

McIntyre (G.) *A Family of Gods: The Worship of the Imperial Family in the Latin West*. Pp. xii + 179. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. Cased US\$60. ISBN: 978-0-472-13005-4.

With the exception of D. Fishwick's dauntingly monumental *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West* (1987-2005), there is a notable paucity of monographs dealing with the phenomenon of the imperial cult in the western provinces of the Empire. This new book (a reworking of the author's doctoral thesis), while not without its flaws, is therefore a welcome addition to the literature on provincial religion.

McIntyre's aim is to give an account of the role of the worship of the emperor and his family, primarily at the municipal level, in the Gauls, Spains, and North Africa. Her starting point, and underlying outlook, is that the increasing trend in scholarship towards using 'emperor worship' rather than 'imperial cult' (e.g. I. Gradel (2002)) elides over the importance of the emperor's extended family in the social role of the cult; this book, then, seeks in part to correct this imbalance. She begins by charting the early establishment of divine honours to individuals in the Julio-Claudian period, starting with Julius Caesar. Using Gaius, Lucius, and Germanicus as case studies, McIntyre makes a clear case that divine honours for imperial family in the Julio-Claudian period served to establish precedents which were then built on and elaborated with each new deification, as both the dynasty and its subjects navigated the new waters of imperial veneration. Her discussion of Caesar's honours in particular, however, is somewhat hampered by a largely uncritical approach to the ancient sources, especially Appian and Suetonius.

The chapters that follow focus primarily on epigraphic evidence for priesthoods to imperial family members, with occasional nods to archaeological evidence. Thus, Chapter 2 discusses priesthoods to living or non-deified family members (albeit confined to the Julio-Claudian period), Chapter 3 the cult of the *divi*, and Chapter 4 the worship of *divae*. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the role of *Augustales* (and positions with similar titles). The book concludes with an epilogue on continuity of traditions in Late Antique North Africa.

McIntyre's emphasis throughout Chapters 2-4 is on local initiative. It is abundantly obvious, as she makes clear, that decisions about whom to worship, and how, were made almost entirely at the local level, rather than imposed as central policy from Rome or indeed from the provincial capital. This includes priestly titles, where she demonstrates conclusively that the choice between *flamen* and *sacerdos* in particular represents local variation and fashion rather than difference in cult, thus putting to long overdue rest one of the more relentless debates in provincial imperial cult studies. (Although it should be noted here that she has reversed the titles for provincial priests in Narbonensis and Tres Galliae in Table 1 on page 71.) She quite rightly stresses from the outset that we need to examine how the cult was used by both individuals and communities in the provinces to promote and consolidate their own social position. However, she could do considerably more to investigate the ways in which this was done. In particular, she finds it very hard to break past a model in which priesthoods are established primarily to curry imperial favour. This leads her repeatedly into difficulties, for instance in her discussion of 1st c. AD Spain, where we know that communities established municipal priesthoods to Tiberius despite the emperor's outright rejection of a provincial-level cult. She openly recognizes that the imperial favour argument is problematic in this context, but makes no attempt to find an alternative motivation. Similarly, when discussing cult paid to Livia during her lifetime, she suggests that 'It could be that by establishing honors to Livia, the community sought to forge a connection with her in hopes of receiving her protection and benefactions in return' (pg. 55). These arguments do not sit well with McIntyre's own emphasis on

local initiative and independence, and on the social role of priesthoods in the local community. It may have been more productive – and more in keeping with her own attitude to the imperial cult in the provinces – to explore in greater depth why these local priesthoods may have been socially useful even if the emperor and his family never knew or cared about them. Similarly, her use of evidence does not always align with her general philosophy, in particular her harnessing of the *Lex Ursonensis* and *Lex de Flamonio Provinciae Narbonensis*. Using these two laws to generalize about the establishment of provincial communities and laws is a common practice which should perhaps be questioned, and here, especially, McIntyre's use of them is conspicuously at odds with her emphasis on the importance of highly localized variation in cult.

The final chapter before the brief epilogue is a discussion of the role of the **Augustales* (a notation which she uses as an umbrella for *Augustales*, *seviri Augustales*, and other variations on the theme). What positions and responsibilities these titles denoted, and in particular whether they should be understood as a priesthood or a type of magistracy, has long been an open question. McIntyre provides a very useful overview of the state of our existing knowledge and the extent and nature of the epigraphic evidence. She ultimately argues that they should be understood as priests; however, her own observations undermine this. In particular, she points out that the **Augustales'* religious dedications 'followed a similar pattern to the overall religious dedications throughout the empire' (pg. 129): the reader is left wondering what, then, marks these individuals out as particularly committed to the imperial cult? (The answer ultimately seems to be only that their title derives from 'Augustus'.) More promising is her opening assertion that 'The surviving evidence seems to suggest that individuals holding this office do not fit neatly into either category of magistrate or priest' (pg. 113). On the whole, then, the question of their function still remains open; however, McIntyre's devotion of a chapter to this issue, along with her collation of the evidence, will hopefully spark further discussion.

At a programmatic level, there are a few issues to note. First, the almost complete lack of direct engagement with Fishwick is both notable and regrettable. *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, by virtue of its sheer monumentality, has almost fossilized debate on the role the cult played in the Western provinces. McIntyre is dealing with the cult primarily at the municipal level, which Fishwick almost entirely neglects; however, this is all the more reason why she could have more explicitly offered an alternative vision of the role of the cult in the West, one which in particular gave agency to local communities and to bottom-up models of the cult's development and expansion. The rather arbitrary nature of the study area also hinders the creation of a compelling counter-narrative. The evidence from North Africa in particular is so different from that for Spain and Gaul, that its inclusion hampers a nuanced contextual analysis for either. Meanwhile, McIntyre's lumping together of Lugdunensis, Belgica, and Aquitania is increasingly problematic as time goes on.

Nonetheless, this book, in part by its very existence, but also through its fundamental outlook, is a useful addition to the conversation on religion in the western empire. McIntyre's emphases on the local, and on the social role of the imperial cult, are especially important and welcome. Religious engagement with the emperor and his family, by whatever name we call it, was a powerful mechanism for the (self-)integration of provincial communities into the web of empire. It is to be hoped that *A Family of Gods* will open the door to further contextualized studies of the imperial cult in the west.