RELIGION IN ROME . . .

J. RÜPKE: *Die Religion der Römer. Eine Einführung*. Pp. 264, ills. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2001. Paper, €19.90. ISBN: 3-406-47175-7.

In the recent boom of surveys on Roman religion, including the extensive Beard–North–Price *Religions of Rome* and John Scheid's *La religion des Romains*, Rüpke's new book fits in about halfway in size and level of difficulty. While its title and introductory intentions (including the replacement of footnotes with an annotated bibliography and the ample inclusion of images with detailed explanatory notes) appear to relate this work to the textbook of Scheid, R.'s interests and approach are quite different. To start with, R. interprets his own title as 'religion in Rome', emphatically highlighting the religion of those whose ethnicity or political standing would exclude them from the 'Roman' category. This immediately reveals two key themes of R.'s volume: a widely cast concept of religious experience and a comparative anthropological perspective on religion. Accordingly, R. sets out to challenge Christianizing notions of Roman religion by establishing its fundamental characteristics as embedded in the collective, public life of the city and learned primarily through participation. The introduction concludes with a brief discussion of the sources and a historical periodization. This latter emphasizes the predominantly republican interests of R.: prehistory (1000–625 B.C.) is followed by a period of urbanization leading up to the *Lex Ogulnia* in 300 B.C.; the ensuing period of politicization concludes in the establishment of the last great priestly college, the *tresviri epulonum* in 196 B.C., and finally a period of Hellenization starts with the Bacchanalia scandal and ends with the divinization of Caesar.

In the following nine chapters R. reviews many possible avenues to analyzing Roman religion. In the first large thematic group, entitled 'Structures', R. discusses Roman gods, religious action and concepts of religion. Characteristically, R. is not interested in individual gods, but provides a succinct explanation of Roman (as distinct from Greek) polytheism as a *pax deorum* in which the normally distanced and inactive gods manifest themselves mainly in highly choreographed religious situations. Even more original is R.'s discussion of religious action. Starting with Walter Burkert's definition of ritual as standardized behavior, in which the original pragmatic communicative function has faded, R. calls attention to a number of problems with the interpretative capacities of this model, including the differences in the religious rituals of various cultures in general, and the intentional invention and alteration of rituals in Roman religion in particular. Given the complexity of Roman rituals and the multiplicity of their possible interpretations, R. puts the greatest emphasis not on a particular, set meaning (semantics), but on the correct combination of elements (syntax). Knowledge of this syntax is what makes up ritual competence within individual rituals, and indeed organizes the whole system of Roman religion, insofar as the calendar organized religious time. The discussion of the Roman calendar itself belongs to the second large thematic category, entitled 'Achievements' or 'Performances' (German *Leistungen*), which includes, besides the religious organization of time and space, a discussion of sacrifice and vows. Throughout, R. emphasizes the relation of private religion to its wider context: the performance of private sacrifices, banquets, and vows fits into and strengthens the larger religious and social order. Vows matter exactly because they have the capacity to repair problems within this order; in contrast, magic can upset the order through the illegitimate means it uses to achieve its goals. Within the third and last thematic category, 'Social Reality', R. reviews the social

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organization of religious activities and the varieties of religious specialists. He argues that *collegia*, with their religious associations, were modeled on the élite priestly colleges, and constituted part of the growing spectrum of possible religious experiences in Rome. Thus within R.'s concept of widely distributed religious competence, the system is both restricted by élite control and open to influence from a variety of other religious personnel, including even such prophets who clearly crossed the boundaries set by the élite.

In the concluding chapter, R. summarizes the problems inherent in writing a single religious history of the empire, and offers up a number of models to make sense of the complex religious and social developments which occurred after the fall of the republic. This is what R. does best: situating Roman religion in its social context with the help of anthropological models, and comparing it to the religions of other cultures. While one may argue with an approach that treats the details of élite religion as relatively unimportant, but cites Horace and Ovid as reliable evidence of wider religious experience, it is easy to see R.'s point in challenging our embedded models and interpretations, indeed what we take for granted under the very category of Roman religion. From the perspective of classics, this theoretical challenge is the crux of R.'s volume, which is essential reading for those interested in paradigms of and comparative anthropological perspectives on Roman religion.

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. . . AND ITALY

E. Bispham, C. Smith (edd.): *Religion in Archaic and Republican Rome and Italy: Evidence and Experience*. (New Perspectives on the Ancient World, 2.) Pp. xiv + 199, ills. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. Paper, £16.95 (Cased, £45.00). ISBN: 0-7486-1431-1 (0-7486-1430-3 hbk).

In his introduction to this new volume that originated from a conference at the University of Edinburgh in 1997, Edward Bispham considers the paucity and difficulty of documentary evidence for early Roman religion and the growing scholarly skepticism towards grand theories to be a challenge, to which the contributors respond using a variety of approaches and evidence. In the most methodologically introspective contribution, Andreas Bendlin reviews the *Forschungsgeschichte* of Roman religion, arriving via Hartung and Wissowa at what he calls the 'new orthodoxy' of civic compromise in Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge, 1998). Bendlin criticizes the latter's close association of social élite with religion in favor of a market-place model of individual choice that ends up not very different from North's version. However, Bendlin's emphasis on the varied experience of ritual is relevant, upheld by the contribution of anthropologist Nicole Bourque, and fits well with the inclusive agenda (e.g. of Romans and non-Romans) of the volume. Bourque discusses anthropological concerns in the study of contemporary ritual and how they differ from studying a past culture, and invites classicists to engage in a mutually critical discussion with anthropological studies.

Archaeological finds are the basis of the first set of studies. Vedia Izzet traces the development of Etruscan religious sites from sacred landscape through the ambiguous buildings at Roselle and Tarquinia to the architecturally codified sanctuary buildings

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