contribution lies in the way in which it raises up spatial realities and relationships as topics for further fruitful investigation.

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Violence in ancient Christianity. Victims and perpetrators. Edited by Albert C. Geljon and Riemer Roukema. (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae,* 125.) Pp. viii + 252. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2014. €104. 978 90 04 27478 5.

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According to the fifth-century AD account of Damascius, the philosopher Hypatia was too well-regarded for her own good. Her fame aroused the jealousy of Cyril of Alexandria, who began to plot her murder. The hit followed a formula later adopted by Al Capone: 'When she left her house as usual, a crowd of bestial men – truly abominable – those who take account neither of divine vengeance nor of human retribution – fell upon and killed the philosopher, thus inflicting the greatest pollution and disgrace upon the city' (trans. Polymnia Athanassiadi). In his chapter in this volume, Hans van Loon asks whether or not Cyril deserves his reputation as a sort of episcopal gangster. He concludes, not unreasonably, that Damascius' account is implausible, not least in the highly personal motive that it gives to Cyril, and he prefers the more sober account of Socrates Scholasticus, who ascribes the murder to excitable Christians who blamed Hypatia for influencing the authorities against their bishop.

Cyril may indeed have been uninvolved in these events. Yet a few years earlier he could be found leading a mob against the Alexandrian Jews, occupying their synagogues, driving them out and looting their possessions. Here too Van Loon tries to play down Christian culpability, and that of Cyril especially: thus we are told that 'Socrates does not mention murder and killing on the side of the Christians' (p. 119) – only violence and looting and forcing the Jews into exile – and that the historian 'does not ascribe to the bishop a single murder' (p. 126). But these points, while worth making, are to some extent a distraction. After all, even Damascius did not have Cyril murder Hypatia with his own hands. Al Capone, for that matter, did very little of his dirty work himself. One does not need to take personal charge of a murder to be a major player in an outbreak of violence.

The most valuable chapters in this volume, Van Loon's among them, offer a similarly careful analysis of what exactly constituted violence in the world of ancient Christianity, but too often also find themselves also seeking alibis for individuals. Thus Hans Teitler, in his chapter on Julian as persecutor, demonstrates that the emperor cannot be reliably placed at the scene of any martyrdom or lynching; and Paul van Geest notes in passing that Ambrose of Milan 'approves of the demolition of temples but nowhere in his works does he legitimise violence against people' (p. 154). These scholars are all clear-eyed and conscientious enough not to make too much of this, and they would doubtless agree with Van Loon that Cyril, for example, 'might be held indirectly responsible, for stimulating a climate in which such an act [as Hypatia's murder] could take place' (p. 126).

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But the tendency towards apologetic suggests a continuing uncertainty over what is meant by religious violence in the ancient world. It is useful to draw attention to the deficiencies of much of the evidence; but the point should not be to blame or exonerate individuals nor to ask, with Jan Bremmer, whether ancient Christians were more or less antisemitic than their successors. On the contrary, as Bremmer's otherwise excellent opening chapter suggests, the question is how religion contributes to particular acts of violence.

Danny Praet's smart and sophisticated second chapter follows this up. He explicitly includes 'cultural violence', and insists that a number of episodes of ancient violence must be regarded as 'produced or intensified' (p. 34) by religion. Yet the effort to understand the motives of historical actors seems to me rather misplaced: after all, it has always been possible for a Thucydides or a Marx to find 'truer causes' than those found in the sources. Rather than seeing religion as a cause of violence, I would more readily adopt an understanding hinted at in Paul van Geest's account of Augustine, who seems less concerned with generating violence against the Donatists than with justifying and legitimising it. We might thereby transfer our attention from the origins of violence, which are more a matter for philosophers or psychologists, to 'religious violence' understood as historical acts given direction and meaning by religion. Alexandrians needed little incitement to riot, but the fact that their violence was expressed under Julian and Cyril in the form of the lynchings of George the Cappadocian and Hypatia respectively must in part be the result of the emphasis on religious difference in the rhetoric employed by those leaders. After all, as Praet points out, 'most people lived and live in relative religious harmony most of the time' (p. 35). When violence did break out, the important question is how and why it could be rendered legitimate by religious discourse.

