

Testament and Early Christianity, but as the sub-title indicates, this volume focuses on some of his work on Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls (which Flusser openly identifies with the Essenes), a work that already commenced when the DSS were discovered. The articles in this collection range from those which have a broad appeal, to those catering for inter-textual specialists and the true DSS connoisseur. A notable strength is Flusser's ability to recognize inter-textual allusions or connections across the spectrum of "Jewish" literature of this period, however subtle they may be. This includes connections between the DSS and later liturgical forms of Jewish worship, with the Tanak, Josephus, the Apocrypha, as well as traditions and attitudes evident in Jesus, early Christianity and of course, the New Testament. For any specialist in the DSS, this book is a welcome addition filled to the brim with opportunities for learning and insightful scholarship.

Hardin, J K 2008 – *Galatians and the imperial cult*

Publisher: Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 188 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof Dr W Carter (Brite Divinity School – Christian University Fort Worth, USA)

This book intends to examine "Galatians against the backdrop of the imperial cult in order to determine its value for understanding the social and religious setting of the recipients of Paul's letter" (p 19).

In Part 1 on the imperial cult, chapter 2 provides a somewhat generalized and simplified introduction to the imperial cult and ideology. The first half identifies some ways in which the cult proliferated, while the second part discusses the cult's "reception" among local populations. The division is awkward, suggesting that Rome exported the imperial cult while provincials willingly received/consumed it. Previous studies of this interaction – not considered here – indicate a much more interactive and ambivalent process. The discussion also does not consider the relationship between "Romanization" and the imperial cult. The use of a sociological model of empire (G Lenski's?) might have helped to establish the hierarchical empire's concentrations (and deprivations) of power, status, and wealth. While the discussion rightly notes the involvement of non-elites, it neglects gender and observances in associations and households.

Chapter 3 examines the degree to which the imperial cult and ideology impacted on Galatia. The discussion catalogues archaeological evidence for the imperial cult and ideology. A lack of methodological sophistication prevents examination of a range of negotiations. The use of James C Scott's work, and postcolonial theory might have complexified and teased out the multivalent and ambiguous ways the powerless (and powerful) negotiated imperializing power. There is little contribution to be found in these chapters.

Part 2 turns to Galatians. Chapter 4 argues that Paul's statements in Galatians 6:12-13 about the agitators are reliable. Engaging Winter's analysis, Hardin argues that the agitators were local Jewish Jesus-believers, not Galatian outsiders (pp 92-94). They participated in the imperial cult (pp 102-110), but sought to avoid civic and synagogal persecution for associating with separated Gentile Christians who did not observe the cult (pp 91, 114, 144). The agitators sought to circumcise them not because Jewish groups enjoyed exemption as *religio licita* (rightly rejected) but to regulate their status by reintegrating the

Gentile believers with a more societally “normalized” (cult-participating) group, thereby also securing their own protection from persecution.

Chapter 5, “Days, Months, Seasons, Years’ and the Imperial Cult (Gl 4:10),” argues that Galatians 4:10 refers not to the Mosaic law but to the imperial cult and its festivals. The salvation-history sketch in 4:1-7 awakens “the Galatian Jesus-believers from their observance of the emperor cult” (pp 138; also 134, 138-139, 141, 145) to which they have returned under social and familial pressure in order to allay their social dislocation (pp 143-144, 146-147). The agitators advocate circumcision to normalize the Gentile believers in society thereby avoiding their own persecution from civic authorities for being affiliated with a Gentile group that did not observe the imperial cult (p 144).

I find this reconstruction of the Galatian crisis in relation to the imperial cult unsatisfactory. At best, it is imprecise in terms and confused in articulation; at worst the main argument is simply incoherent. In chapter 4, for example, Hardin argues initially that the Gentile Galatian believers have separated from the agitators (Jewish Jesus-believers, 93-94). But within ten pages he contradicts himself by arguing that the agitators urge circumcision for Gentile believers because civic authorities and synagogues were persecuting the agitators *for associating with a group* that did not observe the imperial cult (pp 91, 111-113, my emphasis). So were they associating or not? “No” on pp 93-94; “yes” on pp 111-113, and “not yet” on p 111 (Paul is “attempting to persuade the Galatians to dissociate themselves from the opponents;” p 96).

