

religion and *vice-versa*. Rüpke argues that the empire saw a decisive change, not so much in the number or content of cults as in the concept of religion and the social locus of religious practices and beliefs. From being much concerned with creating the political identities of individuals and groups and addressing the contingencies of life (illness, death, uncertainty), religion 'came to embrace the entire context of human life, becoming a medium for the formulation of group identities, and for political legitimation' (p. 2). One of the consequences of this evolution was to facilitate the spread, and ultimately the success, of Christianity. Through a sophisticated mixture of theoretical approaches and detailed case studies, Rüpke explores themes such as globalisation and regionalisation in imperial religions, the media and vectors of the spread of religion, individual creativity, religious competition, pluralism and apologetic. He discusses the role of Roman ideas about natural law and universal human values in the development of religious thinking, and investigates the increasing significance of modes of association that sat between the public and private spheres. One of Rüpke's strengths as a historian is that he avoids the social-functionalist explanations of religion into which historians of Greek and Roman religions tend to lapse all too readily, and one of the many significant strands of argument in this book concerns imperial cult. Rüpke argues (building on the work of Simon Price) that imperial cult did not simply work to legitimate political power or render that power tolerable by expressing it through traditional rituals. Rather, it maintained the presence of the emperor throughout the empire and, by that means, contributed to the construction of the empire's reality. At the same time, Rüpke challenges the widespread assumption that emperors consciously exported imperial (or any other) cult. Cults were more readily carried and transplanted, for instance, by armies and patronage networks. Few scholars, if any, are as well equipped as Rüpke to discuss both theoretical approaches to the study of religions and the specifics of Roman and early Christian religiosities, both religious ideas and imperial practices. This book ranges effortlessly across all those fields and offers that rare thing: a conceptually challenging and stimulating study that does justice to the complexity of a vast range of evidence. It should be required reading for scholars of Roman religions, early Christianity and Roman Judaism alike.

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Crucifixion in the Mediterranean world. By John Granger Cook. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 327.) Pp. xxiv + 536 incl. 19 figs. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014. €69 (paper). 978 3 16 153764 6; 0512 1604 JEH (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916000804

According to John Granger Cook, the stimulus for writing the book under review came from a request from Martin Hengel to revise the latter's short, but influential, work of 1977, *Crucifixion*. Cook states that he soon realised that it would be best if he wrote his own work.

The book joins a spate of heavy tomes on the subject of crucifixion, including Gunnar Samuelsson's *Crucifixion in antiquity* (2013) and David Chapman's

Ancient Jewish and Christian perceptions of crucifixion (2008). Where one is taken up with issues to do with the semantics of crucifixion (with which Cook is not in agreement) and the other with views of the punishment among Jews and Christians, Cook's is a broad survey of texts, graffiti and archaeological evidence pertinent to the practice of crucifixion in the ancient world.

The work consists of an introduction, conclusion and six chapters. In the introduction Cook defines crucifixion as 'execution by suspension', but is clear that this should not include hanging or impalement. He then proceeds to examine a number of pertinent Greek and Latin words which could reasonably be taken to refer to crucifixion. There then follow lengthy surveys of texts in Latin referring to crucifixion, Roman crucifixions, crucifixions in Greek texts, Hebrew and Aramaic texts, crucifixion in law and historical development, and then a final substantive chapter on Roman crucifixion in the New Testament. The book comes with nineteen figures at the end, including two photographs of the partially preserved image of a crucified man from the Arieti tomb from the mid-second century BC.

The volume has something of the quality of an encyclopaedia on crucifixion with all the usefulness associated with such a genre. Discussions range widely from the character of the so-called patibulum (the horizontal beam of the cross which gave it its distinctive shape in the form of the Greek letter tau and which Jesus probably had to carry [rather than the whole cross] and which Cook thinks the Arieti image elucidates) to questions relating to when crucifixion ceased in the West (probably in or around the reign of Constantine). Interesting tidbits of information emerge, including the observation that the account of Jesus' crucifixion in the Gospels is the longest account from antiquity of a crucifixion, and that we only have the names of just over twenty individuals who were crucified in the nearly 600 years of its practice as a form of punishment in the Roman and Greek world. Crucifixion, it seems, was by and large discussed incidentally or *à propos* of other subjects, though the incidental character of its mention in so many texts shows that it was a well-known form of punishment which impressed itself upon the minds of many, with the second-century author Artemidorus assuming its appearance in dreams. It was applied to a range of crimes and its victims were mainly slaves, foreigners and citizens of low standing. Cook, whose work is notable for its circumspection, has eschewed writing a history of crucifixion, thinking that the evidence will not sit easily with such an undertaking; and he is quick to scotch some generally held conclusions such as that relating to a diminution in crucifixions from the second and third centuries onwards.

His section on the Gospels is brief. In part he wants to show how the lengthy discussion of the previous five chapters elucidates the account that we find there. Surprisingly, in this context, he devotes quite a lot of discussion to the theology of the cross, though it was not immediately clear to this reviewer how that was elucidated by what had preceded (not least his discussion of the role of Psalm xxii in the account).

This is a helpful addition to the ever-increasing number of books on crucifixion. The reader might have hoped for a more discursive conclusion (we are given a mere three pages in which much of the discussion is taken up with a summary of Cook's semantic observations). In that respect this book bears little relationship

to Hengel's much shorter, but more invigorating, book of almost forty years ago. But by dint of its competent and careful coverage of a mass of material, it will remain an important point of reference to those interested in further research on this gruesome subject.

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The harp of prophecy. Early Christian interpretation of the Psalms. Edited by Brian E. Daley and Paul R. Kolbet. (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 20.) Pp. xvi + 332. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. \$39 (paper). 978 0 268 02619 6
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As we are reminded early on in this excellent collection of essays, New Testament and patristic Christology and apologetic were heavily dominated by the Psalter: many of the most important themes in doctrinal debate were hammered out in conversation with texts like Psalms ii, xxxix, xlv and cx. Even before the Psalms had established themselves as regular element in liturgy, they were receiving extensive commentary as texts that laid bare the narrative of spiritual life. Gary Anderson observes in an insightful piece here that problems about the 'cursing' Psalms were not the invention of soft-hearted modernists: rabbinic and patristic writers alike acknowledged that the violent language of some Psalms was not an exhortation to extreme behaviour but an example of the depth of the passions that King David successfully destroyed in his soul. Locate the texts in the context of David's life, they argued, and all becomes clear. This may not be exactly the strategy that we ought to (or could) adopt today, but it is a reminder that the tradition encourages a narrative reading (Kolbet on Athanasius makes this plain) and allows for the reality of a developing, diverse and imperfect Church (McCarthy on Augustine). We are introduced to some intriguing hermeneutical issues around gender by Verna Harrison and David Hunter, given a rich survey of Evagrius' reading of psalmody by Luke Dysinger and an elegantly and persuasively argued reconstruction of the content of Origen's preface to his Caesarean commentary on the Psalms by Ronald Heine. Other essays both explicate and problematise the Antiochene/Alexandrian divide in exegesis; and Brian Daley contributes a typically clear and thoughtful orientation to the whole field. It would have been interesting to have more discussion about the process by which liturgical use of the Psalms took shape, and the difference evolved between a Western norm of continuous reading in the Office and the more selective Eastern practice. And the extent of the use of texts from the Psalms in apologetic prompts the question of how and in what context they were used in Jewish worship and reflection – an issue that has had some study but could do with more. But these are marginal points. Overall, this is a collection of unusually solid and satisfying essays, written with clarity and penetration; a very welcome contribution to a burgeoning area of research.

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