

Graeco-Roman Culture & Religion and the New Testament

Daniel Institute
BD IV 414 (Biblical Studies)

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1

Culture

The beliefs, customs, and social arrangements of a particular society that constitute their identity. Culture reflects itself in the people's way of life and the shared values, attitudes, behaviors, and traditions that are passed down from generation. Culture accordingly also includes language, religion, cuisine, entertainment, and other aspects that shape their identity and practices.

2

Learning Outcomes

1. Using appropriate examples, illustrate the relevance of understanding the dynamics of the pivotal ancient Mediterranean cultural values of honour and shame for interpreting the New Testament
2. Use appropriate examples to explain the relevance of Graeco-Roman socio-cultural backgrounds for interpreting athletic metaphors in the New Testament
3. In what ways did the New Testament interpret and apply the Roman Triumph?
4. Describe the relevance of the main features of (a) Magical beliefs and practices, (b) Eastern Mystery cults and (b) Imperial cult of first century Graeco-Roman world for interpreting the New Testament

3

Four features of Cultural Anthropology of First Century Graeco-Roman Society

1. Reciprocity & Exchange of Favours
2. Patronage & Benefaction
3. Honour & Shame Cultural Values
4. Religion & Magic in Graeco-Roman World

4

Reciprocity and Graeco-Roman Culture

- **Definition:**
 - The mutual exchange of goods, services, benefits or favours between individuals, communities, and gods fundamental to maintaining harmony and order within society.
- **Framework**
 - Widespread in all cultures, reciprocity was institutionalized and a fundamental social contract in the Mediterranean societies
 - Prevalent in collectivist societies of "limited goods" which thus fosters competition for these goods
 - Dyadism: individuals define their self-identity through others
 - Involved duties of hospitality, protection, and the exchange of gifts or debts, and their kinds which institute some form of dependency often long-term. Hosts were obligated to provide for their guests' needs who must in turn reciprocate with gratitude and respect. The degrees dependent on the degree of gifts rendered
- **Variations in Emphases**
 - In Roman society, the principle of "*do ut des*," meaning "I give so that you may give," which was fundamental to religious rituals, social interactions, and political alliances reflected the idea of reciprocity.
 - In Greek cultures reciprocity was present but understated and finessed in cultural terms
 - In Jewish culture (from OT), and also Christian theology, reciprocity was less elaborate or even anti-reciprocal in some respects. Ethical teachings certainly emphasized going above and beyond expectations of reciprocity (e.g., Jesus' Sermon on the Mount requiring loving enemies).

5

Grace and Reciprocity in Graeco-Roman world

- **Definition:** The term "grace" was used in three inter-related ways:
 - The willingness or *disposition* of a patron to grant benefit to another person or group
 - Sometimes the word is also used for the *gift* or benefit itself that the patron gives
 - The grateful *response* expressed to the benefactor
- **Aristotle Quote:**
 - "Grace (*charis*) may be defined as helpfulness toward someone in need, not in return for anything, nor for the advantage of the helper himself [or herself], but for that of the person helped." [Rhetoric 2.7.1]
- **Quote:**
 - In ancient Graeco-Roman world, "there is no such thing as an isolated act of "grace." An act of favour and its manifestation (the gift) initiate a circle dance in which the recipients of favour and gifts must "return the favour," that is, give again to the giver (both in terms of a generous disposition and in terms of some gift, whether material or otherwise). Only a gift requited is a gift well and nobly received. To fail to return favour for favour is, in effect, to break off the dance and destroy the beauty of the gracious act." [DeSilva, David A. "Patronage and reciprocity: The context of grace in the New Testament." *Ashland Theological Journal* 31.1 (1999): 32-84. Page 40]

6

Patron-Client Relationships

• Definition

- The social system in which the acquisition of good, service, favours and social positions are dependent of networks of social relationships between patrons and their clients
- Extension of reciprocity that governed relationships between the classes

• Patron

- Higher social status people officially and informally acted as patron for those below them as their clients.
- The patron protected and provided for the interests of his or her clients in the community.
- Some patrons were benefactors of cities or communities by giving bigger gifts in exchange for honour
- Higher status Christians effectively acted as patrons of lower status people (e.g., Lydia Acts 16:14-40, and Aquila and Priscilla Acts 18:3, Philemon Phile 1-2) provided their homes for the fellowship). Theophilus was a Patron to Luke (Lk 1:3; Acts 1:1)

