

would be a mistake to infer, for example, that Romans thought of Jewish priests as resembling what they understood by *sacerdotes*. Of course, *Fasti sacerdotum* is not making any such claim; but there is room here for rich misunderstanding.

It would, however, be unpardonably ungracious to carp at so useful a work, the fruit of so much care, commitment and thought: future generations of scholars searching for elusive Roman priests will have every reason to bless the name of Rüpke.

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Z. VÁRHELYI, *THE RELIGION OF SENATORS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: POWER AND THE BEYOND*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 267. ISBN 9780521897242. £55.00/US\$95.00.

This compact book (based on the author's 2002 PhD thesis) explores the religious activities and beliefs of individual senators and the senate as a body over the first two and a half centuries of the Principate, with a particular focus on the inter-relationship between religious activity, political authority and senatorial identity. The theoretical framework, clearly articulated in the introduction, deploys a sociologically-informed understanding of religion; invoking the 'practice theory' associated with historians such as Gabrielle Spiegel, Várhelyi argues that ritual practices can be seen as constitutive of belief and vice versa without collapsing the distinction between them (12). Aiming to track both normative trends and significant variations, her study is interested less in the potential religion offered for subversion than in senators' creative and dynamic engagement with the religious order.

The book is divided into three parts, with Part I focusing on religious activity in relation to collective identity. Ch. 1 ('The New Senate of the Empire and Religion', based on a geographically nuanced analysis of a large number of dedications made by 'new men') assesses the rôle of new provincial senators as generators of religious innovation. V.'s argument here is that, notwithstanding the increasing rate of recruitment to the senate under the Principate, the tendency to religious conservatism on the part of almost all first-generation senators suggests that even a relatively high degree of social mobility need not have undermined a strong sense of senatorial identity. This seems eminently plausible, even if it does not in itself constitute evidence for a strongly distinct senatorial identity. V. does, however, argue persuasively for the strength of the senate's collective religious authority. In stressing the close relationship between social status and religious affiliations, V. thus challenges the idea of the 'religious marketplace' articulated most influentially by Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price in *Religions of Rome* (1998).

Ch. 2, on religious sub-groups among senators, has many perceptive observations to offer about priesthoods and other religious groupings. In particular, V.'s systematic study of provincial prosopography makes clear that while provincial *flamines* did not themselves generally gain access to the senatorial order, their descendants frequently did (such priesthoods were thus hardly a political dead-end, as earlier scholars argued). Besides epigraphy, V. makes use of a range of literary texts to characterize the religious life of the senatorial élite, concluding with a discussion of rituals associated with illness, in particular the custom of friends gathering at the bedside of the sick and offering prayers for recovery. Despite her interesting comments on the part such rituals played in affirming social networks, it is difficult to argue that specifically senatorial behaviour is distinct in this respect from that of the social élite more generally.

Chs 3 and 4 (Part II) offer surveys of the religious activities, frequently combining piety and euergetism, undertaken by individual senators in, respectively, Italy and the provinces. Just as the position of the emperor was theorized and performed in part in religious terms, so too, V. contends, individual senatorial posts gained religious significance. Here, also, V.'s discussion is informed by an impressive command of epigraphy. The picture which emerges, arguing for a link, for instance, between particular magistracies and specific cults (such as the urban praetorship and the cult of Hercules) is richly detailed and further confirms the tendency for social and political power to be articulated in religious terms.

Part III concerns the development of religious concepts, particularly in relation to political authority. Ch. 5 ('Towards a "Theology" of Roman Religion') argues for an increasingly close relationship between religion and philosophy from the latter decades of the first century C.E. While it is certainly the case that debates in the senate about the divinization of deceased emperors were

couched in terms of the emperor's virtues, to characterize Stoic virtue ethics as intrinsically 'religious' is not entirely satisfactory. Here (as also with regard to the rôle of mythology in articulating the position of both emperors and senators) it would have been helpful to engage more closely with the relevant ancient literary texts, though V. explores with characteristic subtlety evidence of religious strategies on the part of senators in the epigraphy of funerary commemoration. Ch. 6 ('Innovations and Aspirations') analyses instances of senators appropriating elements from imperial cult practice for their own individual purposes; V. pushes this material hard to generate suggestive insights into the imaginary of the imperial senate. She also offers suggestive observations about élite agnosticism in relation to the afterlife as, in part at least, a strategy of social differentiation. Following a brief conclusion (exploring through a number of inscriptions the particular investment of senators in the *ludi saeculares* of 17 B.C.E. and 204 C.E.), the book also includes a number of useful prosopographical appendices.

V. makes a good case for seeing religious practice on the part of Roman senators as closely implicated in the articulation of social and political status, yet not altogether reducible to this function. Ultimately, however, this lucidly written book perhaps promises rather more than it delivers. Of the series of linked case studies she offers, some are more successful than others. Comparison with religious practice on the part of equestrians might (or indeed might not) have reinforced V.'s argument for the distinctiveness of senatorial religious identity. The 'fantasies, aspirations and desires', tantalizingly invoked in the introduction (13), appear only fleetingly. V. is at her best, however, fleshing out a convincing and impressively nuanced picture of the religious practice of senators as evidenced in epigraphy. Her book has many strengths and readers will be especially grateful for its comprehensive yet clear and theoretically informed analysis of a voluminous and significant body of epigraphic material.

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C. FÉVRIER, *SUPPLICARE DEIS. LA SUPPLICATION EXPIATOIRE À ROME*. (Recherches sur les rhétoriques religieuses 10). Turnhout: Brepols, 2009. Pp. iv + 250. ISBN 9782503531915. €55.00.

Roman religion can often be reduced to a variety of ritual transactions to ensure the maintenance of good relations between gods and men and the prospering of Rome's endeavours *domi militiaeque*. While it is true that aspects of the state religious apparatus were operated in the manner of levers and pulleys, the complex relationship between official functions and popular piety is only now being accorded its proper place in the study of Roman religion. Caroline Février's *Supplicare deis* represents one such contribution to this burgeoning field of inquiry. A reworking of her doctoral thesis *Le pontife et le décemvir*, a study of the interaction between two of the priestly colleges in expiatory lore, this monograph focuses on the origins and applications of the Roman rite of *procuratio* from the fifth through to the first century B.C. Thereafter the rite vanishes, perhaps washed away in a flood of equally prodigious social, political and religious upheavals.

F. employs an eminently Roman principle in giving her study a tripartite structure, with each *partie* subdivided into three chapters. The first part addresses the necessary methodological questions of 'Définition et structure du rite'. A brief first chapter considers the typology of *supplicationes* and the origin of the word itself: F. explores the subtle interplay between supplication and placation, both in terms of posture and the wider construction of religious 'attitudes'. Ch. 2 attends to the forms of prayer and sacrifice associated with these rituals. The author is to be commended for her analysis of *obsecratio* which has often, erroneously, been used interchangeably (since Livy onwards) with *supplicatio*. F. convincingly demonstrates the unique function of this element in the process of expiation; it is around this notion of collective prayer that the various agents of Roman religious life — senate, *populus* and priestly *collegia* — are seen to congregate and participate in this constitutive feature of the ritual. The gestures which would have accompanied the ritual are the focus of the third chapter. An important aspect of F.'s treatment is the recognition that women played a prominent part in the manifestations of grief and formalized abjection in the face of disaster: it is not an easy task to filter out which of these rehearsed social conventions bled into the ritual repertoire of expiation and which gestures were regarded as intrinsic to *supplicatio*. Although definitive conclusions necessarily evade a study of