



# Journal of Religion & Society

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The Kripke Center

Volume 1 (1999)

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Denise Kimber Buell. *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Pp. 221. No Price Listed.

[1] Response to this book will depend in large part on the reader's evaluation of the author's methodological presuppositions. Buell is to be recommended first of all for being clear and forthright about these presuppositions. She presumes "that language is constitutive rather than merely reflective of reality" (14). Her goal is to illuminate "the means by which a cultural formation . . . constructs 'the real' and persuades those who participate in it . . . that it is real" (*ibid*). More pointedly, the matter of this book is to analyse metaphors of procreation and kinship in the work of the early Christian theologian, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 C.E.), in order to trace how Clement employs such language to construct and define the authority of his own version of Christianity and of himself as a genuine Christian teacher.

[2] Chapters 1 and 2 analyse and contextualize Clement's central conception of procreation as the sowing of male seed into female soil, showing how paternity is conceived as safeguarding identity of essence while maternity is understood as providing matter and nourishment. Chapters 3-5 show Clement's employment of this "seed/soil model" for the purposes of his own self-authorization as a Christian teacher who stands in a relationship of patrilinear succession to the authentic tradition of Christian knowledge and authority. Conversely, Clement is shown as depicting those whom he terms "heretics" as "illegitimate children or as bearing allegiance to false fathers, whether human teachers or divinities" (95). Chapter 6 traces Clement's use of procreation and kinship metaphors to construct boundaries of Christian self-identity, construed as a collective family. Chapters 7 and 8 describe Clement's selective use of the notion of Christians as "children" in order to portray his conception of the norms of Christian character and formation. Chapters 9 and 10 are comprised of a fairly close textual analysis of an excerpt from Book 1 of Clement's *Paidagogos*, analysing his construction of "a rhetoric of Christian unity and identity" (131) through the use of procreative metaphors. Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 explore Clement's use of maternal imagery for the divine, focusing on the tension whereby Clement is ready to attribute to God female characteristics but reluctant to address God as mother. Moreover,

Buell shows how maternal imagery is employed to emphasize the shared substance of Christian identity while paternal imagery prevails when it comes to an affirmation of the linear transmission of authority and power within the Christian community.

[3] The benefit of this book lies in its fairly thorough exploration of the cultural context that underlies, envelops, and makes efficacious Clement's rhetorical use of procreative and kinship imagery. As such, it is a useful tool for the task of understanding the social construction of early Christian rhetoric. There is a significant lacuna, however. While Buell thoroughly analyses Clement's strategies for rhetorically constructing his own version of Christianity and his authority as a teacher through the use of procreative imagery, she largely abstracts from the actual content of his teaching. *What* did Clement actually teach and what were the issues over which he and his opponents disagreed? Certainly, Clement asserted the rightness of his views not exclusively by the rhetorically strategic use of kinship metaphors but also by appealing to what he called "the rule of the church" (cf. *Stromateis* VII:41) and it would have been most appropriate to give an even cursory summary of his version of this. Buell herself points out that the rhetorical strategies used by Clement were used also by his opponents and were indeed pervasive among the contemporary culture. As such, their use does not account for the differences between different Christian groups. The logical consequence of this observation is not necessarily that the existence of such differences is arbitrary but rather that Buell's focus is too narrow. After citing an excerpt from the Valentinian Ptolemy, she writes: "What is so striking about the juxtaposition of the example from Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* with those from Clement's own writing is that they are traditionally understood to be on opposite sides of the heresy/orthodoxy fence. Since both Clement and the Valentinian Ptolemy employ this strategy of speaking about the transmission of Christian teachings, the historian must ask on what basis have Ptolemy's claims been dismissed as heretical and Clement's found authentic?" (67). It would seem that the obvious response to which Buell's methodology is not sufficiently attuned is that the historian must take into consideration not only the rhetorical strategies and social locations which (in this case) they have in common but the actual content of their teaching on God, world, salvation, etc., wherein they differ. That the one perspective does not exclude acknowledgement of the other has been modelled by, for example, the work of Elizabeth Clark in *The Origenist Controversy*.

[4] All this is not to gainsay the merit of Buell's achievement in providing a richly detailed social context for a rhetorical motif in Clement's writings of which, thanks to her, readers of Clement will now be more cognizant.

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