

This book reveals the extraordinary diversity of ancient Roman religion. A comprehensive sourcebook, it presents a wide range of documents illustrating religious life in the Roman world – from the foundations of the city in the eighth century B.C. to the Christian capital more than a thousand years later. Each document is given a full introduction, explanatory notes and bibliography, and acts as a starting point for further discussion.

Through paintings, sculptures, coins and inscriptions, as well as literary texts in translation, the book explores the major themes and problems of Roman religion, such as sacrifice, the religious calendar, divination, ritual, and priesthood. Starting from the archaeological traces of the earliest cults of the city, it finishes with a series of texts in which Roman authors themselves reflect on the nature of their own religion, its history, even its funny side. In between, the widening scope of religious choice, both within and outside ‘official’ cults of the state, provides a major theme. Judaism and Christianity are given full coverage, as important elements in the religious world of the Roman empire.

The companion volume, *Religions of Rome 1: A History*, offers a narrative account of the religions of Rome and a wider context for the documents discussed in this volume.

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Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price
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Religions of Rome

Volume 2

A Sourcebook

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VOLUME 2

A Sourcebook

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Preface

‘Religions of Rome’ – the traditional, polytheistic religions of the city of Rome and its empire – have a history of over 1, 200 years. It is a history that stretches from the city’s origins in the eighth century B.C. to the fifth century A.D., when Christianity was firmly and officially established as *the* religion of the Roman empire. This book draws on material from throughout this long period, arranging it largely by theme – gods, the calendar, temples, divination, religious officials, and so forth. Of course, the character of Roman religion changed enormously during that time, as Rome itself developed from a small village in central Italy to the capital of a world empire, incorporating a wide diversity of religious traditions and beliefs. This book recognizes those changes, but does not attempt to present a chronological account. For that the reader should turn to our companion volume, *Religions of Rome 1: A History*.

There is more at stake in this arrangement than simply a choice of chapter headings. By grouping the material thematically across the centuries, we are suggesting that (despite all the changes) the ‘religions of Rome’ did retain certain significant constants over their long history. We are suggesting, for example, that Roman sacrifice of the fifth century B.C. had something important in common with Roman sacrifice of the second century A.D.; and that it can be useful to consider these religious forms *synchronically*, across time, not only (as we choose to do in the companion volume) as part of a changing, *diachronic* development.

Any modern analysis inevitably simplifies the complex and changing set of cults, practices, beliefs and experiences that once made up the religions of Rome. So, in this book, the bulk of the material cited comes from the three central centuries of the whole period – the first century B.C. to the second century A.D. Although we have included important evidence from both earlier and later, our choice of entries reflects the facts of survival: more and richer evidence for Roman ‘pagan’ religion (Christian writings are another story . . .) survives from these three centuries than any other. But, in addition to this chronological bias, we have also (for reasons of space and coherence) focused largely on material concerned with the city of Rome and Italy. Again, not exclusively. We have tried to represent something of the complexity and diversity of the religious traditions of the Roman empire as a whole: we have illustrated, for example, the export of various aspects of central ‘Roman’ religion to the provinces, as well as the growth within Rome itself of religions (including

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Judaism and Christianity) whose origins lay elsewhere in the empire. But we have not given a full account of the religious life of any Roman province; and we have considered the development of Judaism and Christianity, or other ‘foreign’ religions, mainly in relation to their interaction with Rome and traditional Roman religion (though we have illustrated the diversity of practice and belief within each religion).

Even so the process of selection has been difficult. Religion was embedded in almost every aspect of Roman life; and the range of source material is enormous – from the specifically religious/philosophical treatises of Cicero (*On Divination*, *On the Nature of the Gods*) and Lucretius (*On the Nature of Things*) to pious discussions of how divine anger might be appeased, or the joking appearances of the gods in Roman comic drama. Our guiding principle has been to use the texts we cite *argumentatively*, and to show that Roman religion was not a static body of doctrine, but a subject of debate, negotiation, definition and re-definition (explicitly or implicitly) for the Romans themselves. This does not mean that we have heavily weighted our selection towards those texts in which Roman authors self-consciously discuss their own religion. (We have not, in other words, filled the book with long extracts from Cicero and Lucretius.) Instead we have tried to put those specifically religious discussions in the context of the other ways (whether more casual, humorous or indirect) in which Romans represented religion to themselves. These other ways include polemic and attack, from both inside and outside the traditional ‘pagan’ system. We have often chosen to illustrate Christian polemic against traditional Roman beliefs and practices. This is not intended to be a judgement on Roman religion from a Judaeo-Christian viewpoint, but to stress that the interaction between traditional ‘paganism’ and Christianity is an important element in our understanding of *Roman* religion.

We hope that our readers will join in the argument and engage in debate with the texts that they read. These have been chosen to be a starting-point of discussion, not merely sources of ‘information’. We have prefaced each extract with a brief introduction designed to alert the reader to some issues of interpretation involved, with notes on particular points of detail in the text; and there is a bibliography attached to most entries, with suggestions for further reading, both for beginners and more advanced students. (‘Vol. 1, 000–000’ indicates relevant discussion in our companion volume, *Religions of Rome 1*; an asterisk (*) marks out, where possible, a clear starting-point in English – though it is not necessarily the best treatment of the subject; figures in bold type (e.g. 2.1) point to other related texts in the volume.) Further details of the authors of the ancient texts, the nature and date of their work, and available English translations are collected at the end of the book. It has been our aim to present each extract so that it can make useful sense on its own *and* open up further exploration of particular issues in Roman religion. Within each chapter the entries are grouped into sections indicated by the numbering. So, for example, the first section in Chapter 2 (‘The deities of Rome’), 2.1, is entitled

Gods in human form, and groups together a painting (2.1a), a piece of sculpture (2.1b), a ‘pagan’ text (2.1c) and Christian polemic (2.1d). The reader is invited to explore the connections between the entries in this particular section, as well as the relation between this section and those that follow.

