Michael Schramm (ed.): Sonne, Kosmos, Rom. Kaiser Julian, Hymnos auf den König Helios. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit interpretierenden Essays versehen von Franco Ferrari, Martin Hose, Stefan Rebenich, Adolf Martin Ritter, Michael Schramm, Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2022 (Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam REligionemque pertinentia 40). XII, 298 p. € 89.00. ISBN 978-3-16-157543-3.

This volume, Band XL in the SAPERE series ('Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam REligionemque pertinentia'), is in the now familiar format of text with facing translation, notes and essays. The title itself indicates the wide-ranging aspects applied to the interpretation of this intriguing, yet often baffling, work of Julian; for the essays deal with the philosophical background, the religious and philosophical content of the work, Julian's religious persona, his religious policy and relationship to Christianity as well as what his readers might have expected of a 'Hymn' composed in prose.

Franco Ferrari, in his contribution (translated from Italian), "Solartheologie und Lichtmetaphysik im vorjulianischen Platonismus" (pp. 105–131), sensibly limits himself to those aspects of Julian's thought which are directly relevant to the hymn to Helios. Although Plato and Iamblichus are the only authors specifically mentioned by Julian, Ferrari covers all other possibilities even if there is no direct evidence of influence, but which, it is reasonable to assume, he would have been aware of. This includes Aristotle, the Stoics and the Chaldaean Oracles as well as Platonists. For knowledge of these is implicit for understanding the Hymn. Of primary importance is Plato rep. 506d8–509c10, and Ferrari presents us with a careful discussion of the various interpretations of this passage, both ancient and modern, and their implications. For Julian the key interpretation is the treatment of the sun as a really existent transcendent entity rather than an analogy, an interpretation which finds its first substantial expression in Plotinus, but which, Ferrari notes, is already suggested in Philo (*De migratione Abrahami* 40) where the sun is an εἰκών of the original light of God (θεοῦ φέγγος) which looks forward to Plotinus' notion of divine light. He also cites *De opificio mundi* 30–31 for 'invisible and intelligible light'. Other Platonists, of course, made much of this passage of Plato as central to Platonic metaphysics and epistemology, though without the crucial adjustment of perspective which begins with Plotinus. Ferrari demonstrates how Plutarch, for example, is somewhat cautious as

the divinising of the sun would tend to obscure the sharp Platonic distinction between incorporeal transcendent being and the physical world.[1] Ferrari details the influence of the Chaldaean Oracles, which Julian probably knew from Iamblichus, particularly in the application of light and fire to express the activity of divine entities and metaphysical principles, the hypostasising of a central communicative entity (King Helios as second Intellect), and not least in the important role of light in the ascent of the individual from the darkness of this world to the realm of light. Ferrari admits the difficulty of tracing the exact influence of Iamblichus. For though Julian says he has carefully read Iamblichus (but without naming specific works), nothing survives of Iamblichus' discourses on the sun. But he is right to affirm with some confidence that Julian's discussion of incorporeal light (originally an Aristotelian concept) is probably drawn from Iamblichus, and that the Intelligible-Intellectual distinction (which is not found in Plotinus and Porphyry) is from Iamblichus, as is the concept of οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια (used in 132b to account for the nature and activity of Helios). He then rightly concludes that his general philosophical ideas are from Iamblichus and his School.

Although Julian explicitly claims works of Iamblichus as the foundation of his theology in the Hymn, Michael Schramm, in "Julians Götter: Der *Helios-Hymnos* und die neuplatonische Theologie" (pp. 133–166), points out that, since these are no longer extant, it is difficult for us to see exactly how and where his theology is rooted in a Neoplatonic framework. But by using Sallustios, who seems to have depended on Julian, and Proclus, who developed Iamblichus' ideas, he shows how we can attempt to fill in the gaps and outline a coherent structure to Julian's theology, showing how the complex levels of Iamblichus' transcendent world may be discerned in the *Hymn to Helios*, though not always explicitly; for, as other scholars have suggested, Julian often simplifies his presentation according to his readership. This is not then a return to a more simple middle platonic system, as some have claimed. An additional problem is that other works of Julian suggest different and even conflicting details, e. g., the central mediating role of Attis, as opposed to Helios, in *Mother of the Gods*. But Schramm is able to show how the complexity of Iamblichus' metaphysical structures, with multiple triads at different levels of reality (especially the Intelligible and Intellectual levels), allows Julian to contain the rich and potentially conflicting variety of pagan

