

serait bien longue. Son ouvrage de référence vient à point pour divulguer convenablement la mémoire perdue de l'augustin toulousain Guillaume de Bonjour (1670-1714), très récemment découvert et mis en lumière par les travaux de N. Bosson et S. Aufrère (Montpellier).

Pour conclure, nous dirons combien nous avons apprécié la présentation globale que nous offre Hamilton de l'histoire copte, longue de deux mil ans, dans la première partie de son ouvrage. Elle est assez complète, bien documentée et convenablement nuancée ! Nous regrettons à peine que l'auteur n'ait pas consulté systématiquement les actes de la dizaine de congrès de l'Association internationale d'études coptes / International Association for Coptic Studies (IACS) ou bien la revue copto-américaine *Coptica* (Los Angeles CA). Pour la littérature copte d'expression arabe, par exemple, il y aurait trouvé de nombreuses études corrigeant et complétant le manuel de référence de Graf sur la littérature arabe chrétienne, vieux de plus d'un demi-siècle. Certaines contributions mettent mieux en lumière l'abondance, la variété et la qualité de la production des auteurs de l'âge d'or (XIII^e/XIV^e siècle), la majorité d'entre eux hauts fonctionnaires de l'État..., ce qui s'avère riche en leçons culturelles, sociales et politiques pour la période islamique.

ADEL SIDARUS
Instituto de Estudos Orientais
(Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisboa)

HANNAH, Robert, *Time in Antiquity*, «Sciences of Antiquity Series» (London – New York: Routledge, 2009), 210 pp. ISBN: 9780415331562

What is time? Does it really exist? Does it exist because we think it does? The subject of time has been the cause of timeless debate. It is rather difficult to address such a subject, let alone writing a whole book on it. The challenge lies in how to write the book. The issue discussed is multifaceted indeed. How one can approach the concept of time is the heart of the challenge, and here lies, I believe, the strength of this book. It addresses time from different perspectives, turning the book into an attractive read for people of different disciplines. Moreover, the book is written in a way that is clear, explanatory and “easy” enough for non-specialists to read and understand, although it is packed with technical details.

Robert Hannah travels through history from ancient Greece of the sixth century BC to the Roman Empire of the 3rd century AD, investigating the various perceptions of time. He addresses a number of interesting questions: How did

people measure, mark or tell time? What kind of instruments or machines were used to measure time? How did people view time back then?

The writer explores the definition of time and time-related aspects (e.g., calendars, time-marking schedules). He also addresses the various time-measuring techniques and instruments (e.g., sundials, water clocks), offering a detailed study of the *Antikythera Mechanism*. Moreover, the use of built environment to mark time is explored through a case study of the Pantheon in Rome. The writer highlights the fact that time was inseparable from nature and its cycles in ancient times, especially the movement of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

The book consists of 7 chapters, 23 pages of detailed notes, 50 figures of all kinds, and 19 pages of references. It begins with a “hellish” introduction that opens with a joke posing the question whether time existed before the Creation or the “Big Bang,” an epitaph modifying the age of the deceased with the phrase “more or less,” and a reminder of the scientific fact that the sun does not really rise or set. After such an attractive thought-provoking introduction, it is difficult not to continue reading.

In the following chapters, the writer explores how the sun, moon and stars were used to measure time by the ancient Greeks and Romans who used the cyclic regular movements of these heavenly bodies to create different kinds of time-schedules. The writer also tries to make the reader see the physical background of the period to help him or her better understand how time was viewed and measured.

Following that, the book investigates the time-schedules and calendars of antiquity that were used to mark the moments of time. The writer provides a detailed study of the Antikythera Mechanism, which was a complex computer-like machine that incorporated various calendars into one mechanism able to predict the positions of the sun, moon, and the planets known at that time. The writer, discussing this mechanism, highlights the valuable work done by the Antikythera Mechanism Research Group. He also provides interesting examples of how people’s beliefs affected time calendars. For example, ancient calendars tried to keep the month of *Lenaion* within the winter season because of its negative association with the worst part of the season. In contrast, the Muslim month of *Ramaḍān* changes through time. We also learn that it is possible to have two New Year’s Days in one solar year.