Or again, Hardin argues in chapter 4 that the Gentile Galatian believers do not participate in the imperial cult (pp 91, 114) while the agitators do (p 91). But in chapter 5, initially Hardin argues – plausibly – that Galatians 4:10 refers to the imperial cult in which Paul’s addressees *were* participating (“you are observing ...” present tense). Hardin then builds his argument on their NOT observing the cult. That is why the addressees had, so the argument goes, created an ambiguous social location for themselves “in no man’s land” (p 112) and why Jewish Jesus-believers pressured them to be circumcised, partly to alleviate this ambiguity (normalize status, 143) as well as to protect themselves from persecution. But if the addressees are already observing the imperial cult as Hardin’s exegesis of 4:10 claims (contrary to his argument of chapter 4), they do not have an ambiguous status that needs to be resolved, they are “normalized,” there are no association difficulties for (participating) Jewish Jesus-believers (if they were associating?) because everyone is participating in the imperial cult, there is no reason for circumcision, and there would be no persecution! Chapter 5 destroys chapter 4.

Throughout, Hardin asserts the key role of persecution for both the Gentile believers (for not participating in the cult) and for the agitators in associating with them. Hardin produces no first-century provincial evidence that civic authorities routinely persecuted those who did not participate in the imperial cult or those who associated with groups that did not participate. While there was societal pressure to participate, participation was not required. There are other problems. Despite the book’s title and Hardin’s insistence on exegesis (18), the discussion of both Galatians and the imperial cult is minimal. Only 2 passages – generously 12 verses – receive detailed discussion. The inadequate understanding of the pervasive presence of empire is reflected in the frequent use of the image “background/backdrop” (e.g. 19, 47, 48, 86 [2x], 91, 113, 114, 116, 123, 149 [3x], 150, 151, 155 [2x]). The empire was foreground not “background,” constituting the multi-faceted daily reality negotiated by millions, as previous work (that Hardin at times disparages) has established. The book’s minimal contribution is also evident in that much of the (confused) “argument” comprises modifications to previous proposals from B Winter and T Witulski. Throughout there are typos (p 2 “bene”), wrong words (p 58, “catch site” should read “catch sight;” p 137, “Christ’s son” should read “God’s son”).

This is not to conclude that Galatians has nothing to do with the imperial cult. The good work of Brigitte Kahl, Davina Lopez, and Crossan and Reed, to name some not engaged by this discussion, suggests otherwise.

Instone-Brewer, D 2002 – *Divorce and remarriage in the Bible: The social and literary context*

Publishers: Eerdmans. 355 pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Rev A E Dreyer-Krüger (Rustenburg)

As the subtitle suggests, Instone-Brewer examines in great detail the social and literary context of marriage and the associated topics of divorce and remarriage in the Old and New Testament periods. He attempts to show that because of the background knowledge and assumptions of the first-century reader, based on developments in the abovementioned periods, the conclusions they would have reached on Jesus' and Paul's teachings on divorce and remarriage would have been different than those of later readers, because by the second century, such knowledge and assumptions had already been forgotten.

Instone-Brewer begins by looking at ancient Israel and the Near East and its influence on Mosaic material. In these times a marriage was primarily seen as a contract which involved payments, agreed stipulations and penalties. It was almost impossible for a woman to remarry. The Law of Moses brought the divorce certificate which gave woman the right to remarry, especially in the case of abandonment. The Mosaic Law also stipulated the ways in which a husband had to care for his wife. This included supplying her with food, clothing and love.

In chapter three the point is made that the prophets often portrayed the relationship between Israel and God as a marriage, from which God divorced Godself because of a breach of the marriage contract. The intertestamental period, discussed in chapter four, brought great changes that increased both the rights of woman and the security of marriages within Judaism. By the first century there was general agreement concerning most aspects of divorce and remarriage within rabbinic Judaism. According to divorce law, the decision to end the marriage contract was that of the husband, because he had to write the divorce certificate. A wife could force a husband to divorce her if she could prove to a rabbinic court that he had broken the marriage contract, but it seldom happened. The author claims that one development during these times influenced almost all divorces among Jews. The Hillelites introduced a new interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 by which they allowed divorce for "any matter", while the Shammaites interpreted the same text as saying "for a matter of indecency". Most Jewish divorces therefore took place on Hillelite grounds, because there was no need to prove anything in court. It is worth noting that the Shammaites accepted the validity of this type of divorce even though it was contrary to what they would have decided. Meanwhile, in the greater Greco-Roman context it became easier for both men and woman to initiate a divorce, and anyone could divorce simply by separating from one's spouse.

Instone-Brewer approaches the problem of Jesus' radical teaching about divorce and remarriage from an interesting angle. An important investigation in this regard concerns the abbreviated texts that we find in the Gospels. He claims that usually the exegesis was largely absent from these debates because these text were regularly used in the synagogue and