1 Plut. de E 393a–b.

theological entities. The comprehensive detail provided by Schramm in this essay is an indispensable guide for the modern reader's attempts to understand the often bewildering theological structure of the *Hymn to Helios*, a structure that would have been self-evident to a contemporary elite readership schooled in the latest version of Neoplatonism.

Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler's contribution ("Theologe, Myste, Gesandter der Götter: Kaiser Julians Selbstinszenierung als religiöses Subjekt", pp. 167-209) is a careful treatment of the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*, *To the Cynic Heracleios*, and the *Hymn to Helios* in which she differentiates the different aspects of Julian's religious persona, whether as personal initiate, learned philosopher-theologian, or messenger divinely commissioned to bring order and harmony to the Roman Empire. Although these all appear in each of the three speeches, she shows how Julian adjusts his emphasis on each one to accord with the particular religious theme. By this comparative method she manages to demonstrate the very particular emphasis of the Helios hymn, in which Julian stresses the Roman nature of the worship of King Helios as Sol Invictus along with his own role as divinely appointed 'follower' of the God as Roman Emperor. At the same time, and from a different perspective than that employed by Michael Schramm, she succeeds in making coherent sense of the sometimes baffling complexity and apparent inconsistency of the divine figures which people the three speeches. In a broader sense the role of divinely appointed Emperor is closely linked to Julian's own personal experience of divinity, whether of the mother of the gods, or particularly of Helios, movingly described in his account, at the beginning of the Hymn, of his childhood encounter with Helios as Light. For both experiences, as she brings out, are deeply grounded in the Platonic tradition mediated through Iamblichus; on the one hand the mystic follower of Plato's *Phaedrus*[2], joining the procession of gods in heaven and, on the other, the Iamblichean doctrine of the divine mission of select souls, sent into the universe to help others. In this context she also alerts us to Julian's use of 'we' and 'I', the singular where he stresses the contribution of the individual, the plural where he identifies himself with the worshipping community.

In "Der *Helios-Hymnos* als Beitrag zu Julians Religionspolitik: Herrschaftsrepräsentation und pagane Reaktion" (pp. 211–232) Stefan Rebenich argues that, whilst adopting many of the ideas behind Constantine's theocratic

2 248c–d.

system, as formulated by Eusebius, including the notion of the empire under a single ruler analogous with god's reign over heaven and earth, Julian has a different emphasis. Rather than simply wanting to assuage pagan practice and beliefs, he was actively engaged in the restoration, reform and reorganisation of traditional paganism and in providing it with a coherent theology. Even his role as *pontifex maximus* was conceived as active rather than passive with the composition of letters and tractates. This personal engagement and responsibility was given additional philosophical support by stressing his own central position as emperor, both vertical and horizontal, as analogous to that of Helios. Rebenich also tackles the question of the intended audience of the Hymn and convincingly concludes that it was aimed at friends – a like-minded elite knowledgeable in Neoplatonism. Rebenich admits that it is difficult now to know how effective his message and his religious reforms were; but points to inscriptional evidence, which shows a favourable reception in some quarters at least (for example in North Africa), even though this might be at the instigation of local elites rather than the result of a centralised programme. Even the coinage is ambiguous; there are no issues with sol Invictus or Helios, but an issue with a bull design might have suggested Mithras, or Sol or have been deliberately ambiguous. Rebenich considers whether Julian was relying on his written works (after all they were read and even attacked later). But one might also wonder whether he was making a cautious beginning and would have extended his programme more publicly if his reign had not been so short.

