

enables one to see in much greater depth what was going on in that world between the spread of Christianity and the rise of Islam. Alas, it has to be said that the book is marred by poor proof-reading.

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

ANDREW LOUTH

*The power of religion in late antiquity. Selected papers from the seventh biennial 'Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity' conference.* Edited by Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski. Pp. xvii+464 incl. 15 figs. Farnham–Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. £65. 978 0 7546 6725 4

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The 'shifting frontiers' franchise has established itself over the past fifteen years as one of the most dynamic forces in Anglophone late antique scholarship. The volume under review is the seventh to have emerged from the biennial conferences, and maintains a healthy balance between veterans (five of the twenty-seven authors in the current volume also featured in the first, from 1996) and newcomers (two papers in this volume are by postgraduate students). Although religious frontiers have loomed large from the outset in an enterprise self-consciously conceived in the spirit of Peter Brown (the original, eponymous 'shifting frontiers' volume began with a map and a series of papers on border patrols and interlopers, but fully a quarter of it was devoted to 'frontiers of ritual, piety and spirit'), this is the first instalment to take religion as its defining theme. It therefore provides a valuable sample of current research interests and approaches. The 'frontier' here is the period itself, and it 'shifts' as new sites of religious power emerge – Noel Lenski, in his introduction, singles out as examples Peter Brown's holy men, Brent Shaw's martyred/ascetic bodies and Garth Fowden's hegemonic monotheisms. The absence from this list of any Church will probably strike readers of this *JOURNAL*, and the contributors also show considerably more interest in personal than in institutional religious power. The principal exception is Sabine Huebner's shrewd survey of the admission costs into the clergy in sixth-century Constantinople.

Although individual churchmen are well represented, more attention is paid to the subtleties of their textual strategies than to the practicalities of their exercise of authority. Giacomo Raspanti thus discovers a skilful adaptation of Seneca in Ambrose, but without explaining how this would have moved his 'wide and varied audience' (p. 55). Conversely, the translation which Justin Stephens sketches, for John Chrysostom, from a rhetoric of 'holy laws' into a coherent principle of action (pp. 186–7) deserves fuller exploration: the preacher's use of the same expression in a sermon just before the riot of 387 (*Ad pop.* 1.12), challenging his congregation to uphold these 'laws', suggests that his imaginative horizons stretched beyond his own confrontations with monarchs. The religious topography of Antioch, where these contests to enforce Christian standards would be waged, is brought tantalisingly to life by Wendy Mayer in a pair of impressionistic snapshots which suggest useful possibilities for convergence with Stevens's approach. Alexandria meanwhile receives only passing mention, with the most pugnacious of its leaders, Athanasius, absent altogether. Although Rome receives a section to

itself, there is only passing attention to its bishops; the longest contribution, by Rita Lizzi Testa, concentrates on the priestly colleges of the traditional cults, and proposes that they remained more robust for longer than is usually supposed. Papal Rome is represented by Jacob Latham's Gregory I, who exercises his power through the occasional orchestration of complex processions and through the participants' tears – by blazing a cognitive-emotional trail rather than by digging any institutional foundations. The most interestingly hobbled bishop is Gillian Clark's Augustine, who remains Lilliputian in his actual capacity to effect change, but soars free – and in unexpected directions – in his writings: the meditation on 'the power of true religion' (pp. 196–9) is one of the highlights of the volume. In felicitous juxtaposition, Lisa Bailey argues for a relatively authoritative Augustine (p. 206), towering above her Gallic clergymen and their modest pastoral goals. The microscope more readily exposes the limits than it delineates the musculature of ecclesiastical power.

Throughout the volume, both 'power' and 'religion' assume many shapes and sizes. Fulgentius' allegorical reimagining of the *Aeneid* thus becomes a weapon forged for combat against 'Greco-Roman paganism' in Emily Albu's deft analysis, its potency expressed in its continued importance to Carolingian educators and slyly subversive Normans. In drawing attention to the significance of Victorinus of Poetovio's commentary on Revelation, Josef Lössl arguably reveals more about the authority of (authoritatively packaged) exegesis than about his announced theme, the 'power of millennialism'. There is an embarrassment of religious powers throughout: it says much for the ingenuity and thoughtfulness of Lenski's introduction that the collection maintains its coherence.