Furthermore, the book studies the forms of different time machines, in particular sundials and water clocks. It deals with three main types of sundials, the spherical, the conical, and the plane. The writer also investigates simple, very

human methods to tell time (e.g., using one's own shadow). The case study of the Pantheon in Rome and how that building was used to measure time is quite interesting. This is used as an example of the use of the built environment for telling time in antiquity.

Reading the acknowledgements section of the book, a part that is often necessary to write, but hardly read, one can reach two conclusions. First, this book is the product of a multifaceted theoretical and field research. One thing that characterizes this book is the intensity, seriousness and diligence that describe the preparation phase and the research done by the writer to end up writing the book. The writer travels all around to research and investigate time (e.g., the Epigraphical museum in Athens, the British museum in London, the Vatican in Rome, different archaeological museums in Turkey). The second is that the interdisciplinarity of this book is unique. The writer says that he has learned "there were no fixed disciplinary boundaries," and this is what precisely describes this book.

The book can be appealing for specialists of different fields. As a linguist, studying the intriguing concept of time, how it is viewed, and how it is expressed is simply fascinating. The writer states in its first page that the word *time* is the most common noun in the English language. Undoubtedly, for physicists, such an investigation is quite relevant, especially the scientific analysis provided of time measurement. Although the writer states that philosophers' thoughts are not center-stage, any study of how time is conceived or perceived or conceptualized cannot but be interesting to philosophers, even if the focus is the perception of "ordinary" people. Furthermore, what can be more appealing for historians than a thorough study of a key concept during periods of the most important in the history of human kind! For sociologists, it is a study of the sociology of time in antiquity. For example, the writer indicates that for some Greeks and Romans, the best time for a couple to conceive a child was when the moon was waxing.

The use of literary evidence to support the arguments and the facts provided is quite frequent in this book. We feel that the study of time here is almost text-based. The writer quotes and cites numerous writers. Some examples are Aristophanes's play *Clouds* where a series of complaints on behalf of the moon are presented, the famous Greek historian Herodotus' reference to the three sundial-related time telling mechanisms of the antiquity, the fictional letters of Alciphron and the Roman writer Cassiodorus, the physician and philosopher Sextus Empiricus, the pagan philosopher Simplicius, the Greek astronomer Cleomedes, the Greek historian Polybios, the Roman writer Vitruvius, and the Greek geographer Strabo.

The reader feels that the book is based on first-hand research in the literal sense. Many of the illustrative photographs presented were taken by the writer himself. Even some of the figures were drawn by him.

To conclude, *Time in Antiquity* is a thorough scientific study of the intriguing concept of time, based on intense and genuine investigation, culminating in a well-written book.

NADER AL JALLAD
University of Córdoba

Hechos y dichos de Jesús en la literatura ascética musulmana. Introducción, traducción y notas por Pilar González Casado y Juan Ramón Martínez Murcia, «Apócrifos cristianos» 6 (Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2009), 238 pp. ISBN: 978-84-9715-160-3

La colección 'Apócrifos Cristianos' nos presenta en esta ocasión un nuevo volumen a los cinco ya existentes. La obra representa un interesante trabajo sobre hechos y dichos que se le atribuyen a Jesús a partir del conocido trabajo de Asín Palacios.

La obra se divide en dos grandes bloques bien diferenciados, pero complementarios. El bloque inicial (pp. 13-89) corresponde a la introducción. En un primer momento se describe el género de los *agrapha* de modo general, para pasar a especificar cuántos y cuáles de ellos son de origen musulmán. La introducción continúa con una relación de fechas y lugares de composición de los *agrapha* de origen musulmán presentando a cada autor a través de una breve pero interesante introducción biográfica y sobre su obra.

Este bloque se completa con un estudio dedicado a diferentes personajes que ejercieron gran influencia en los orígenes del islam como son Jesús, María, Juan el Bautista y Zacarías. Es conocido que la figura de Jesús ha suscitado grandes debates en el seno del islam por su aparición en el Corán, lo que ha hecho que intelectuales cristianos y musulmanes se encuentren todavía inmersos en él debatiendo sobre el papel desempeñado por la figura de Jesús en una y otra religión. Por su parte, las figuras de María, Juan Bautista y Zacarías, también aparecen en el Corán, si bien no han suscitado tanto interés como la de Jesús. Este bloque introductorio finaliza con la descripción de conceptos teológicos relacionados con la religión islámica, incluyendo también algunos propiamente cristianos.