Although we know from other sources that Julian was defiantly anti-Christian, Adolf Martin Ritter ("Julians Helios-Theologie in Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum", pp. 233–253) points out that this is not explicitly obvious from the *Hymn to Helios*. After all the Sun did not play a significant role in the Old and New Testaments and is thus not an obvious target for anti-Christian polemic. The nearest one gets to something more directly anti-Christian is the figure of Asclepius as 'saviour of the all' – universal saviour[3] and we know from Cyril of Alexandria[4] that he was regarded by Julian as Christ figure. Ritter rejects Jean Bouffartigue's reading of Julian's vision of Helios at the beginning of the Hymn as an intended allusion to Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus and Martin P. Nilsson's description of

3 Iul. or. 4 [11 Bidez], 153b.

4 Kyr. Alex. c. Iulian. 6,22.

the Hymn as a 'Christmas Sermon.' Even Julian's stress on Helios (and himself) as 'mediator (μεσότης) – an important concept in New Testament exegesis – Ritter rightly sees as deeply rooted metaphysically in Plato and Neoplatonism rather than borrowed from Christian theology. Ritter, I think correctly, interprets the *Hymn to Helios* as more a re-action to Christianity than an explicit exercise in anti-Christian polemic.

Into what genre are we to locate the Hymn to Helios? Is it to be placed in the category of Hymns as a subcategory of Prose-Hymns? Martin Hose, in his contribution "Der *Helios-Hymnos* im Kontext der kaiserzeitlichen Hymnenliteratur" (pp. 255–268), begins by discussing the meaning and difficulties of the whole concept of genres – are they not a product of literary critics, or readers, formulated only after the literature, or even only at the demise of a certain type of literature? So, in the case of the 'prose hymn', its genre classification is only a recent concern, which we see in attempts to place it in a tradition between early verse hymns and Neoplatonic verse hymns (e. g., Synesius, Proclus) and in the further complication of the class of 'philosophical hymns.' Hose ingeniously uses a passage from Aelius Aristides' *Regarding Serapis*[5] and the 'Tractate on Epideictic Speeches' of Menander Rhetor to locate the Hymn to Helios in the genre of rhetoric. Aelius compares the poet and orator with regard to hymns to the gods, and maintains that the prose writer, too, may hymn the gods, that to do so is not restricted to the poet. But he calls it a 'logos' rather than a 'hymn'. Menander describes epideictic (panegyric) speeches as sometimes for gods and sometimes for humans, calling the former 'hymns', but whose content and rules are not those of poetry but of oratory. He can even include Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*. Hose points out how Julian's Helios hymn fits in with this designation: e.g., he begins with a reference to τοῦ λόγου τοῦδε. He then shows how Julian proceeds to follow rhetorical guidelines, e. g references to a general imaginary audience as so often in Second Sophistic, and, most importantly, argumentation rather than assertion – hence the metaphysical content. It is, then, not a subspecies of (verse) hymn, a sort of poetry in prose but a panegyric, thus rhetorical and yet a hymn in Menander's sense, that it praises a god. The importance of this designation is that it alerts us to identify and respond to the structures and ploys of rhetoric to set the tone and guide us through the work.

5 Or. 45, especially 1–14.

This is a stimulating set of interpretive essays which adds considerably to our understanding of Julian's *Hymn to Helios,* soundly based on a mass of supporting material and on a careful consideration of the wider aspects of his *oeuvre*. The Greek text is that of Heinz-Günther Nesselrath,[6] but with nineteen noted adjustments. It is accompanied by a readable translation and almost thirty pages of helpful running notes, some of them quite substantial, including cross references, all of which help readers to make their way through the text. The volume is provided with an extensive bibliography and useful indices of ancient authors cited and of names and topics.

6 Iulianus Augustus: Opera. Edidit H.-G. Nesselrath. Berlin/Boston 2015 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 2018).

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