

scientific enquiry, it may also do by trial and error. In antiquity branches of science were established, but systematic enquiry as we know it was not, and science was barely applied to warfare. Passing various areas under review, Isaac finds technological development in warfare, for instance, through application of mechanics but advances in geography are not reflected in the Peutinger map or in any kind of naval chart (87-92).

This raises the wider question of the lack of the notion of progress. As one of my old teachers put it, if they could stamp images on coins why did nobody think of moving on to the invention of printing? It is as if the ancients reached a certain point and then ground to a halt. Medicine could classify symptoms but nobody sought to discover new and effective drugs.

Isaac sees three reasons for this state of affairs. The very notion of progress was largely absent. A narrowly rhetorical education neglected scientific matters. The philosophical schools, too, were hostile to the idea of progress. I have often wondered if they were a positive hindrance. The finest minds busied themselves with the abstract and neglected the concrete.

To sum up. As I said initially, there is much to be learned from this book about a large number of areas in which the reader may not have expertise and, in those where his or her interests lie, it can be seen that it provokes reflection and thought.

Arthur Keaveney

University of Kent

Oren Tal and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. 288 pp. ISBN: 978-2-503-55335-1.

In their introductory remarks, editors Oren Tal and Zeev Weiss state this book's intentions (xviii):

As no other volume has ever been dedicated to the many different facades of the cultic manifestations of the southern Levant in the Greco-Roman period, this volume is aimed at presenting the multifaceted nature of the evidence via the archaeological, artistic, and historical media available.

The book successfully delivers on these intentions, presenting sound and in several cases groundbreaking scholarship on an impressive array of topics and through multiple disciplinary lenses. All eighteen chapters are clearly organized, with opening and closing statements that summarize arguments and with substantial bibliographies, most listing in excess of fifty secondary works. The book features a general tendency toward caution, frequently noting uncertainties and issues in need of further research. In this way, it serves to provide both a collection of responsible and informative studies and a template for ongoing research.

Tal and Weiss also explain in the introductory remarks that the volume is based in large part on a 2013-2014 research group sponsored by the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies and a subsequent international conference. This collaborative approach no doubt has enhanced the quality of scholarship. Ideally, this collaboration would have been carried forward all the way through the writing process, to include cross-references between chapters. For example, the relatively brief section on Caesarea Maritima in Avner Ecker's chapter (63-5) would benefit from reference to the extensive study of the city's sculpted images in the following chapter by Rivka Gersht. Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom (156) and Achim Lichtenberger (211) also have

interesting things to say about the city. Granted, facilitating such cross-referencing requires another major step in the editorial process.

The three phrases in the volume's main title provide a useful outline for critical assessment of the contents. The articles are quite consistently focused on 'expressions of cult', even while problematizing in various ways the prospect that material artifacts are necessarily indicative of cultic practice. Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom is especially careful in this regard, raising the question of what religious practice constitutes 'cult' (156 and 158). One aspect of the book's rich variety involves the range of religious phenomena under consideration, whether termed 'cult' or not. Emperor worship (sometimes called 'imperial cult') is shown to be evident in many locales of the southern Levant, especially during the second and third centuries, but notably also, in Caesarea Maritima, during the reign of Augustus (Ecker, 63; Gersht, *passim*). Nicole Belayche draws explicitly on the hermeneutical model of polis-religion / individual religion (9), and several other authors in less explicit ways employ this model. Hayim Lapin's chapter, 'Temple, Cult, and Consumption in Second Temple Jerusalem', stands in contrast with and is complemented by Yonatan Adler's chapter on the decline of Jewish ritual purity observance, in which he argues that the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE had no effect on the ritual use of *miqwa'ot* or chalk vessels. These examples reflect the book's general breadth with regard to types of expression of cult in various contexts, ranging from the highly institutionalized, such as the Jerusalem Temple, to the local and domestic.

