

Christianity in Roman Africa. The development of its practices and beliefs. By J. Patout Burns Jr and Robin M. Jensen. Pp. liv+670 incl. 10 ills+153 black-and-white and colour plates. Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2014. £35.99 (\$55). 978 0 8028 6931 9

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The intention of the authors in this study is to track interactions between the changing social context, practices of life and worship, and the theology of the Christian Church in Roman Africa, and they are well suited to undertake this venture, with their combined expertise in archaeology, material culture (Robin Jensen) and patristic theology (Patout Burns). Though this Church is extinct, and much evidence perished amidst the Islamic invasions of North Africa, it was the cradle of Latin-speaking Christianity, and the writings of its major theologians – Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine – have survived and have always been cited as having some authority. A major thesis of this work is that as the communities of the North African Church grew from a persecuted minority to a dominant majority, each generation of theologians developed the theories of its predecessors to justify adaptations in the practice of the Christian life.

The introductory chapters of the book sketch the earliest evidences for Christianity in this region, noting (as might be expected) that initial evidence suggests that there was a Greek-speaking component to the African Church of the early third century, and that knowledge of the presence of Christianity in North Africa comes from the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* of 180 CE. As the communities became established, they seem to have been led, regardless of size, by a bishop, and were clustered in the fertile tracts of Africa Proconsularis and Numidia. Additional introductory chapters cover the Imperial period, and fifth-century conflicts between Vandal Arians and African Nicenes. Chapter iv offers a very useful and full survey of the archaeological evidence for Christian practice. The fact that multiple baptisteries existed in a single urban area is given full discussion along with the placement, construction and shape of the fonts (round, cruciform and ply-lobed), as well as the mosaic decoration. The cult of the saints and burial of the dead are both subjects on which the archaeological evidence is plentiful.

Subsequent chapters discuss themes such as the ritual of baptism, the celebration of Word and eucharist, penance, leadership of the clergy and ordination, marriage, virginity and widowhood, as well as ritual surrounding death, the cult of the martyrs and practices of Christian living. The layout of many of these chapters becomes predictable (and at times a little monotonous), with a full and detailed analysis of the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine on each topic, supplemented where applicable by council decisions and figures such as Optatus. One of the constant theological quarrels in Africa was the status of baptism in dissident Churches, such as the Donatists and the Arians. In the ritual of baptism it is noted that Cyprian clearly regarded the rite of baptism as indivisible and insisted that immersion in water with the invocation of the Trinity could not be separated from the giving of the Holy Spirit, which was normally associated with the bishop's imposing hands on the newly baptised. Tertullian mentioned anointing and hand laying, but did not mention that this was episcopal. One wonders whether the Roman practice of double anointing – presbyteral and episcopal – had its origins in an African use where it was the bishop who laid hands on the candidates. The

Roman tradition was unique and does seem to be the result of combining presbyteral baptism with a tradition of hand laying reserved for the bishop. As this study points out, the African position, in contrast to the Roman one, recognised baptism as valid only when administered by a duly consecrated bishop in good standing within the unity of the true Church. In the discussion of Word and eucharist, Augustine is used (even squeezed dry!) to the full to illustrate preaching. Augustine apparently noted that incense played no role in the rite, in contrast to the East where incense seems to have been used by this time. Appealing to the study of Edward Kilmartin on the African councils, the tradition was to address prayer, including the eucharistic prayer, to the Father and not to the Son or Spirit. However, suggestions on the content of the African eucharistic prayer using Augustine remains speculative, and particularly the 'calling down of the Holy Spirit'. Scholars such as Edward Ratcliff long ago suggested that the core of the Roman *Canon missae* accords with the teaching of Cyprian that the eucharist is made by doing and saying what Christ did and said, namely, recitation of the institution narrative, and that the text of the narrative in the Canon is mainly from the Old Latin (African) of St Matthew. In such a theology there is no need for a calling on the Holy Spirit. Ratcliff and others referred to the *Canon missae* as Romano-African. It is a pity that this and other possible influences of the Latin-speaking African Church on the Latin-speaking Roman Church are not explored. Likewise, though the importance of the Old Latin Bible is mentioned, that too is left undiscussed. Perhaps, though, this study lays the groundwork for others to explore those links and influences. This is a well-researched study, with 153 plates, and may be regarded as the current authority on this topic.

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Porphyry in fragments. Reception of an anti-Christian text in late antiquity. By Ariane Magny. (Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity.) Pp. xvii + 183. Farnham–Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. £60. 978 1 4094 4115 1
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A hundred years ago, Adolf von Harnack finished his 'Reconstruction of Porphyry's 15 Books Against the Christians. *Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate* [testimonials, fragments and reports]'. For decades, this book has been used as the standard edition of Porphyry's anti-Christian work, often without proper regard to Harnack's cautious title which was supposed to make the reader aware of the patristic, often polemical context from which these fragments were recovered. Since its publication, Porphyry had become famous not only as the most important neo-Platonist after Plotinus, but also as ancient Christianity's fiercest critic, a sentiment that had already been expressed by the ancient Fathers. However, in 1973 Timothy Barnes launched a serious attack on Harnack's edition ('Porphyry against the Christians: date and attribution of fragments', *JTS* n.s. xxiv [1973], 424–42), and there have been a number of attempts since to provide a more reliable basis for research into Porphyry's criticism of ancient Christianity, the most recent being Matthias Becker's de Gruyter edition