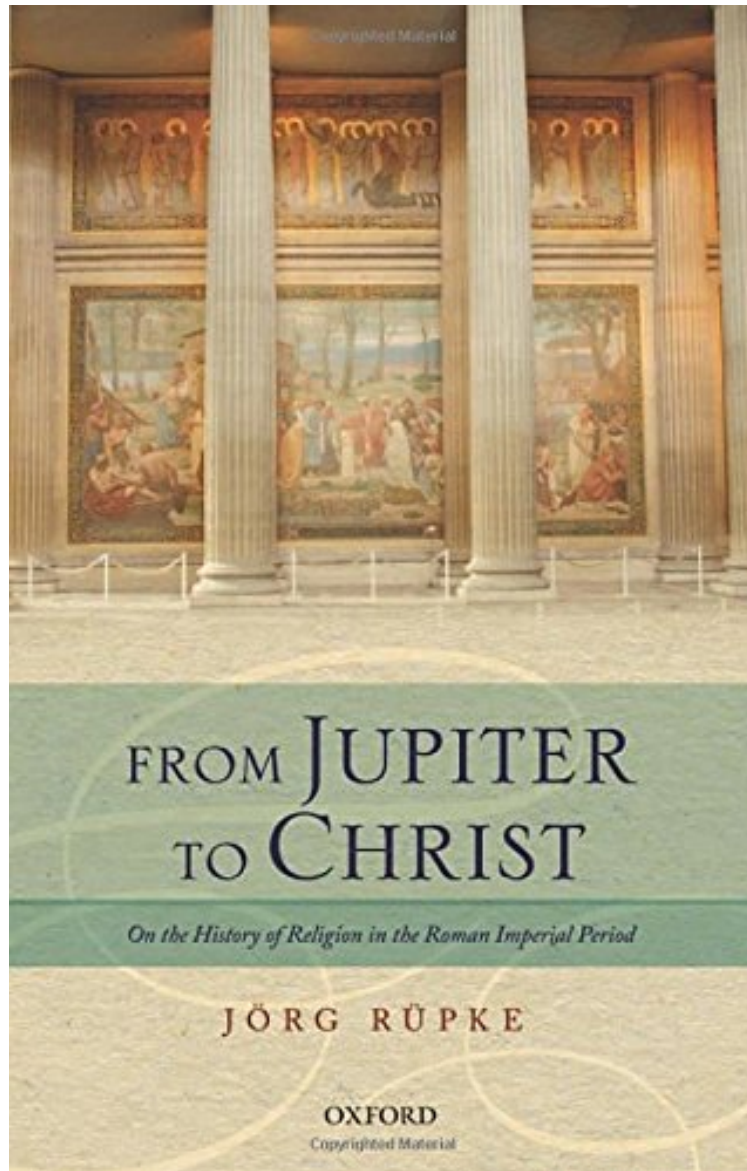


[Download pdf] From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial Period

From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial Period

Jrg Rpke

*Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#3074296 in Books 2014-09-24Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 5.80 x .80 x 8.60l, .0 #File Name: 0198703724336 pages | File size: 78.Mb

Jrg Rpke : From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial Period before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial Period:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A frustrating treatment of an important subject
By DAJ
The early centuries AD saw a dramatic change in the nature of religion in the civilized regions of Eurasia, especially the Mediterranean and Middle East. It wasn't the replacement of polytheistic religions with Christianity, as the misleading title of this book would suggest. Christianity was just the most visible example of the shift in thinking. It was really a process of convergent evolution among different groups, spurred by the rise of multicultural empires and the resulting cultural interaction. Many of the elements we think of as fundamental, or at least common, traits of a religion—a fixed set of fundamental beliefs, a religion-based system of ethics, a canon of sacred texts, and a presence across multiple cultures—were invented or became much more important in this period. In the Roman Empire, many polytheistic traditions started developing in this direction, even if they didn't go as far down that road as Christianity, Judaism, or Zoroastrianism. This fundamental shift doesn't seem to have been discussed much until fairly recently, because Christianization tends to overshadow the wider development. Rüpke aims to describe how religion in the Roman Empire was changing, focusing particularly on the polytheistic cults. The problem is that, aside from short sections like the introduction or the opening of Part Three, the book doesn't address the overall topic very directly. Instead, it jumps around from subtopic to subtopic without connecting them very clearly. A chapter will use a very specific example, like the Lex Ursonensis, the Shepherd of Hermas, or the role of the Pontifex Maximus, to illustrate its particular subtopic, and spends most of the chapter analyzing the example. The broader conclusions to be drawn from the example often appear only briefly at the end of the chapter. Those conclusions are often insightful, but they feel underdeveloped. I hope there will soon be a cohesive analysis of the way religion changed in the Roman Empire. This book doesn't pull the disparate trends and pieces of evidence together well enough to fill the gap. Instead it feels rather like a precursor to a broader treatment of the topic. The scholarly audience that the book is clearly aimed at will find it useful enough for that purpose, but for me it's a disappointment.

The history of Roman imperial religion is of fundamental importance to the history of religion in Europe. Emerging from a decade of research, *From Jupiter to Christ* demonstrates that the decisive change within the Roman imperial period was not a growing number of religions or changes in their ranking and success, but a modification of the idea of "religion" and a change in the social place of religious practices and beliefs. Religion is shown to be transformed from a medium serving the individual necessities -- dealing with human contingencies like sickness, insecurity, and death -- and a medium serving the public formation of political identity, into an encompassing system of ways of life, group identities, and political legitimation. Instead of offering an encyclopaedic presentation of religious beliefs, symbols, and practices throughout the period, the volume thematically presents the media that manifested and diffused religion (institutions, texts, and law), and analyses representative cases. It asks how religion changed in processes of diffusion and immigration, how fast (or how slow) practices and institutions were appropriated and modified, and reveals how these changes made Roman religion 'exportable', creating those forms of intellectualisation and enscripturation which made religion an autonomous area, different from other social fields.

Rüpke's work overall is expert, and his arguments well founded. * Carson Bay, Gnomon *
About the Author
Jrg Rüpke is a Fellow in Religious Studies at the Max Weber Centre, University of Erfurt.