• Client

- Supported the patron in maintaining their honour, elections or did other services in the patron's favour.
- In some cases, clients would gather each morning at the gates of the patron to greet and acknowledge and follow them to the agora/forum as their supporters and entourage

• Broker

- A patron who provides access to another patron for his or her client
- Effectively acts as mediator

7

Analyze Luke 7:2-10 from Perspective of Graeco-Roman Patronage

There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was ill and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.' ⁶So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: 'Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, "Go", and he goes; and that one, "Come", and he comes. I say to my servant, "Do this", and he does it.' ⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, 'I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.' ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Clients turn brokers of favours on behalf of patron

Prospective client expresses humility to receive favour

Reciprocity invoked for the necessity of the miracle

Patron/Benefactor in need of favours falls on network of clients

Network of clients become brokers

Jesus the Divine Patron Grants Favour to the Undeserving Client

8

Honour and Shame Social Values

- The main cultural values or currency which regulated rewarded acceptable behaviour or sanctioned inappropriate ones in social interactions
- Honour is the attribution of and shame as the withdrawal of esteem from peers depending on fulfilment of, or failure of fulfilling of certain expectations
- Honour/shame ascription was defined as dependent on one's contribution to the family, clan or socio-economic group, not on particular standalone characteristics
- Honour and shame may be ascribed (by birth or clan connection) and or acquired (by certain achievements or notoriety)
- Guilt has close relationship with shame, but they are not the same. Whereas guilt is often personal, shame in collectivist society relates more to how one's role in the community is impacted from the behaviour. An act which should bring guilt to an individual, may be perceived to be honourable in a community.

9

Public Recognition of Social Class

1. Clothing

- Only citizens were permitted to wear a toga
- Quality and expense of the toga matched rank
- Purple stripes on togas for Senators (broad) and equestrians (narrow)
- Patricians had special rings and accessories
- Women clothing were also ranked but not as conspicuous

2. Name

- Patricians had 3-parts: *praenomen* [personal] - *nomen* [clan] – *cognomen* [family]
- Some added an *agnomen* for a sub-division of large prominent family
- Women tended to have only the feminine form of the nomen but few from large family added the cognomen
- Foreigners who acquired citizenship preserved their native name as a *cognomen* added to the *praenomen* and *nomen* of their patron
- Slaves were named by their master, often with mythological names

3. Identity of Patron

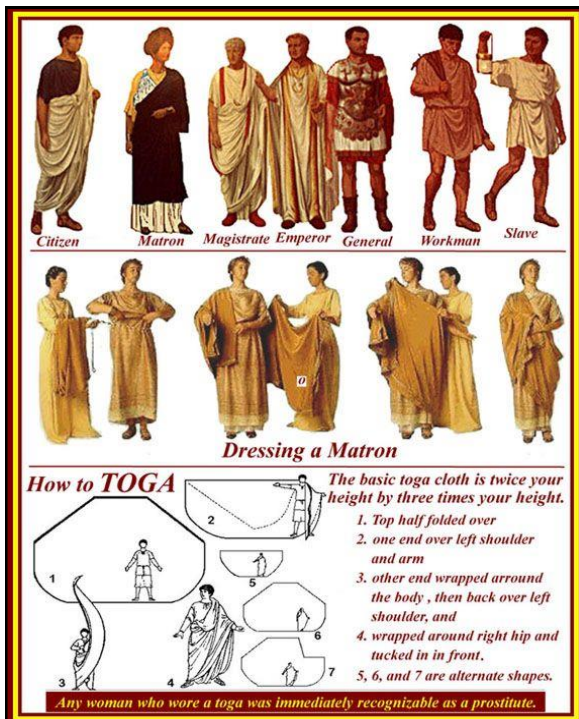
- As the culture was organized around patron-client system, once patron is essentially also the claim to their social class

