

Republic as a democracy, and argues that the Republic's decline can be usefully paralleled in the erosion of academic autonomy in the UK (a cause of Millar's): in both cases, the guileful bosses took over. Other parallels suggest themselves: the USA, for example, where the story is rather that of the lazy surrender of the nasty jobs to the hacks, half unaware that it is in the nasty jobs that power lies. But North's ingenious yoking of Millar's interests honours him indeed.

In total, a strong collection, although we miss papers by the volume's four distinguished editors, which would have made the volume even stronger. Yet bravo to them for arranging publication as a British Academy Centenary Monograph: the volume is sumptuous—one wants to eat the pages—and reasonably priced, at £20. Finally, the photograph of Fergus Millar, looking like the sprightliest of basset hounds, with which the volume opens, and his formidable bibliography, which forms an appendix, make one rail against the bizarre and unjust system of mandatory retirement which casts the most useful of professors out of their chairs at the height of their powers.

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## ROMAN RELIGION

J. SCHEID: *An Introduction to Roman Religion*. Translated by J. Lloyd. Pp. viii + 232. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003 (first published as *La Religion des Romains*, 1998). Paper, £14.99 (Cased, £45). ISBN: 0-7486-1608-X (0-7486-1607-1 hbk).

Professor Scheid needs no introduction to scholars of Roman religion. Lady Lloyd's translation of *La religion des Romains* (Paris, 1998) is an opportunity for English-speaking undergraduates to become familiar with the insights of one of the most prestigious scholars working in the field.

The five sections deal with questions of methodology (including terms, concepts, and definitions) relevant to the theory and practice of Roman religion (pp. 5–38); the structures of Roman religion (the calendar, festivals, temples, and other sacred sites) (pp. 41–76); religious rituals (sacrifice, rituals of expiation, and divination) (pp. 79–126); the rôle of priests, gods, and emperor (pp. 129–70); and exegeses and interpretations of Roman religion (pp. 173–91). A series of text boxes highlights specific issues (including modern perspectives on Roman religion; definitions of religion; examples of the decoding of ritual actions and gestures; public and private sacrifices; auguries and auspices; and the public priests under the Republic and the Empire). The chronology (pp. 193–212), table of principal people (pp. 213–15), and glossary (pp. 216–18) are all helpful. The suggestions for further reading (pp. 219–25) are conveniently subdivided, although the array of German, French, English, and Italian titles may be too much to ask of the average undergraduate. Missing from the English text are the useful 'objectifs de connaissance' that appear at the head of each chapter in the French edition.

S. stresses the importance of ritual and sacrifice in the public and daily life of the ancient Roman without suggesting that these religious practices made Roman religion devoid of belief. Alongside the civic practices he sets private religious and divinatory

custom (for example, *devotio, defixio*, p. 105; private priesthoods, pp. 145–6; ‘domestic and family deities’, pp. 165–70). His discussion of the rôle of priests and gods draws out the multifarious, variegated, and pliable nature of Roman polytheism (pp. 127–70). With the final section, S. highlights the importance of intellectual speculation and the plurality of possible interpretations available for ‘Roman’ religion via philosophical enquiry which had its influence on the progress towards monotheism.

At times, modern literature, archaeology, and the ancient texts are admirably interwoven. For example, Rüpke (*Kalender und Öffentlichkeit. Die Geschichte der Repräsentation und religiösen Qualifikation von Zeit in Rom* [Berlin, 1995]) informs the importance of religion in the Roman calendar. Further references to the structure of the Roman year are supported by a listing of agrarian, civic, and military festivals, with line drawings of the Fasti of Antium (fig. 1, p. 53) and the Caesarean calendar (fig. 2, p. 53). Elsewhere, ideas relevant to the division of space are supported by Tacitus’ account of the rededication of the Capitoline temple (*Hist.* 4.53), in addition to figures pertinent to the plan and appearance of the Roman temple adapted from J-P. Adam’s work on the temple of Portunus in the Forum Boarium (figs 3–8, pp. 67–70).

A synthesis of Roman religion from the archaic period to the end of the empire in a little over 200 pages is an ambitious undertaking, and not surprisingly this book has its deficiencies. More could have been done to demonstrate how religious practice and thought at Rome developed. The ancient literature, especially where it pertains to religious practices outside Rome’s state rituals, is introduced erratically, and there is a tendency towards misrepresentation and overstatement. For example, S. asserts that: ‘Superstitious people thought that the gods were evil, jealous and tyrannical, and this distressed them’ (p. 23). In earlier periods *superstitiosus* was associated with having the gift of second sight and the religions of the countryside, not necessarily with notions of a fearful attitude towards the gods.

The problematic term ‘magic’ is introduced without discussion (p. 98), although S. usefully recognizes that the ritual practices of the ‘sorcerer’ differed little from the rituals performed by government-recognized religious officials. Cicero’s tripartite division of Roman religion (*De N.D.* 3.5; *De Leg.* 2.20) becomes bipartite (p. 23). The suggestion that families were surrounded by professional priests and priestesses (p. 145) seems to be an overstatement of the evidence available at any period. Where individuals do consult diviners, as in the case of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (p. 125), they do so proactively. S. is rightly concerned about the state of our knowledge regarding the *haruspices*, but it is by no means certain that the *ordo* of 60 under the empire did not have associations with the ‘great Etruscan *haruspices* of the Republican period’ (p. 123).

Despite these difficulties, S.’s work is a good indication that modern scholarship on Roman religion is in a far healthier state than it was even a few years ago. This book does not necessarily posit firm answers as to what Roman religion constituted exactly nor does the author make any grand claims to do so. As S. observes, commenting on Roman philosophical attempts to define their religion: ‘in the domain of interpretation and speculation, the same rules applied as in religious life itself: there was no absolute dogma or authority to impose the “right” interpretation. One proposition was as good as another . . .’ (p. 185). Similarly, this book will encourage the student to approach Roman religion with an open mind, and to think more flexibly about Roman religious institutions and practices.