
The period of time identified in the title of Petropoulou’s book is an apposite one for investigating the status of animal sacrifice across Greek, Jewish and Christian traditions. Widely regarded as a period of decline in the performance of animal sacrifice in both Greek and Jewish worlds—with alterations in religious practice brought about by the transformation of the classical model of Greek civic life, and the annihilation of Judaism’s cultic centre with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70—P.’s study seeks to revise such commonly-held academic characterisations pertaining to the apparent redundancy of sacrificial procedure. Furthermore, P. suggests that the turmoil which early Christian ideas about religious worship introduced across the Mediterranean world, can only be correctly understood when an accurate understanding of what Christianity replaced is reconstructed from the extant source material. P.’s study presents a welcome reappraisal of an important, although oft-neglected topic, in the study of religion in antiquity.

P.’s theoretical approach to the realities of sacrifice in antiquity develops previous anthropological work concerned with ‘decoding’ the symbolism of the sacrificial act, and she readily acknowledges her partiality for structuralist approaches to the topic (30-31). In this regard, therefore, P. presents a bicameral scheme for understanding the composite features, ‘beliefs, gestures, objects, and materials’ (28), which together comprise the act of animal sacrifice: thus, the theological and metaphysical reality linking the offerer and recipient of the sacrifice is envisaged as a relationship along a vertical line, whilst the horizontal line concerns the ‘objective reality’ of sacrificial procedure, including the sacred space, instruments, human activities, values and lifestyles involved in the cultic act itself. As P. indicates, her study is concerned with the mechanics of the horizontal, rather than the vertical line, not only because the components comprising this line are more evidentially accessible, but also as alterations in the concerns along the horizontal line reveal changes effected vertically between offerer and deity (31).

The structure of the work is divided into three dense chapters dealing with Greek (ch. 2), Jewish (ch. 4) and Christian (ch. 6) approaches to animal sacrifice, with ‘bridging chapters’ comparing and contrasting Greek and Jewish attitudes (ch. 3), with Christian responses to sacrifice (ch. 5). Indeed, the complexity of the issues addressed by the work means that only a small number of the study’s insights can be offered in the space provided for this review. P.’s discussion of animal sacrifice in ch. 2 is determined by a reassessment of the claim made by Martin Nilsson during the mid-twentieth century that the civic face of Greek religion—and by association, the sacrificial act—waned from the late Hellenistic period onwards.
Nilsson’s assumption was based on the decline of epigraphy dealing with ritual matters during this period (including the so-called *leges sacrae* inscriptions), which in turn led to a judgement of archaism concerning the literary evidence for sacrifice in the second century, primarily in the writings of Plutarch and Pausanias. P. provides a brief philological discussion concerning the terminology of animal sacrifice (33-37), and a sensible analysis of the pitfalls involved in handling the sources (42-48). Whilst the nature of animal sacrifice along the vertical line remained static, a degree of variation in the horizontal line is noted, particularly in relation to an increased role that prominent individuals and members of communities played in taking on the responsibility for local sacrificial cults (75-92). Both the vitality and diversity of local cults in the early imperial Greek world becomes apparent from P.’s analysis of the epigraphy and literary material, and little fault can be found in this regard. Nevertheless, the argument in ch. 2 demands a great deal of ‘unpacking’, arising in part from the complex nature of some of the research questions asked of the sources: a more systematic attempt at recapitulation throughout this portion of the study would have made for a more cohesive final conclusion (102-106).

Within its Jewish context, P. discusses both the history of sacrificial practice up to the late Second Temple period (137-149), along with a structural analysis of the components of animal sacrifice (e.g. the role of High Priest, sacrificial regulations, food laws *etc*). The writings of Philo supply P. with most of the material for analysis in this section (149-187), not simply because much of what Philo had to say about sacrificial procedure is not dealt with by other writers within Judaism, but also because P. weaves a delicate (although occasionally laboured) argument around the testimony of Philo, in relation to the reaction of various Jewish parties to the place of animal sacrifice in the cultic landscape of Second Temple Judaism. Thus Philo, characterised by P. as a representative of a ‘school’ of eclecticism (‘his ideas are drawn from a number of Greek philosophical systems’, 133), emerges as a personality occupying a position of the middle ground: although a Jew of the Diaspora—thus standing at a physical distance from the Temple in Jerusalem—and a commentator on the Pentateuch whose interpretive approach was largely allegorical, he nevertheless acknowledged the centrality of animal sacrifice for Judaism, as against those who sought either to treat the regulations of the Pentateuch in a wholly allegorical fashion (condemned by Philo in his *De migratione Abrahami* 89-90), or those who posited Jewish religious identity through adherence to ritual alone. P.’s suggestion that, on the basis of Philo’s systematisation of the Law concerning sacrificial practices and festivals, his writings (principally *De specialibus legibus*) may have served as texts for teaching students about the religious value of Jewish ritual, is an important argument in so far as it indicates an alternative and original approach to the value of animal sacrifice among Diaspora
Jews (205), and raises further questions (not always resolved by P.) about the value of sacrifice to different groups of both Jews and Gentiles who aligned themselves with early Christian ideals during the first century (207-210).

Ch. 6 of the study traces the effect which Christianity had on the meaning of sacrifice along the vertical line, by analysing the reduction of the pragmatic value of Jewish animal sacrificial practice along the horizontal line in the letters of Paul through the development of a metaphorical language of sacrifice (240-244), this reappraisal of sacrificial terminology being linked to the role of Jesus as the mediative figure along the horizontal line. P. exercises sound critical insight in relation to the historical value of writings from the first century, and demonstrates that clear evidence of absolute early Christian non-participation in animal sacrifice within late Second Temple Judaism is not forthcoming from these sources (246). A differentiation in the nature of the Christian reaction to sacrifice as evidenced in the Apologists in the Second-century is noted by P., principally in relation to the theological concern raised by Tatian with a Θεὸς ἄνενδεής (‘God in need of nothing’; 248), as part of a complete rejection of ritual as defined according to Christianity’s Jewish heritage (246-251).

P.’s study constitutes a detailed treatment of animal sacrifice, a subject which as the work demonstrates is characterised by great diversity in both its practical and theoretical manifestations. In this sense therefore the study takes in a variety of arguments and concerns, many of which are demonstrably linked to P.’s overarching concern with tracing both areas of continuity and transformation in the performance of sacrifice, and some of which are less obviously associated with this concern and may be construed as taking certain conclusions a little further than both the sources and their contexts suggest. Nevertheless, this is a highly valuable contribution to the study of sacrificial ritual in ancient religions.

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