10

Christianity is Counter-Cultural

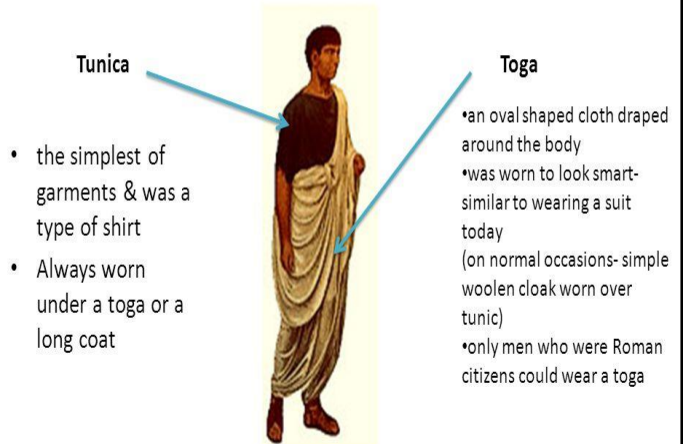
New Testament Christianity was a Counter-cultural Movement. We are methodologically required to interpret the language by taking the cultural anthropological norms of the times seriously. However, we must be wary of transferring such ideas about the society wholesale unto the Christian movement. In many cases the Christian ethos of reciprocity, patronage and honour and shame were counter to the norms. Concepts like unmerited favour (Gal 6:1-2; Heb 12:28), giving without expecting something in return (Lk 6:34-35), and forgiving offences for unlimited times (Matt 6:14-15; Col 3:13) were counter-cultural.

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Roman Citizen

Through the course of Roman history (753 B.C.E- 467 C.E.) there were two garments that were essential to the male wardrobe:



These two garments were capable of sending complex messages about taste, social status, and power

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Clothing, and Honour in the New Testament

- **Instructions on clothing**
 - Giving clothing as gift of blessing others: Matt 25:38-43; Lk 3:11
 - Garment of the Messianic banquet Matt 22:11-12

- **Problematic Dressing**
 - 1 Tim 2:9-10: Ostentatious women in Ephesian gathering
 - 1 Pet 3:3-6: Misplaced priority in showing off clothes instead of character
 - James 2:2-4: Ostentatious men in Church

- **Clothing as metaphor of Christian existence**
 - Clothing with Christ in Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14
 - Clothing with the new man in Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:22-24
 - Clothing with the resurrection body in 1 Cor 15:49, 50-54; 2 Cor 5:1-4
 - Clothing of divine armour for spiritual warfare Eph 6:10-20
 - Clothing with Christian virtues in Col 3:12; 1 Pet 5:5
 - Eschatological clothing in heaven in Rev 19:8

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James 2:2-4

Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there or sit on the floor by my feet, have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?'

Ostentatious display of honour was frowned upon but at the same time sign of the person's honour

Preferential honour demonstrates the church was dominated by the culture's values

Position in gathering structured according to honour code

Seating arrangement coded according to degree of honour

It takes Spirit led discernment and wisdom to remain counter-cultural

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Other Examples of Passages where Honour & Shame are Prominent

Passage	Key themes
John 12:42-43	Fear of shame from society prevented believing leaders from witnessing
John 21:19	Peter's martyrdom as glorifying God
Matthew 5	Beatitudes as honour codes of the kingdom
Matthew 16:24	Taking up ones cross and following Jesus is counter cultural
Phil 2:5-11	Jesus' self-emptying to die on the cross as means of salvation and example
Heb 12:1-2	Subversion of the world's values of shame and honour
1 Pet 2:6-10	Those who believe with be honoured by God
1 Pet 4:16	Refusing to be ashamed by name-calling and shaming

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Graeco-Roman Public Entertainment

- A major expression of Graeco-Roman culture and as such heavily laced with the pivotal cultural values of patronage and honour and shame
- **Types of Entertainment**
 - Dramatic plays
 - Board games: chess-like games
 - Gambling: dice or knucklebones, which were shaken in a cup and rolled out onto a table or the ground
 - Competitive Sports: horse riding, swimming, field sports, boxing, wrestling, athletics, & ball games,
 - Charioteering
 - Gladiatorial fights
 - Roman Triumph: triumphal march celebrating victory with spectacles and weeks of festivities
- **Venues for Entertainment**
 - Theatre (e.g., Acts 19:29-31) – more in eastern Grecian parts of empire
 - The arena (amphitheatre) – more in the western Roman parts
 - The circus (or hippodrome)
 - Public Gymnasia & Baths
 - Homes & public halls for banquets

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Athletics & Religion in Graeco-Roman World