The chapters above all provide worthwhile and serious discussions of this complex interaction between acts of violence and religious identities. The remaining pieces focus more narrowly on rhetoric, and some scarcely mention violence at all. Elizabeth Boddens Hosang provides a helpful reminder that Jews and Christians intermingled throughout late antiquity, despite the efforts of Church and imperial authorities to keep them apart; and Fred Ledegang traces the ways in which Eusebius sought to make Constantine's military activity consistent with his Christian allegiance; but these chapters mostly deal with familiar material. Gerard Bartelink is typically erudite in listing the disparaging terms applied to 'heretical' gatherings, although the reader is left to draw out the connection to those differences expressed and reinforced by religious violence. Joop van Waarden provides a careful analysis of the petition of Priscillian of Avila to Damasus of Rome, the refusal of which led to Priscillian's execution by the usurper Maximus: an especially interesting example, since this execution was officially justified on religious grounds – through accusations of witchcraft and Manichaeanism – but would later be challenged by Christians uncomfortable with this assertion of the emperor's right to engage in religious violence on his own account.

Finally, Riemer Roukema concludes by tracing down to late antiquity the use of the Gospel injunction to 'love your enemies'. Although this very phrase defines friends and enemies, and could be taken to exclude certain categories of enemies such as enemies in warfare, and even Gentiles and Jews, Roukema argues that its continued use in sermons must have had an effect on those who

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heard it. This is a salutary reminder that religious rhetoric might inhibit violence as well as justify it, and it reaffirms that violence and religion are quite separate phenomena. That they are so often allied tells us something about the ubiquity of violence, but perhaps more about the elasticity of religious rhetoric.

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Christian in toga. Boethius. Interpreter of antiquity and Christian theologian. By Claudio Moreschini. (Beiträge zur Europäischen Religionsgeschichte, 3.) Pp. 155. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014. €69.99. 978 3 525 54027 5

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Originating in lectures for a graduate seminar on 'Christentum als antike Religion' at the University of Bremen in 2011, this book is not the accessible short introduction to Boethius that its jaunty title might seem to promise. Claudio Moreschini, who has edited Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* and theological works for the Bibliotheca Teubneriana (2000, rev. edn 2005), offers his readers the fruits of a long reflection on this author. After surveying the oeuvre as a whole ('Boethius' great cultural project'), he devotes most of his space to the *Opuscula theologica* and the *Consolatio*. The book ends with a selective review of medieval responses to the *Consolatio*, apparently chosen to support Moreschini's view of its solidly Christian Platonist credentials ('the work of a Christian in toga') against Danuta Shanzer's recent contention – in an essay in the *Cambridge Companion to Boethius* – for its more experimental character. Questions of authenticity (for the *De fide catholica*) and literary genre (for the *Consolatio*) are treated in preliminary sections, the main expository coverage being reserved for Boethius' doctrinal positions, their sources and relation to the tradition. Bibliographical reference is generous and up-to-date. There are some slightly jarring features, such as a section summarising the *Consolatio* headed '*De remediis utriusque fortunae* (Petrarch)' but devoid of any mention either of Petrarch or of his work of that title, and also – not helped by the necessity of publishing in English – the author's brusque way with other scholars' opinions ('The whole interpretation is surely convoluted!', 'We find these lucubrations arbitrary'). It is hard to imagine anyone interested in Boethius putting this study down without being stimulated by its arguments or counter-arguments on given points, but equally hard to discern in it a fully unified vision of him as an 'interpreter of antiquity'.

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Histoire de Mar Abba, catholicos de l'Orient. Martyres de Mar Grigor, général en chef du roi Khusro Ier et de Mar Yazd-panah, juge et gouverneur. Edited by Florence Jullien. (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 658. Scriptores Syri, 254.) Pp. lviii + 89. Louvain: Peeters, 2015. €76 (paper). 978 90 429 3222 7; 0070 0452

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This edition and translation presents three Syriac hagiographies of the mid-sixth century. All of them deal with prominent converts from Zoroastrianism to

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