

Lewis Ayres and H. Clifton Ward, eds., *The Rise of the Early Christian Intellectual*, *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 139*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020. ISBN 978-3-11-060755-0. Hardcover, pp. xiii + 272. \$99.00/€86.95.

- [1] The present volume is a collection of papers delivered at a seminar with the same title held by the Australian Catholic University in Rome in 2016. The seminar's goal was "to explore the emergence of Christian intellectual life during the second century. The participants proceeded by considering, the early Christian intellectual not in the abstract, but by exploring different facets of Christian intellectual life over what we might consider a 'long second century', stretching from the writing of 'John's' Apocalypse through to Clement of Alexandria in the early third century" (2). The strength of the set of contributions gathered in this volume is that they do not consider intellectuals as academics only or intellectuality as the result of academic training and education alone. All the cultural achievements and background a modern intellectual might be associated with are considered (see the "Introduction and Acknowledgments" by Lewis Ayres and H. Clifton Ward III, 1–2). Contrary Max Weber, who regarded ancient Christianity as "essentially anti-intellectual and petty bourgeois" (viii), the articles of this collection of essays realize the broad scope of early Christian intellectualism. Thus, like other volumes of its type, this volume revolves around individual authors a reader would might expect to be dealt with in such a thematic book.¹
- [2] The first contribution in this volume is by Tobias Nicklas, who focuses on the seer in Revelation ("Crazy Guy or Intellectual Leader? The Seer of Revelation and His Role for the Communities of Asia," 7–24). For Nicklas the definition of an "intellectual" depends on "if he/she is both well-educated and willing to learn and he/she is occupied with creative scholarly, literary, artistic or related activities which also allow him/her to take a critical stance towards situations and developments in the world he/she lives" (7). Of course, this trial definition provokes a handful of critical questions such that the individual features Nicklas names seems to cause more questions than answers to the issue of what an intellectual finally is. Be that as it may, the overall question Nicklas poses is a witty and essential one: how to evaluate the work of the seer of Revelation? Nicklas also successfully interrogates the language and style of Revelation, the intertexts to be recognized in it, and the seer's relation to and communication with communities. Although the positive evaluation of Revelation against the only potential and inappropriate categories of "classical Attic Greek," "correct Greek," or "usual grammar" (14) might be debatable and rather general, Nicklas successfully brings insights into the work of an author who knew many other texts, played on "allusions and echoes" (23), structured the text plausibly, was "aware of dangerous social and political changes," and was able to create "a new synthesis of traditions, images and ideas about Israel's God which integrates the Christ event without abandoning Israel's heritage" (24). This fine piece of writing provides much food for thought and might initiate further discussions.
- [3] Stephan C. Carlsen ("Papias's Appeal to the 'Living and Lasting Voice' over Books," 25–44) critically deals with Papias's obvious preference of "a living and lasting voice" to "what

¹ Thus, the book shares its selected authors (and topics) with other representations of the "intellectual" in early Christianity. Cf. Philip E. Eisdler, ed., *The Early Christian World*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2000), 503–691 (chapters 20–26), which divides its discussion between "The Apostolic Fathers," "The Apologists," "The Early Theologians," "Later Theologians of the Greek East," "Later Theologians of the West," and also "Creeds, Councils and Doctrinal Development" and "Biblical Interpretation" (according to the titles of the seven chapters).