- Like everything else in ancient world, and particularly in Graeco-Roman culture, sports and athletics were bound up with religion.
- Religious ceremonies, festivals and celebrations were not only conducted with sporting activities, but these activities also often occurred on the sacred grounds of the gods to whom the games were performed
- Olympic games were specifically dedicated to Zeus and held in Olympia regarded as the sanctuary of the god
- Achaian Athletic games featured of festivals dedicated to gods:
 - the Nemean games to Zeus
 - the Isthmian games near Corinth in honour of Poseidon
 - the Pythian at Delphi to Apollo
 - the Panathenaic to Athena in Athens.
- Games began with sacrifices & the contestants made vows to the gods
- **Quote:** “No holy sanctuary existed in ancient Greece that did not combine its religious liturgical practices with the organization of athletic games” [Taylor, Elias L. "The Christian marathoner: Athletic references in Paul's epistles." *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 4.11 (2015): 01-18. Page 5]

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Athletic Metaphors & Christian Existence in the New Testament

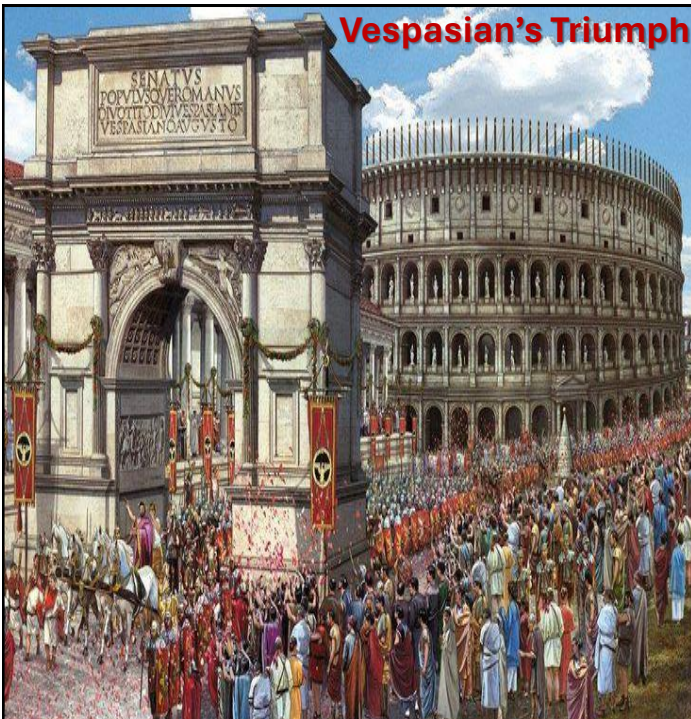
- Pressing on for the upward call: Phil 3:12-14; Gal 2:2
- Wrestling, Boxing and Spiritual discipline: 1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Cor 11:23-27; 12:15
- Running the foot race with perseverance in Heb 12:1-3
- Finishing the race Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7
- Training & Competing according to the rules 1 Tim 4:6-8; 2 Tim 2:5
- The crown of reward in 2 Tim 4:7

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The Roman Triumph

- **Politics, Culture & Entertainment:**
 - A prominent cultural feature of the Graeco-Roman world which mixed together and showcased Roman military and political might, culture and entertainment, and so strongly featured as records and metaphorical scaffolding in their literature
- **Procession:**
 - Victorious general, with painted face signifying glorification emanation of gods, accompanied by senators, his troops, parade through the prescribed route through Rome in a chariot, displaying the spoils of war and the captured enemy leaders
 - Rides in a chariot, accompanied by family members, as well as musicians, and various other figures symbolizing the conquered territories
 - Spectators lined the route lauding praise, throwing confetti and taunting captives
- **Religion:**
 - General makes offerings and sacrifices to the Roman gods, particularly Jupiter where parade ends, to show gratitude for the victory.
 - The triumph is thus pitched as a religious celebration with the triumphant general at its centre
- **Culture:**
 - Triumphator dressed in a purple and gold embroidered toga, with a laurel wreath on his head, symbolizing his victorious status
 - Accompanied by athletic festivals, games and theatre celebrations that may last days to week

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1 Cor 4:9

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings

2 Cor 2:14-15

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

Col 2:14-16

Having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us...he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

20

Mark 15:16-20: Jesus' Crucifixion as His "Roman" Triumph

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Jesus is dressed up for His "triumph"

Jesus is lauded and praised during His "triumph"

Jesus is ἐξάγουσιν (leading out) to His victory and "glorification" on the cross in His "triumph"

Assembly of Roman military entourage in preparation for the "triumph"

Jesus is taunted and mocked during His "triumph"

"When Jesus hung on the cross, a great unseen cosmic battle raged in the heavens—and in the end, Christ triumphed over all the forces of evil and death and hell."