The second and third phrases of the book's title, 'in the Southern Levant' and 'in the Greco-Roman Period', reflect the stated aim of examining, respectively, 'synchronic and diachronic expressions of cult' (xvii). Regarding focus on the particular geographical region of the southern Levant, as also pointed out in the introductory remarks (xviii and n. 1), this volume adds to a small but growing list of books with this same geographical focus. This is a practical means of categorizing scholarship, as specialists from a range of disciplinary fields typically have much to share with colleagues who focus on the same locale. For the most part, the contributions to this volume do indeed focus on the southern Levant, although in most cases (and this I consider a positive attribute) by also considering a broader geographical context within the Mediterranean basin. Alix Barbet appropriately promises both in the chapter's title, 'A Mediterranean Overview of the Painted Motifs in the Southern Levant', clarifying early on that there is a lack of examples from the southern Levant, and proceeding to provide a wealth of examples from various sites around the Mediterranean Sea. Avner Ecker also considers both, but diachronically, explaining that there were no *poleis* in the southern Levant until the Roman period. 'By the second century CE every city in the Roman province of Palaestina had its cult' (62).

Regarding 'the Greco-Roman Period', specialists on Greek and Roman religions are more and more inclined to reject this umbrella term out of concern for obscuring the identity of specifically Greek or Roman aspects of the phenomena under consideration. Using 'Greco-Roman' to designate a period is relatively benign — although 'Hellenistic and Roman periods' arguably affords more precision. The crucial concern here is not to identify something as 'Roman' that is 'Greek' and vice versa. The editors in their introductory remarks refer to "'imported" Greek or Roman cults' (an example of precise terminology), but to temples 'designed and decorated at some sites according to Greco-Roman rules' (a potentially problematic conflation) (xii). The book's title clearly uses the phrase as a benign designation of the period (Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest) under consideration, and the chapters all conform to these temporal parameters.

There are disadvantages along with advantages to variety of contents in a volume like this. Readers of *Expressions of Cult* should both beware and be grateful that the contents do indeed span a wide spectrum of topics and disciplinary approaches. Disadvantages include lack of consistency with regard to use and spelling of terms. For example, some authors use the term 'pagan' without comment, whereas one author, Robert Lamberton, specifically avoids use of the term 'on the basis that it is inherently derogatory and no one before the twentieth century ever applied the term (or the concept) to his or her own beliefs' (51, n.1). There is no evidence of adherence to a style sheet; for example, the name of the healing god is referred to variously as 'Asclepius', 'Asklepios', and 'Asclepios'. More problematically with regard to the god, the index refers only to 'Asclepios' and only to one instance (205), thus missing, most notably, Rivka Gersht's interesting argument for identifying a sculpture from Shuni as Neptune rather than Asklepios (82-4). More substantively, this degree of variety inevitably results in some apparent miscalculations with regard to expectations of readers. The long discussion of the Eleusinian rituals in the midst of the highly informative article on the Te'omim Cave by Boaz Zissu et al. (122), for example, would strike most classicists and historians of religion as unnecessary, given their familiarity with the topic.

None of these disadvantages of variety of content are severely problematic, and in any event they are much outweighed by the advantages. Even variation over whether to use 'pagan' or not, especially when accompanied by explanations such as Lamberton's, can be advantageous in a volume like this. And despite lack of a fully dependable index, most readers will be grateful for the rich variety of topics and disciplinary approaches incorporated in this volume. Without trying to be inclusive, we can cite many topics that are explored with impressive depth and, in every case, careful, astute scholarship: theatres, hippodromes, and amphitheatres; the establishment of December 25 as the *Natali Invictus* of Sol Invictus (and, by extension, of Christmas); magic, specifically as practiced in cemeteries; coins, 'the most complete source material of antiquity', according to Achim Lichtenberger (197); and specific coin iconography portraying Io and Minos (in Gaza) and Pan (in Caesarea Paneas). A number of the chapters seem to present highly original research, exceptionally thorough grasp of scholarship, or especially sophisticated methodological approach (or a combination of the three). Among them, Nicole Beyache's 'Cults in Contexts in the Hellenistic and Roman Southern Levant: The Challenge of Cult Places' features her original research on the 'Christian hall of prayer' at Legio/Kofar 'Otnay, along with a consistently cautious and sophisticated concern for methodology. This chapter exemplifies use of case studies to inform theory and methodology that is on display throughout much of the book. Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom's '(Presumable) Cultic Artefacts from Domestic Contexts at Dora' is an exemplary chapter in that it combines focus on specific objects and on the southern Levant — but with attention to a wider cultural context — while also cautiously setting forth provocative ideas with regard to the usage of the objects. Gideon Bohak's 'Magic in the Cemeteries of Late Antique Palestine' is admirably astute with regard to use of evidence, including attention to what is lacking or not yet sufficiently understood — another combination of attributes that tends to characterize the entire book. Many other indications and examples of special expertise and sound approach could be cited further to commend this very fine book.