The translations printed are our own (except in a few cases indicated). In turning the original language (mostly Latin or Greek, but occasionally another ancient language) into modern English, we have followed different principles on different occasions. In some difficult texts, where we have been concerned to render as closely as possible the sense of individual words and phrases in the original, we have opted for a relatively literal translation – even at the cost of some clumsiness of expression. In other cases, where we wish to capture the tone and general ‘atmosphere’ of the original, we have chosen a freer, more idiomatic style.

Not all our extracts are drawn from literary works, that is from the poetry, philosophy, history, oratory and drama that made up the ‘high’ literary culture of the Roman world. Some are much more technical or mundane documents, often inscribed on bronze or stone, or written on papyrus: the rulings of Roman law, lists of cult members, the regulations of the religious calendar. These documents have a very different ‘style’ from the literary extracts, as different a style (to use a modern Christian analogy) as a page from a marriage register would have from a chapter of the New Testament. We have given these non-literary documents a prominent place in the book. This is partly because, unlike most literary texts, they can offer some insight into the religious world of those outside the topmost echelons of the Roman elite (into the world, for example, of the lowly cult official). But it is also because of our concern with how Romans represented to themselves, defined and debated the nature of the religions of Rome. Even an apparently bald inscribed list of cult members was a loaded statement of group identity, a mechanism of incorporation and exclusion. These texts too are a focus of *debate*.

We have also included visual evidence – drawings and plans of temples, as well as photographs of paintings, sculpture and coins – side by side with texts. Images are (and were for the Romans) just as central as texts to the understanding of religious practice and belief. It is impossible, for example, to understand the conduct of Roman festivals without some understanding of the physical environment in which those festivals took place; impossible to understand the significance of Roman sacrifice if we concentrate exclusively on verbal descriptions, ignoring the visual representations in sculpture and on coins. We have therefore consistently treated our visual images as entries in their own right, with preface, bibliography and notes. Each one invites the reader to reflect on the relationship between visual and written images of Roman religion.

We imagine that different readers will use this book in very different ways. Some will consult a particular chapter or chapters, some just individual texts; and we have arranged the book so that there is no need to start at the beginning. In fact, for reasons that will become obvious, the first chapter on

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the religion of early Rome is one of the most technically difficult, one which the newcomer to the subject is likely to find the hardest. Nonetheless, we hope that we have written more than just a *sourcebook* to be quarried; and that the interaction between ancient texts and interpretation amounts to a thematic *analysis* of Roman religion that complements the chronological treatment of our companion volume.

W.M.B.
J.A.N.
S.R.F.P.

Conventions and abbreviations

Conventions

In the translations we have used the following conventions:

- () are used to enclose the author's own parenthetical statements
- [] indicate words that are missing in the original text
- < > indicate words that we have added for clarity (e.g. dates)
- * in the suggestions for further reading indicates a good starting-point in English (see further, Preface)

Italics have been used for Latin or Greek words, which are explained either where they occur or in the glossary at the end of this volume

Figures in **bold type** (e.g. 1.4b) refer to other texts within this volume

Abbreviations

With the exception of the following works, we have used a fairly full form of abbreviation; any doubts about the exact form of periodical titles will be solved with reference to *L'année philologique*.

- AE* *L'année épigraphique* (Paris, 1888–).
- ANRW* *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, edd. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin, 1972–).
- CIJ* *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, ed. J.-B. Frey (Vatican, 1936–52). Vol. I repr. with addenda by B. Lifshitz as *Corpus of Jewish Inscriptions* (New York, 1975).
- CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1863–).
- CIMRM* *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithrae*, ed. M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden, 1956).
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*.
- CTh* *Codex Theodosianus* (Berlin, 1905).
- EPRO* *Etudes préliminaires sur les religions orientales dans l'empire romain* (Leiden, 1961–).
- FIRA* *Fragmenta Iuris Romani Antejustiniani*, edd. S. Riccobono et al., 2nd edn (Florence, 1968).
- ICUR* *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* (Rome, 1857).
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berlin, 1873–).
- IGUR* *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae*, ed. L. Moretti (Rome, 1968–).

Conventions and abbreviations

- ILCV* *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*, ed. E. Diehl (Berlin, 1925–31).
ILLRP *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Reipublicae*, ed. A. Degrassi (Florence, 1957–63).
ILS *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H. Dessau (Berlin, 1892–1916).
Inscrif. Kyme *Die Inschriften von Kyme*, ed. H. Engelmann (Bonn, 1976).
JRS *Journal of Roman Studies*.
MEFRA *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Antiquité*.
RE *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, edd. G. Wissowa, E. Kroll et al. (Berlin, 1893–).
RIB *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, edd. R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright (Oxford, 1965).
ROL *Remains of Old Latin*, ed. E.H. Warmington (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA and London, 1935–46).
*Sylloge*³ *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. W. Dittenberger, 3rd edn. (Leipzig, 1915–24).
 Vidman, *Sylloge* L. Vidman, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae* (Berlin, 1969).
ZPE *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*.