Billy Graham

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Graeco-Roman Religion

• Specialties:

- Several categories of gods were worshipped: Sky gods (e.g., Zeus), Earth gods (e.g. Demeter), and ancestral spirits
- Gods were anthropomorphized as human beings and each specialized in specific areas thus requiring multiplicity of gods.
- The more the gods in the pantheon therefore, the better. Whatever "worked" and how many forms were included
- Foreign gods including those of conquered nations were easily adopted and included in pantheon
- Each household had their own gods and shrines, in addition to worshipping planetary gods of stars and comets
- Imperial cult divinized the Emperor and became part of the pantheon

• Principle of Reciprocity:

- Religion was structured on the principle of reciprocity: People aimed to satisfy and placate the gods in exchange for what they needed from them.
- Will of the gods were sought in every decision making to do not just with national affairs but also with household ones through routine sacrifices.

• Quote:

- "The Roman attitude towards religion can be summed up with the Latin words *Do ut des* ("I give so that you give"). For the Romans, religion was a give-and-take arrangement, a bargain, a deal. If mortals kept their part of the bargain and did everything the gods expected them to do, the gods would reward them with protection and prosperity. What did the gods expect? The Romans believed that their gods responded favourably to formal and consistent behavior. And so Roman religion dictated the performance of specific and precise formalities called rites that were often performed at religious ceremonies" [Brucia, Margaret A., and Gregory Neil Daugherty. *To Be a Roman: Topics in Roman Culture*. Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2007. Page 123]

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MAJOR ROMAN GODS AND GODDESSES AND THEIR GREEK NAMES

Roman Name	Greek Name	Function
Jupiter	Zeus	King of the Gods
Juno	Hera	Queen of the Gods
Minerva	Athena	Wisdom, War
Apollo	(Phoebus) Apollo	Sun, Archery, Music, Medicine, Prophecy
Diana	Artemis	Moon, Hunting, Women
Mercury	Hermes	Messenger
Mars	Ares	War
Venus	Aphrodite	Love, Beauty
Cupid (Amor)	Eros	Love, Desire
Neptune	Poseidon	Sea
Vulcan	Hephaestus	Fire, Forge
Bacchus	Dionysus	Wine
Pluto	Hades	Underworld
Ceres	Demeter	Grain, Crops
Aesculapius	Asclepius	Healing

23

Polytheism of ancient Graeco-Roman World was a Pragmatic Inclusive Religious Pluralism. The more gods that are worshipped, the better for everyone. On the other hand, people who sought to limit the number of gods to be worshipped were viewed with intense hostility, not only because they were claiming to be exceptional, but even more so because it was believed that all the other gods will be angry and bring retribution on the whole land. Such people were therefore easily blamed when natural disasters occurred for triggering the feared retribution.

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Some Features of Major Idol Worship

Idol	Some Features of their Worship
Aphrodite / Venus	Sex and love goddess with temple and prostitutes in Corinth
Apollo	God of music and healing with a large temple in Corinth
Diana / Artemis	Midwife and fertility goddess with world famous temple in Ephesus
Asclepius / Aesculapius	Snake god associated with healing with more than a hundred healing centres spread throughout the empire
Cybele	Mother goddess of the Phrygians associated with frenzied worshippers usually falling in trance-like states and prophesying
Dionysus / Bacchus	God of wine and fertility, it was also called Bacchus.
Zeus (Jupiter) & Hermes (Mercury)	A joint god, regarded as the chief gods of the Greeks. The ruins of the gigantic temple in Athens are still present in the city. Hermes was regarded as god of shopkeepers and thieves
Juno / Hera	Queen of the gods; seen as championing women
Isis & Osiris	Imported twin gods from Egypt associated with magic and mystery cults

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Graeco-Roman Religious Phenomena

