

BOOK REVIEW

Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult. Edited by JEFFREY BRODD and JONATHAN L. REED. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series, Vol. 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011. Pp. xiv + 261. Paper, \$37.95. ISBN 978-1-58983-612-9.

The collection *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* promises a dialogue, a “wide-ranging treatment of issues and interrelated themes” that brings together “classicists, biblical and religious scholars, historians, and archaeologists.” Part One addresses the definition of “religion” as an analytical category. Part Two studies the variously successful penetration of imperial ideology in the Eastern Mediterranean. Part Three the intersection of Roman imperial religious practice and thinking with Jewish and Christian communities. Part Four offers final comments on the importance of cross-disciplinary research.

Collectively the papers illustrate the use of literary, numismatic, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence to consider questions of religious policy, practice, and belief. A religious institution emerges as sets of historical actions, situated in place and time, and the product of historically situated actors.

In the opening essay, Galinsky emphasizes the need to study imperial cult not as a single monolith but as a “paradigm”; to conceptualize imperial cult as a negotiated product of “religious pluralism”—rather than a polarity of religious accommodation or resistance—embedded within distinct communities possessing their own political, religious and social histories in a diverse Roman Empire; and to evaluate “the Jesus movement” similarly within the “religious pluralism” of the Empire. Galinsky highlights the value of language (e.g. *theos ek theou* and *soter*) to locate “imperial cults more precisely within the associative spectrum” (10) and to understand the Christian appropriation of Roman ideas.

In Part One, James Hanges (“To Complicate Encounters”) reframes Galinsky’s claims in terms of post-colonial discourse: the processes of identity formation of subordinated groups; the concept of identity as multivalent and the product of an ongoing, negotiated interrelationship, with a salutary awareness of negotiation implying the views and actions of the subordinated; and the appro-

priation by the subordinated of the symbols of domination. He claims that local quarrels influenced the evolving character of ancient cult (31 n. 15, where one misses a discussion of comparative material for understanding the local negotiation) and concludes provocatively with the transformative function of myth and ritual to conjure up the ideal reality within the imperfect, mundane existence (33, which lacks citation of ancient evidence and Vernant's analysis of Hesiod's Myth of Prometheus).

Jeffrey Brodd ("Religion, Roman Religion, Emperor Worship") considers the definition of "religion" with three interlocking premises: the need for "conceptual clarity," for distinguishing modern and ancient definitions of religion, and for confronting theoretical definition with data. He surveys anthropologists and their critics grappling with definitions of religion and concomitant terms, both to illustrate the debate and to identify what is at stake in defining the categories.

Given the claims, I missed—perhaps revealing my Classical, disciplinary perspective—the philological bibliography on the Roman terms, especially A. K. Michel's study of the term "religio" and its historical evolution ("The Versatility of *Religio*" in *The Mediterranean World: Papers Presented in Honour of Gilbert Bagnani* (1976) 36–77) and more recent treatments (R. Muth *ANRW* 2.16.1 (1978) 290–354; J. Rüpke *Les Études classiques* 75 (2007): 67–78).

Eric Orlin ("Augustan Religion: From Locative to Utopian") uses Galinsky's claim about religious pluralism to explore the religious context of the development of imperial cult and Christianity. He divides ancient religious practice into categories of "locative religion" or "religion of place" by contrast with "utopian" religious experience and traces a change in "religion of place" during the Augustan principate. Augustan religious reforms broke the traditional identification of place and cult: Augustus relocated the Republican rituals of Roman militarism from the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus to the new temple of Mars Ultor and removed the Sibylline books from there to the new temple of Apollo on the Palatine, so that "the chief deity of the Roman Republic was dislodged from his position theologically, ritually, and physically." The expanding political definition of the Empire transmuted the definition of locative religion, as Roman cults were adopted beyond Rome and peninsular Italy throughout Roman Mediterranean. Imperial cult emerges as another example of the extended locative religion.

In Part Two, Barbetta Spaeth ("Imperial Cult in Roman Corinth") illustrates the utility of Galinsky's ideas of "religious pluralism" and the interpenetration of religious and political/social life, in order to think about imperial cult in Corinth. Coins pairing obverse portraits of Nero with reverse images of deity (the Genius

of the colony, Fortuna) and inscriptions giving gods the adjective “Augustus/a” illustrate the “intertwining’ of the cult of the emperor with those of other gods in the city” (67). The particular configuration of imperial cult at Corinth emerges as stamped by the religious and political history of the Roman colony.

