doi:10.1017/S0009640711000771

"Let the Little Children Come to Me": Childhood and Children in Early Christianity. By **Cornelia B. Horn** and **John W. Martens**. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009. xv + 438 pp. $44.95 paper.

Horn and Martens provide their readers with an expansive and richly documented work that should be useful to anyone interested in the study of children and childhood, especially children situated in antiquity. The comprehensive bibliography alone (including a multitude of primary and secondary sources) makes this a useful work. It certainly sets a high standard for the depth of research in this important subfield.

In the body of the work, the authors situate the experience of Christian children, and Christian thought about childhood, in the larger Greco-Roman world of late antiquity. With this background, they examine Christian texts from the first six centuries of Christianity to provide a work which they consider "seminal and foundational" (ix). To answer their central question about the difference Christianity made to children, the authors separate their material into eight topics. After describing conceptions of children in antiquity and the use of the phrase "Child of God" by Christians to conceptualize the status of all Christians, the authors lay out how Christian children experienced Christian households, played and worked, escaped some violence, worshiped, and, in some cases, lived ascetically.

Christianity was socially dislocating in the first centuries, Horn and Martens argue. The conversion of individuals often led to mixed households with differing priorities. Non-Christians often charged Christians with targeting children and women and thus disturbing a society in which the father (or grandfather) ruled the family. In addition, because of the demands of Christian theology that called for commitment to the family of God above one's biological family, children often found themselves torn between submitting to their earthly father and devoting themselves to a heavenly one.

In many respects children in Christian households shared the same experiences that non-Christian children did. The education system might have been very similar, with religious instruction being an additional component of study for Christian children. In matters of violence, play, ritual duties, and asceticism, however, Christian children appear to have had different opportunities.

Children connected with Christian homes did not face exposure, violent death, abuse, or sexual exploitation like those in the rest of the ancient world. Based on Jewish criticism of these practices, Christians attempted to prevent violence toward their children as well as to the slave children they owned. One area of violence that Christians did not protect children from

appears to be martyrdom. The records indicate that not only did some children die because they were Christians, but also Christian children faced losing family members to martyrdom. The authors argue that overall, however, Christian attitudes toward violence directed at children did substantially alter their lives.

The authors also claim that Christianity made a difference in children's play. While there are indications (as well as suppositions) that Christian children played games that were similar to the ones played by the non-Christians around them, many of those games were associated with Greek or Roman deities. Christians often reconceptualized toys and games to provide instruction in Christianity, making play serve as an opportunity for education. Christian children also role-played worship services, mimicking what they saw the adults do.

The ascetic and celibate lives were also introduced as options. Sometimes a life of celibacy and devotion was the decision of a child's parents, but it appears that sometimes children voluntarily chose to commit themselves to an ascetic lifestyle. Choosing to disregard the societal pressure toward marriage and family, however, was not a choice free from opposition and difficulty. Christians developed complex regulations regarding who could and could not decide whether a child was going to be an ascetic. (Here it is surprising that in a comprehensively documented work the authors do not include Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988].)

The main disappointment of this work lies not in the abilities of the authors but in the lack of sources. Not surprisingly, children in antiquity had different experiences based on status and gender. Male and female children had different experiences and different expectations. Slave and free children also differed. The experiences and expectations preserved in ancient sources, however, are primarily those of free male children. Quite frequently the authors must extrapolate what might have been for female and slave children. In addition, the paucity of sources extends to what can be said about *Christian* children. The predominant available resources are manuals on how children should act or hagiographic records of supposedly exceptional children. Often the authors must qualify that there is little that they can positively say about how Christian children actually acted. While it is acceptable for scholars to acknowledge the limits of their sources, the authors often fill in that space with what can be determined from wider Greco-Roman accounts. This contextualization is certainly valuable, but several places in the text present difficulties in determining whether we should conclude that Christians followed the non-Christian practice or offered an alternative.

Despite the limitations of the source material, Horn and Martens provide a work that is useful for courses on either children and religion or Christianity in antiquity. It will serve as a valuable foundation for additional research.

Todd M. Brenneman
University of Central Florida

doi:10.1017/S0009640711000783

The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity. Edited by **Andrew Cain** and **Noel Lenski**. Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009. xviii + 464 pp. $134.95 cloth.

This useful volume offers twenty-eight papers on religion and power in late antiquity—well-trodden territory for scholars of the late ancient world. The editors of this collection, however, should be commended for assembling a set of essays that, together, encourage a reassessment of power and religion across a range of subfields in late ancient studies. Individually, the essays are well researched and represent significant contributions to late ancient social, political, cultural, and religious history.

The editors identify Foucaultian and recent postcolonial discourse analysis as the theoretical touchstones of the collection. While Foucault's work has figured productively in late ancient studies for the past four decades, postcolonial insights have invigorated late ancient studies more recently. We can see the influence of this trend in the collection's stress on locating "religion and power" in the context of various boundaries and borders. Two sections of essays explore religion along the western and eastern frontiers of the later Roman Empire; other sections consider literary frontiers between the classical and post-classical, Neoplatonic negotiations of boundaries between the profane and sacred, and the limits of ecclesiastical and secular power. These essays were originally presented at the biennial Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference, though all have clearly been expanded and revised. The essays are grouped thematically into eight sections. This method makes the collection especially useful; a collection of essays on a topic as broad as "religion and power" could easily make for a disconnected read. The thematic format asks the reader to consider resonances and dissonances among the essays on a given theme. Each group of essays, in effect, offers an entry point into various current topics in late ancient studies. Indeed,