- **Prophecies:**
 - Divination – study of celestial and animal phenomena in order to determine divine favour
 - Mantic prophecy - possession of the spirit to create an altered and heightened state
 - Written prophecies and oracles, e.g., Sibylline books
- **Healings:**
 - Divine men did miracles
 - Healing shrines, e.g., Asclepius
- **Numinous experiences**
 - Visions, dreams, trances
- **Pilgrimages:**
 - Gods were localized and so pilgrimages were part of the worship practices to visit their shrines
- **Magic:**
 - Attempts to control the energies of spirit world for benefit
 - Use of spells, charms and amulets for the purpose

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Grassroots religion in first century Graeco-Roman world tended to focus on myths and rituals rather than on developing and articulating coherent theological thought and on ethical paradigms. This is different from how we tend to view religion today, and certainly how the first Christians approached religion. Intellectual pagan philosophical schools devoted some of their writings to construct theological and ethical ideas. But the extent to which these theological ideas influenced the day-to-day religious practices at the grassroots is difficult to tell as the evidence suggests it was not as extensive.

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Graeco-Roman Religious Events & Rituals

• Festivals:

- Very common. Athens celebrated 120 festivals each year. But there were special festivals also
- **Saturnalia:** In honour of the god Saturn, celebrated in December.
- **Lupercalia:** Fertility festival celebrated in mid-February
- **Ludi Romani:** Roman Games and celebrations held in honour of Jupiter, and later in honor of the emperor.
- **Floralia:** Dedicated to the goddess Flora, celebrated in late April or early May (Spring)
- **Parilia:** Celebrating the founding of Rome, held on April 21st

• Rituals:

- **Purifications:** often marking life's milestones
- **Sacrifices:** of animals – cow, sheep, pig, & bird; or food – cakes, incense
- **Sacred meals:** often following sacrifices
- **Votive offerings:** Gift given to a god often in fulfilment of vow as gratitude

• Personnel:

- Priests & priestesses
- Diviners & Augurs
- Magicians – these were heavily attracted to Judaism and tried syncretized
- Vestal Virgins

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Magic (Witchcraft) and the New Testament

- Jesus accused of magic Matt 12:24
- Simon the Magician in Samaria Acts 8:8-25
- Prominent in Ephesus Acts 19:18-19
- Possibly a feature of the Ephesian heresies 2 Tim 3:8-9
- Magicians will be eternally condemned Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15

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Imported Religion in Graeco-Roman World

- **Mithraism:**
 - Religion, with roots in Persia, popular among Roman soldiers who brought them into Roman society
- **Isis and Osiris cult:**
 - Egyptian religion championed by many in the lower classes.
- **Dionysian cult:**
 - Greek god of wine, ecstasy, and fertility, also found followers within the Roman Empire.
- **Cybele and Attis**
 - Imported from Anatolia & Phrygia

30



Luke Timothy Johnson

“The point in all Graeco-Roman religion was not correct doctrine and certainly not exclusive devotion. The point was the experience of power, and in that respect, Graeco-Roman polytheism was a generous, cooperative, and noncompetitive religious system.”

[Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Among the gentiles: Greco-Roman religion and Christianity*. Yale University Press, 2009. Page 43]

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According to Ephesian mythology, “Artemis’s experience of her mother’s suffering during the birth of her brother Apollo negatively influenced her view of childbearing and marriage in such a way that she never wanted to have her own children; she developed an aversion to marriage and was known as the eternal virgin goddess. She became the protector of women giving birth and of young children.”

Vrey, Alta, and Lilly Nortjé-Meyer. "Artemis as matrix for a new interpretation of the household codes in Ephesians 5: 22–6: 9." *Neotestamentica* 50.1 (2016): 53-69. Page 62.

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Impact of Artemis on Ephesus and Graeco-Roman World

- **Religious**
 - Regarded it as a celibate virgin as “saviour” of women during childbirth
- **Socio-cultural**
 - Temple was one of seven wonder of world
 - Politicians must closely associate with its worship
 - Celibate Priestesses were highly respected
 - Two festivals per year lasting 1 month each time
- **Economic**
 - Religious tourism
 - Used as International investment banking centre

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Preaching and Living the Gospel in such an environment in which polytheism is woven into the socio-cultural, economic and religious fabric and language of the society was bound to be extremely challenging.

