

how important normative texts are to the historian for reconstructing institutional settings and historical developments in order to understand theological and philosophical discussions. Canon law texts as historical source material have long been underestimated by other disciplines, as the author correctly observes. Stephens's more general reflections on canon law and its nature (pp. 171–215) highlight some interesting aspects of early canon law, for instance its character as guidelines rather than as strict rules, its complexity, and also the lack of means to enforce it.

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*Controlling contested places. Late antique Antioch and the spatial politics of religious controversy.* By Christine Shepardson. Pp. xxi + 288 incl. 2 maps. Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 2014. £65. 978 0 520 28035 9

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In this stimulating, well-researched, and wide-ranging study, Shepardson argues that space in fourth-century Antioch was not a neutral entity. Drawing heavily on the work of social geographers, she argues that places are 'socially and rhetorically constructed, and they in turn shape the politics that take place in and around them' (p. 128). The apparent obviousness of space is, indeed, the mark of a successful imaginative geography.

And it is imaginative geography that forms the subject of the book. The ravages caused by repeated earthquakes, the challenge posed by continuous occupation as well as the lapse of time and, crucially, the current devastation of the region have all conspired to preclude the possibility of in-depth archaeological reconstruction of the concrete places and spatial relations of late ancient Antioch. Thus, although Downey's map of Antioch is included in the front material, the book makes little if any allusion to this cartographic image (not even to illuminate the claims of Libanius on whose *Oration* 11 it is largely based). Nor do studies of the expected components of a late ancient city play a significant role in the argument: we do not hear about the dimensions of the porticoes, the layout of the streets or of the markets with their vendors' stalls. One regrets the decision not to draw on archaeological material from comparable sites, for surely it would have made the spaces that Shepardson describes seem sharper and more defined, and thus the contestation over them more tangible and real. But the only physical structures that do figure largely in the analysis are the churches of Antioch, which have been recently illuminated by Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen (*The Churches of Syrian Antioch, 300–638 CE*, 2012) with their customary admirable care. Otherwise, the book focuses on the imaginary construction of space. With some apology to mathematicians, we might describe the enterprise as one of topology, or spatial theorising, rather than topography, or spatial description.

The person at the heart of this imaginative enterprise is John Chrysostom. His distinctive thinking is thrown into high relief by comparison with the writings of his contemporaries, among whom Libanius looms especially large. The other

crucial interlocutor is Theodoret. The study as a whole, however, chiefly illuminates the distinctive perspective of Chrysostom.

In terms of its structure, the book proceeds through a series of *topoi*. The first chapter examines urban places of teaching, as Shepardson compares the teaching venues occupied by Libanius with those used by preachers. This comparison is truly illuminating. It uncovers not only a fascinating hierarchy of place, but also a lively – and shared – competition over securing the most prestigious positions. Location was thus a key factor in power negotiation (p. 43). Where a place lacked prestige, it could be enhanced by the spatial manipulation of its contents. For Christians, this meant relics.

The second chapter pursues exactly this theme, moving to the outskirts of the city to explore the role of the relics of Babylas in the Christian contestation of the elite suburb of Daphne. At stake in this rhetorical manipulation of the physical landscape was the shifting of collective memory, and with memory, Christian identity and claims to power (pp. 78–9).

The subject of religious contestation takes centre stage in the following chapter, which examines the spatial rhetoric used by Chrysostom in combating the Jewish Christians of Antioch as well as the Anomoeans. Here, Shepardson focuses on the triangulation of three contested spaces: the house, the church and the synagogue. Again and again, we see Chrysostom ‘fighting to patrol his community’s boundaries, identifying where in Antioch his listeners should and should not go’ (pp. 92, 97, 111).

Chapter iv turns to the urban-rural divide. Despite the usual elite stereotypes that privileged the city, as the centre of *paideia* and sophistication over the uncivilised countryside, Chrysostom’s rhetoric insists that true orthodoxy and orthopraxy are to be found in the countryside. Indeed, he locates these quite specifically in the shrines of the martyrs and in the caves of ascetics (p. 130). The turmoil that followed the riot of the statues (in the spring of 387), when the monks of the mountains came into the agora and the prominent citizens fled to the country ‘offered Chrysostom a unique opportunity to imagine a reordered Christianized Antioch’ (p. 162).

This creation of an idealised landscape, dotted with shrines and temples, classrooms and saints, which Libanius, Chrysostom and Theodoret effected through their literary descriptions, Shepardson argues, can be usefully compared to maps. And maps always involve politics. For maps, as cartographers insist, not only encode political ideology but also actively shape the ways in which people ‘perceive, and act in, the world around them’ (p. 172). Thus the ‘textured landscapes’ evoked by Libanius, Chrysostom and Theodoret, should be appreciated for what they were, namely strategies designed ‘to reshape local behavior and religious identity’ (p. 200).

A final chapter widens out the lens, to view a larger territory. Shepardson discusses how church leaders elsewhere in the Empire, in Palestine, Egypt, North Africa and Spain, used shrines and *martyria* to reshape their local topographies in order to define religious orthodoxy and to bolster their own authority (pp. 226, 239).

As even this brief *précis* suggests, this study covers a lot of ground. Along the way it makes many interesting and valuable observations, but perhaps its largest

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).