In “Embedding Rome in Athens,” Nancy Evans delineates an Athenian local history to appraise cult from the perspective of the Athenian, the Roman, and the non-Athenian tourist at Athens. Evans locates imperial cult at Athens on a religious continuum that included rare cult to the Hellenistic successors of Alexander and to the late Republican generals, and deliberate revocation of cult for those subsequently deemed unworthy, by contrast with the explosion of imperial cult locations (94 altars identified), whereby Athens demonstrated allegiance to “external authority” and garnered imperial benefaction.

For the Romans Augustus exploited the Athenian historical antagonism of Greeks v. Persians to formulate his own imperial policy v. Parthia, and Paul’s journey establishes a thinking man’s reactions to imperial cult at Athens in the first century. For this paper and the entire Part Two, Kantiréa’s book (*Les dieux et les dieux Augustes. Le culte impérial en Grèce sous les Julio-claudiens et les Flaviens*, 2007) and richly documented, comparative study of imperial cult at Pergamum, Athens, and Ephesus (“Étude comparative de l’introduction du culte impérial à Pergame, à Athènes et à Éphèse,” in *More Than Men, Less than Gods. Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship*, 2011: 521–51) are useful and should be consulted.

Daniel Schowalter (“Honoring Trajan in Pergamum: Imperial Temples in the ‘Second City’”) illustrates Galinsky’s ideas of “religious pluralism” and a non-monolithic imperial cult with a discussion of the diverse honors given to Trajan at Pergamum. Pliny’s letters from Bithynia illustrate “how honors offered to the emperor (along with honors to the traditional gods) were a natural part” (100) of provincial existence. The enormous Trajaneum gave topographic and architectural emphasis to the emperor; the city’s second neokorate shows how a city and its wealthy elite affirmed their prominence through ostentatious civic deference to imperial power. Comparing the honors given to Augustus and Trajan reveals continuity and allowable change (Greek versus Roman temple architecture) in the imperial cult.

James McLaren (“Searching for Rome and Imperial Cult in Galilee”) follows Galinsky’s exhortation not to create a monolith of imperial cult or of local responses and provides a richly contextualized explanation of Galilean participa-

tion in the Jewish war of 66–70 ce. McLaren defines a maximalist approach to imperial cult that recognizes its ubiquity and assesses it as part of the broader Roman presence (administrative, military, and economic) in the region. Galilean participation in the Jewish war emerges within a context of minimal Roman intrusion in Galilean life, and so not as a direct result of Roman policy or action. Moreover, the diversity of perspective among different peoples in Galilee regarding relationship with Rome shows Galilean participation in the war, not as a product of zealotry but instead a recognized identity of interest among Jews and Galileans regarding the temple in Jerusalem, an action not a reaction (128).

Warren Carter (“Roman Imperial Power: A Perspective from the New Testament”) argues that Jesus’ followers “did not negotiate the empire and its cult in a monolithic manner” (142). He examines the characterization of “Jezebel” in *Revelation*: she engages in idolatry, eats sacrificial food, and, like Satan and Rome, deceives. The character and the critique represent the difficult negotiation of Christians in a Roman world, where “cultic activity was intertwined in socio-economic activity” (144), required strategic decision-making, and produced a different theological point of view that “societal and cultic participation did not compromise faithfulness” (145).

The analysis and its development owes much to James Scott’s analysis of power relationships. Carter compares *1 Peter* which similarly recommends accommodation to defuse criticism and conflict and shows that Jesus believers were deeply embedded culturally in a Roman world, although the logic of accommodation implied a simultaneous devaluation of imperial cult practice. Finally Carter considers scenes of worship described in *John* 4-5 to show the appropriation of Roman ceremonial and its reinscription as rightful worship of a Christian God.

Robin Jensen (“The Emperor as Christ and Christian Iconography”) examines the representation of the emperor and of Christ in fourth-century art. Analysis of the labarum, “*chi rho*,” crown, or seated captives in various media (sarcophagi, public architecture, coins) before and after Constantine suggests the multivalent meaning of iconography and a competitive appropriation and redefinition of Roman imperial symbols.

Michael White (“Capitalizing on the Imperial Cult”) looks at a series of inscriptions from Ostia, Cyrenaica, Lydia, and Phrygia that illustrate what he terms the “negotiated symbiosis” whereby Jews, despite their religious difference, appropriated and manipulated the Hellenistic and Roman systems of civic euerge-

tism and patronage in order to attain and secure their status within their own hierarchical, local, Roman communities.

So Galinsky's paper provides the focus for three distinct series of investigations about the nature of ancient religion, about the diversity of imperial cult at the local level, and about Christian and Jewish responses to imperial religious practices. The book emerges almost as a Festschrift that celebrates the work of Karl Galinsky.

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