- comes from books” (25) and embeds his attitude into a survey of what non-Christian, Jewish, and Christian authors of the time thought of and wrote about literacy (26). Although Papias might have been the first who explicitly used the phrase “living voice,” it is likely that “it was already a conventional term” (40). Carlsen plausibly suggests that we see Papias as an author who deliberately added “lasting” to “living voice” in order “to overcome the inherent limitations of the conventional expression” (43).
- [4] Matthew R. Crawford focuses on Tatian and Celsus (“Tatian, Celsus, and Christianity as ‘Barbarian Philosophy’ in the Late Second Century,” 44–80) and demonstrates that “a comparison of the two thinkers reveals a striking overlap in their presuppositions and methodology” (44). Crawford succeeds in pointing out that ancient wisdom and philosophy play a crucial role in the discussions both authors, Tatian and Celsus, led with contemporary (religious or philosophical) movements. Most interesting to me as a reader is the section about Tatian’s “self-presentation as a barbarian philosopher” (80) and the reinterpretation of the fallen angels as demons and then as the gods of the Greek pantheon. These former fallen angels (68) “led humanity astray and plunged them into vice, all in an attempt to make themselves look like gods.”
- [5] Matyáš Havrda (“Intellectual Independence in Christian and Medical Discourse of the Second–Third Centuries,” 81–100) only briefly tackles medical issues from outside Christianity, and there he specializes on Galen alone (83–87), which might be seen as too narrow a perspective of a complex and rather wide subject matter. The strength of his contribution is to be seen in a survey of “intellectual independence in early Christianity” (87), in which he deals with the Valentinians—but without discussing who they might have been and whether or not they can actually be identified as such—mainly with Clement of Alexandria.
- [6] Benjamin A. Edsall (“Clement and the Catechumenate in the Late Second Century,” 101–27) focuses on Clement’s view of the catechumenate. However, a more contextual reading of the individual and relevant textual aspects—for example, the interaction of Clement’s own education and philosophical background with his Christian belief—might have been very efficient, but that would probably go far beyond the scope and space limits of a book chapter. Nevertheless Edsall does convincingly illustrate that Clement did not use any parallels or models from his environment (e.g., the Eleusinian mysteries) for his depiction of the catechumenate.
- [7] Gretchen Reydam-Schils (“Platonism and Stoicism in Clement of Alexandria: ‘Becoming like God,’” 129–43) is the next study concentrating on Clement, this time specializing on Clement’s philosophical home (Plato) and Stoic influence. Reydam-Schils deals with “wisdom,” “gnosis,” “love-*agapê*,” “*philanthrôpia*,” and “*eusebeia*” and thus brings together some important terms and concepts.
- [8] Lewis Ayres (“Irenaeus and the ‘Rule of Truth’: A Reconsideration,” 145–63) presents a comprehensive and in-depth study of the significance of Irenaeus of Lyon for the canon (“rule of truth,” see *Haer.* 1.22.1 and 3.11.1). For the benefit of his readers Ayres refers to Clement and his understanding of canon and then uncovers the use of the phrase *κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας* in non-Christian contexts (156–59).
- [9] The title of Azzan Yadin-Israel’s contribution, “Christian, Jewish, and Pagan Authority and the Rise of the Christian Intellectual,” already proves that he takes the concept of this collection of essays rather literally (165–91). By investigating the “prophetic or revelatory authority and an oral-traditional authority based on transmission of authorized traditions” (165), Yadin-Israel at least partly touches on what Nicklas addressed in the first article with his focus on Revelation. In this learned study, Yadin-Israel takes his readers

by the hand and leads them through a well-structured, mostly chronological outline, in the course of which he even integrates “non-intellectual sources in pagan sources,” such as oracles (186–88) and, of course, rabbinic sources.

- [10] Francesca Schironi (“Eusebius’ *Gospel Questions* and Aristarchus on Homer—Similar Strategies to Save Different ‘Sacred’ Texts,” 193–226) starts her study with a reference to Homer’s “questions and solutions” (*zetemata* and *lyseis*) (193) before she turns to Eusebius’s *Questions and Answers on the Gospels*, where she focuses on the four *Questions to Marinus* only (195). Step by step Schironi highlights parallels between Aristarchus and Eusebius and discusses the particularities of the latter (219–26), which she identifies with a sort of improvement of “Alexandrian scholarship” by Eusebius (224).
- [11] The book comes with a bibliography (227–48) that contains secondary literature only, an indices of passages (biblical texts, classical non-Christian texts, early Christian texts, and Jewish writers; 249–62), and a general index of names and subjects (263–72).
- [12] The collection of essays under review is definitely mind-provoking and its individual contributions, though different in quality and length, offer many aspects for further study to any interested reader. Nevertheless, the layout and thematic composition of the conference volume appears as if an overall definition of “the early Christian intellectual” is arbitrary or inconclusive. On the one hand, it seems that an intellectual is to be identified as a person who is capable of reading, writing, and knowing and combining other literature, which would widen traditional views of intellectuality. On the other, a considerable number of contributors actually focus on Christian writers that are usually seen as intellectuals (for example, Papias, Tatian, Clement, Irenaeus, and Eusebius). Even more the collection of essays reveals a special interest in Clement of Alexandria, who is the subject in three of the nine studies. Be that as it may, there are many speculative and challenging theses in some of the studies, and reading the book helped me to reflect critically on the issue of the “intellectual” and “intellectuality” in early Christianity. Moreover, they prompt me to consider more carefully how to define these terms and how they might have been seen by early Christian writers.

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