INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

J. N. Bremmer: *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife. The 1995 Read–Tuckwell Lectures at the University of Bristol*. Pp. xi + 238. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Paper, £15.99. ISBN: 0-415-14148-6 (0-415-14147-8 hbk).

Throughout his career, Jan Bremmer has demonstrated a knack for asking and answering profound but simple questions about ancient Mediterranean cultures, particularly those questions which at first seem previously resolved by often-repeated truisms or not even requiring discussion. Among his previous works, examples of this tendency would include 'Walking, Standing and Sitting in Ancient Greek Culture', in Bremmer and Roodenberg (edd.), *A Cultural History of Gesture* (Ithaca, 1992), pp. 15–35; 'Why Did Medea Kill Her Brother Apsyrtus?', in Clauss and Johnston (edd.), *Medea* (Princeton, 1997), pp. 83–100; and 'The Birth of the Term Magic', *ZPE* 126 (1999), 1–12. The knack is particularly evident in this book; in fact, it is his intellectual cadenza to date. B.'s familiarity with the ancient sources and the extensive secondary literature on paganism, Hellenistic Judaism, and early Christianity is remarkable. Of the 238 pages in the work, eighty-eight are given over to notes and bibliography, and, if only for that reason, it will remain a valuable resource to scholars for some years. Diligence in annotation has been a characteristic of much of B.'s previous work, but in this instance his knowledge of the sources has been nurtured by participation in the Groningen Conferences on the Apocryphal Acts and the Groningen Colloquia on the Novel, where classicists and scholars of biblical literature have interacted extensively. Given this preparation, B. has the resources to trace characteristics, themes, and developments across religious communities and pose or answer anew basic questions about the afterlife.

His starting point is his earlier study, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton, 1983), in which he applied the anthropological concepts of the free-soul and the body-soul to Greek terms such as *psychê*, *noos*, and *thymos*, but it is clear from the outset that the scope of this work is to be wider, as he uses these same concepts to sort through ideas of the soul in the Hebrew Bible. The second chapter is given over to distinguishing between Orphism and Pythagoreanism, and the contributions of those movements to the Greek acceptance of the *psychê* as an immortal soul. It makes an important contribution, because it brings to bear recently discovered ancient sources, particularly the Orphic 'Gold Leaves', but B.'s discrimination between the two movements is perhaps too neat. He admits common doctrines, interactions, and even ancient confusions between the two movements, but concludes with a distinct list of characteristics for each (p. 24). In the third and fourth chapters B. examines hypotheses for the borrowing of beliefs about the soul and afterlife into the Western tradition. The former dismantles the proposal that contact with the Scythians led to the emergence of Greek shamans in the archaic period. He demonstrates that evidence for shamans among the Scythians themselves is doubtful (pp. 29–36). The latter chapter searches for the origins of the Jewish and Christian belief in the resurrection; in particular, it critiques the traditional view that the idea was borrowed from Zoroastrianism during the Babylonian exile. In truth, the Iranian scriptures have suffered so much in transmission that they can be used to support numerous interpretations. B. instead proposes that the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body is rooted in the Roman persecution (p. 52). Such a social environment would explain the dogmatism regarding the belief in the early Church. Anyone who has read the pages and pages in

© The Classical Association, 2003

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/53.1.210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Augustine's *City of God* dedicated to the place of fingernails, hair, and aborted fetuses in the afterlife will be disposed to accept that the doctrine became fundamental as a result of its adoption in a crisis. Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive review of the elements of the Christian afterlife up through the addition of purgatory in the twelfth century. B. here, as in Chapters 3 and 4, emphasizes the social factors which led to the adoption of the various characteristics of the afterlife.

The three appendices best demonstrate B.'s ability for solving mysteries. In the first he explains the origin of the term 'Christian' by its use in response to a mocking question of Roman magistrates, 'Esne Christianus/a?' In the second he traces the Greek term *paradeisos* from its Median origins through the Septuagint to its use in the Roman period, with a striking excursus on paradise in the *Oracula Sibyllina*. An exciting by-product of the excursus is the possible determination of Jesus' own conception of paradise, given his statement to the criminal in Luke 23.43.

Despite the book's general success in resolving vexing issues, it falls short as a synthetic and diachronic treatment of the afterlife in the West. Part of the problem results from its origin as six separate lectures on human immortality. There is, for example, an obvious connection between shamanism treated in Chapter 2 and necromancy in Chapter 6, but as these chapters are dedicated to distinct agendas, the connection goes largely unexplored. The broad scope has induced B. into discussing modern phenomena such as spiritualism (pp. 83–6) and near-death experiences (pp. 100–2) in the latter chapters, but he can only do so in brief. In fact, the fall of the afterlife, as suggested in the title, goes largely untreated, as B. sees it as a relatively modern occurrence (pp. 86–7). B.'s own skill in resolving specific issues exacerbates the problem, and, at times, the larger goals of the book are lost in the details of the subsidiary arguments.

Rhodes College DAVID H. SICK

A PANORAMA OF GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY

J. WHITLEY: *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*. Pp. xxvi + 484, maps, ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Paper, £21.95. ISBN: 0-521-62733-8 (0-521-62205-0 hbk).

Greek archaeology has had a remarkable thirty or so years. Lefkandi changed almost everything for Dark Age and archaic Greece, and continues to surprise and provoke us. Field survey has come into its own. Theory entered Greek archaeology and took parts of it by storm. Every year, as the Archaeological Reports show, there are new finds, new discoveries, from the Neolithic to the Byzantine period. Chronologies have been shaken up and challenged, and at least some have emerged the stronger for it. History and archaeology have seldom worked more closely together. The Cambridge World Archaeology series has provided two guides now which cover the period from the beginning of the Bronze Age to the time of Alexander the Great, O. Dickinson's magisterial *The Aegean Bronze Age* (Cambridge, 1994) and Whitley's equally remarkable survey.

Like Dickinson's account, W.'s survey is lavishly illustrated with maps, line drawings, and photographs. It is beautifully put together. It will, rightly, be the standard *vade mecum* for a long time to come, and it is a monumental work of scholarship and care.

© The Classical Association, 2003

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/53.1.210 Published online by Cambridge University Press