Perhaps the most consistent theme is the ability of certain individuals in certain circumstances to exercise power over religion. The overheated introversion of the philosophical school provided a convenient laboratory for such appropriation, and in a notably well-integrated section three papers, by Sergio Knipe, Elizabeth Digeser and Aaron Johnson, suggest the outlines of a power struggle between Porphyry and Iamblichus over the shape and direction of spiritual Platonism, a struggle which had implications for wider society. Other exercises in religious empowerment are less rarefied. Bailey Young thus uses Frankish belt-buckles to suggest how the Merovingian lay elite was able to set the terms of their own conversions to Christianity; Ralph Mathisen shows the fifth-century *generalissimo* Ricimer confidently shaping his church of S. Agata in Rome to his own requirements, although a number of specific arguments here (on the legal status of Arian worship, and the presence of an institutionalised Arian bishop) remain daringly speculative.

But the principal exponents of power over religion here are emperors. Both Justinian and Theodosius II knew exactly what they were doing, the former when enduring rudeness from monks (Hartmut Leppin) and imposing loyalty oaths on governors (Charles Pazdernik), the latter in his management of fractious Christian lobbyists (Hugh Elton). Constantine proves more elusive, and the three papers dealing with his vision of the cross say more about how he was interpreted than about what he might have intended. There are some interesting convergences (and divergences). Hal Drake and Jacqueline Long each discover a different 'thriller' in Constantine's escape to his father's court (pp. 221 n. 25, 231); Drake

and Jan Willem Drijvers disagree on whether Cyril of Jerusalem knew the vision story (pp. 219, 244n.). The different vocabularies applied in these three papers to the uses of religious power by the authors and actors under discussion provide a ready-made subject for a graduate seminar.

Each of the eight sections of the volume, indeed, could launch an invigorating seminar discussion. The religious frontier that is presented here is a generously open and most inviting one.

OXFORD

NEIL McLYNN

*Social mobility in late antique Gaul. Strategies for the non-elite.* By Allen E. Jones.

Pp. xi+379 incl. map. New York–Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. \$90. 978 0 521 76239 7

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This book is a contribution to the social history of Gaul in the later fifth and sixth centuries. Based on the approaches of Peter Brown, Ralph Mathisen and Raymond van Dam, the author explores the question, to what extent Gallic society offered opportunities for upward social mobility and which groups were able to participate in this process. After discussing his main sources, especially Gregory of Tours, Jones proceeds along two main lines. First he compares strategies of elite and non-elite status achievement, which according to Jones did not fundamentally differ; in the absence of a well-defined aristocratic status and distinct culture of nobility, the same means of social advancement – accumulation of wealth (mostly by marriage), ascent by service at court and in the hierarchies of the Church – were available to all social strata. The longer second part of the book deals with separate groups (captives, the poor, physicians and healers), for whom Jones identifies different opportunities to improve social status. Apart from the physicians, whose traditional claim to social recognition rested on the fact that medicine had been a respectable profession since late antiquity, other forms of social advancement required integration in or at least cooperation with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This necessity would have been especially felt by healers, as potential rivals of the Christian saints, but also the agency of *matricularii*, who occasionally acted as influential pressure-groups, was limited by the fact that their influence depended on the patronage of a saint or a bishop. In this study, Jones offers a vivid picture of different forms of patronage (poor relief, redemption of captives, miraculous healing) based on extensive readings of Gregory of Tours, and shows a deep familiarity with current scholarly debates on his specific subject matter. Comparable attention to the broader context would have been desirable. The main problem of Jones's study is its superficial engagement with the relevant literature in this respect, as well as a general lack of reflection on methodological questions. Social order (not only of late antique Gaul) is open to different and competing patterns of stratification – juristic, economic, religious, to mention only a basic few. Jones's attempt to reconstruct a model of Gallic society without taking this systematically into account necessarily leads to confusion. Categories like personal freedom, economic poverty and sinfulness are not simply complementary attributes of a society characterised by a 'deep seated cultural unity' (p. 8), but