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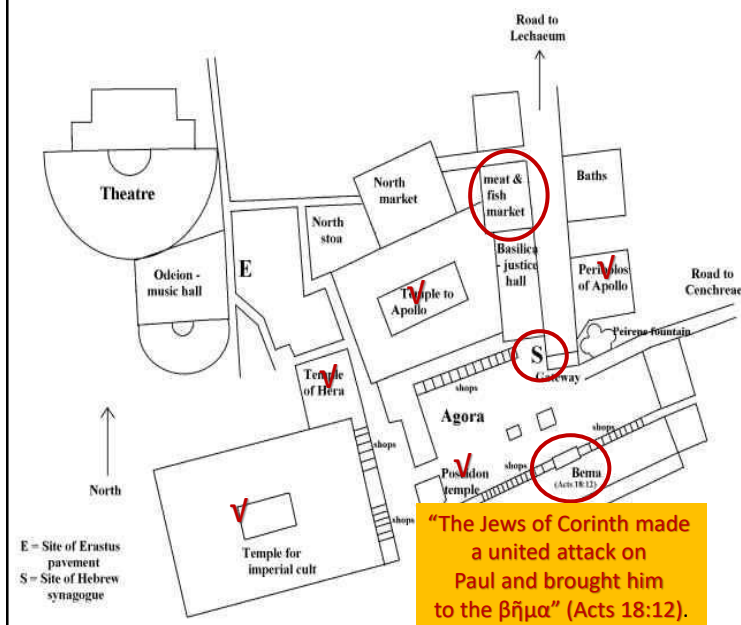
34

Idol Food and the New Testament

- **Rev 2:14:**
 - “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: there are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality.”
- **Rev 2:20:**
 - Nevertheless, I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.
- **1 Cor 10:20-21:**
 - “the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.”

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City Centre of Ancient Corinth & Idol Food



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The Imperial Cult

- The worship of deified Roman emperor and sometimes their families, through sacrifices, obeisance, dedicated temples and even sometimes prayers directed to them.
- Starting with Augustus, the cult became widespread in the Empire and the worship practices incorporated into the polytheistic systems of the Mediterranean world.
- Despite initial reticence on the part of some patricians in Roman hierarchy, they came to regard it as an essential unifying factor for maintaining the empire so much so that it became indistinguishable from the colonial political ideology that it naturally supported.
- However, despite its pervasiveness, the degrees of intensities of the worship varied from Emperor to Emperor, and from one province to another.

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Formative Assessment Question 2

Describe the relevance of the main features of the Imperial cult of first century Graeco-Roman Empire for interpretation of the New Testament (1000 words).

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Roman Imperial Ideology

“the cult of Caesar was not simply one new religion among many in the Roman world. Already by Paul’s time it had become the dominant cult in a large part of the Empire, certainly in the parts where Paul was active, and was the means whereby the Romans managed to control and govern such huge areas as came under their sway. Who needs armies when they have worship?”

Wright, NT. 2010. *Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire*, Center of Theological Inquiry, Reflections: 1-13

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Richard Horsley on the Imperial Cult

“The most important and effective way that urban and provincial oligarchies constructed and maintained the Roman imperial order was their sponsorship of the imperial cult. To cultivate imperial favour and open access to imperial power and favours, local elites honoured the emperor or imperial family members by setting up shrines and building temples in redesigned city centers (agorai) and by funding festivals and imperial games. The imperial cult was not imposed from the imperial center, where Roman reserve required that living emperors decline to be worshiped as a god. The celebration and honouring of Augustus and his successors as divine figures, Lords and Saviors of the world, was developed by the elite in the Greek cities themselves, on the basis of the already-existing civil religion, in cities such as Ephesus, Corinth, and Thessalonica”

[Horsley, Richard A., ed. *Paul and the Roman imperial order*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2004. Page 16]

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Summary

1. **Cultural Anthropology of Ancient Graeco-Roman Societies**
 - Reciprocity & Exchange of Favours
 - Patronage & Benefaction
 - Honour & Shame
 - Christianity as counter-cultural
2. **Graeco-Roman Social Entertainments and New Testament Interpretation**
 - Games & Religion
 - The Roman triumph & New Testament
 - Athletic Metaphors & New Testament Interpretation
3. **Graeco-Roman Religions and New Testament Interpretation**
 - Polytheism as pragmatic religion of Graeco-Roman World
 - Artemis worship as example
 - Idol Food and New Testament
 - Imperial Cult & Christianity

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Questions?

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