e.g., the first full sentence on p. 48 is missing one or more words; on 105 line 26, for “*1 Clement*” read instead “*Pol. Phil.*”; and on pp. 111–112, the introduction to the discussion of the use of Ephesians mentions Ignatius, Polycarp, and the *Shepherd*, as does the conclusion. In between, there is a two-paragraph discussion of Ignatius and a long paragraph on the *Shepherd*—but not a word about Polycarp’s possible use of Ephesians. It certainly appears that a paragraph (or more) discussing *Pol. Phil.* 12.1 is missing from this section.

Overall, this is an excellent addition to the “Cambridge Companions” series. The chapters on various documents comprising the AF offer reliable guides both to the document and current scholarship regarding it. The nine thematic chapters set this volume apart from similar volumes and add greatly to its worth and usefulness.

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***Helena Augusta: Mother of the Empire.* By Julia Hillner. Women in Antiquity. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. xxiv + 381 pp. \$99 cloth, \$29.95 paper.**

This is a chronological biography of Constantine’s mother, the Empress Helena. Ordinarily that would not sound like an original thesis but in fact it is. Most of the written evidence we have of Helena’s life covers very short periods, particularly late in her life when Constantine became emperor and gave her an imperial title. We also have legends written after her death. But what of all the years in between, when the records are silent about her life?

Trying to extrapolate the lives of people out of power in the ancient world (the modern world as well for that matter) is always difficult. Hillner’s approach reminds us of the truth of the adage “absence of evidence isn’t evidence of absence.” The women were always there—and always influential—even if the standard historical sources did not mention them. Hillner had to turn to unusual sources and creative interpretations to try to recreate the silent years of Helena’s life.

Hillner’s most creative and insightful analysis comes from her work on art and archaeology. She analyzes the clothing and hairstyles on sculptures, mosaics, and coinage to see how the views of imperial women changed over time as women became increasingly central to imperial propaganda. She even notes the significance of imperial women’s noses in art to show family connections. Hillner also studies little-known tombs of imperial women to consider their roles and portrayals. These sources, in addition to a careful analysis of geography and even women’s names, shed light on their experience.

Through this careful analysis, the author demonstrates and recreates the central importance of the imperial women of the late third and early fourth centuries. The family ties—whether of concubinage or formal marriage—were central to and shaped the political history of the age. Readers will also appreciate the chart of the complex family