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JAN M. BREMMER (ed.), The Apocryphal Acts of John (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995)

In November 1994 a conference was organised in Holland by universities in Budapest and Groningen. Ten of the papers delivered at that conference are included in the present book. All are by Hungarian or Dutch scholars. To these is added an article by Geoffrey Jenkins, who is neither Hungarian nor Dutch but is an Australian from Melbourne University. It does not look as if his contribution was originally part of the conference. His paper and the photographic plates relating to it were not announced in the original publicity for the book. That is of no consequence because Jenkins’ main piece is an appropriate addition to the collection. More of that below.

The papers, all but one in English, are concerned with various aspects of the Acts of John (= AJ), although some inevitably stray into other apocryphal Acts.

The editor writes on the place of women in the Acts of John. He analyses the role of Drusiana, of Cleopatra and of the old women and widows in the stories. He concludes that the author is unlikely to have been a woman but that a female readership was probably in mind. He concludes that “the prominent position of the women will also have had a certain missionary appeal” (p. 53).

Another obvious theme to anyone opening these apocryphal Acts, especially the Acts of John, is their alleged gnosticism, and that is the theme in another essay. G. Luttikhuizen gives a gnostic reading of AJ. Although he inevitably concentrates on chapters 94-102 and gives a detailed commentary on the gnostic ideas found there, Luttikhuizen does not see these chapters as an inappropriate intrusion into an earlier Acts. Rather the stories in the rest of AJ, although lacking a specifically gnostic character, nonetheless would have been acceptable and relevant to gnostic readers.

Hans Roldanus’ paper (in German) also discusses chapters 94ff. His main concern is with the eucharistic passages (AJ 85 and 109). These are analyzed in detail but he sees a close connexion between them and the doxological character of chapters 94-96.

The polymorph of Christ is another important characteristic of the apocryphal Acts and AJ in particular. Pieter Lalleman’s essay on this topic concludes that not all the stories of metamorphosis, of which AJ has several, are polymorphous. He
also distinguishes docetic descriptions of Christ from polymorphous appearances proper, i.e. stories where Jesus is seen simultaneously in different guises. Polymorphy functions as a means to illustrate a docetic christology, and the main purpose is to stress that Jesus was not human. In *AJ* polymorphy covers stature, age and corporeality. It is not a sign of gnosticism "but gnostics used it" (p. 117). The Easter narratives in the canonical gospels encouraged the idea of the polymorphic Christ—an idea which was transferred to the account of the transfiguration and then to other stories from the ministry period. The origin of the polymorphic Christ is thus said to have arisen from a docetic reading of the New Testament. Lalleman concludes his essay by looking at polymorphy in other apocryphal Acts.

Another essay that strays beyond *AJ* is I. Karasszon’s piece on the Old Testament citations in the apocryphal Acts. In fact he analyzes five significant OT allusions in Gregory of Tours’ adaptation of the Acts of Andrew. Of the only two examples in *AJ* one (AJ 113.20) comes via the NT, the other (AJ 90.8-9) is a very loose reminiscence of Ex. 33:23. Karasszon fails to suggest that the relative paucity of OT citations in the apocryphal Acts (unlike the NT or patristic writings) may have been due to their contamination with Marcion-type ideas—a possibility recognised in two of the other essays.

We have referred to several articles that are not related exclusively to *AJ* despite the book’s title. Dr. A. Hilhorst’s opening essay on the apocryphal Acts as martyrdom texts is related entirely to the Acts of Andrew! I am not sure why the essay was delivered at a conference on *AJ* or why it was allowed into this collection rather than into a later volume in the series—especially as at least one other conference paper related directly to *AJ* was excluded.

Two essays discuss the influence of *AJ* on later writers. These are R.H. Bremmer Jr.’s introduction to the reception of these Acts in Anglo-Saxon, in particular in the work of Aldhelm and Aelfric; and T. Adamik’s article: “The Influence of the Apocryphal Acts on Jerome’s Lives of Saints.” Bremmer’s paper contains an Appendix with a translation of Aelfric’s Homily of December 27th, which betrays knowledge of apocryphal stories from *AJ*, probably known to him (and indeed to Aldhelm too) from a form of Ps-Melito’s version. Adamik looks particularly at Jerome’s Lives of Paul, Malchus and Hilarion, and points out significant links between these Lives and *AJ*. Despite the title to the essay Adamik also turns to Hrosvit (here Hrosvitha) of Gandersheim, whose play *Callimachus* is a clear and good example of the episodes in *AJ* 63-86 influencing 10th century storytelling. There is scope for further investigations into the influence and reception of these Acts on other authors and especially on their secondary and expurgated forms in Ps-Melito, Ps-Abdias, Ps-Prochorus and others.

M Miracles and speeches are two other obvious features of *AJ*. Jan Bolyki deals with the former, and analyses the major miracle stories in *AJ*. Pál Herceg writes on the sermons in *AJ* (and the Acts of Andrew) compared with those in canonical Acts. His conclusion is that there are striking differences, not least the comparatively blinkered and apologetic nature of the contents of the sermons in the apocryphal literature. He also looks at the allusions and short logia from the NT found in *AJ*—there are no full quotations as such.

The article by Geoffrey Jenkins (G. Jenkins in the Contents page R.G. Jenkins on the plates) is in two parts and covers some 34 pages plus three plates. The main essay is on a papyrus from the Manichaean site at Kellis. We are given here the *editio princeps*, which is a careful and detailed reconstruction of the text together with papyrological and other comments. The text (two adjoining fragments forming one sheet of a codex written on both sides) has linguistic links with *AJ*, especially chapters 84, 85, 106, 109. We know that the Manicheans used the five principal apocryphal Acts. Jenkins suggests that this Kellis papyrus, which he numbers Kellis 1, is not directly related to *AJ* as we have it, but represents a version of