sovereigns and Roman bishops would seem to matter greatly. Without such a master narrative, it is difficult to justify the inclusion of this survey in a collection of essays about Christianization.

This volume, appearing in a series whose texts, translations, commentaries, and collected essays are seldom reviewed in English-language periodicals, can be recommended for traditional patristic philology, up-to-date Italian bibliography, and insight into a particular school of late antique and early medieval studies. It is worth reading as a report of work in progress.

The Catholic University of America WILLIAM E. KLINGSHIRN
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CONVERSION—A SOCIAL PROCESS

K. MILLS, A. GRAFTON (edd.): *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Seeing and Believing.* Pp. xii + 283, map, ills. Rochester, NY and Woodbridge: University of Rochester Press, 2003. Cased, £50, US$75. ISBN: 1-58046-125-5.

While in no way detracting from its excellence and importance, the structure of this book appears at first a little puzzling. Drawn (save in one instance) from a seminar organized by Susanna Elm and Peter Brown at Princeton's Shelby Cullum Davis Center in late 1999, the collection does have a unity, reflecting the Center's broader theme for the period 1999–2001, 'Conversion: Sacred and Profane'. There is also a companion volume, which complements this one, in its theoretical models as well as its fields of inquiry: *Conversion: Old Worlds and New* (published in the same year by the same press under the same editors).

The puzzle resides in a lack of guidance to the reader. The brief two-page 'Introduction' does identify two major emphases that come (it transpires) to characterize the book as a whole: the impact of 'gradual and incomplete social processes' (of greater moment than the inner intensity that 'conversion' so often suggests) and the way in which 'officially prescribed Christianity comes up against the limits of its ability to steer converts and dictate the terms of their belief and practice' (p. ix). Otherwise, the editors are happy to leave a fuller summary or survey to what is here the final essay, by Neil McLynn. They refer to this as 'an afterword that renders much in the way of introductory words to this book unnecessary'. They admit that it might have served as an introduction, but they were swayed, it appears, by the fact that the essay 'began as an oral commentary and retains the nature of a concluding set of thoughts'.

The tactic is not entirely successful. One cannot read McLynn's paper first: it would neither make complete sense nor invite a just assessment. Yet, it is frustrating to have to leave it meanwhile, knowing that it hits the major nails on the head. That frustration is compounded by the fact that the individual contributors scarcely refer to one another (always a useful feature in a collection of this sort, albeit based on a species of wisdom after the event); they betray no clear sense of what they are contributing to.

Nevertheless, McLynn's reflections are worth waiting for. He tackles his task with characteristic flair; with clarity, humour, detail, and breadth. This is a particularly sophisticated example of what we have learned to expect from McLynn's understanding of the period. The essay is likely to become one of those landmark,

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golden inquiries that will be essential reading for many years. It feeds upon the other contributions, but enhances the value of the collection as a whole. While skilfully playing paper against paper, to everyone's advantage, McLynn carries us to further and broader reflections. As one would expect, his sharp eye is focused most on the fractured character of the evidence. A single 'conversion' could be at once hesitant, conditional, independent, and multiple in its commitment: one could be converted to several things and yet not wholly converted to any of them; and one was not governed closely by other people's expectations (which were themselves various). Gone, in other words, is the notion of a single arena for the convert, a single etiquette, a single model. The pleading of an often harassed party—the clergy—and the insistent demands of literary *genres* are restored to their proper and often exposed or challenged position within the more complicated and competitive 'processes' of late Roman society. 'Conversion' had just as little vigour or simplicity as the groups who advocated and experienced it.

None of that calls into question the outstanding quality of the other papers. One may wonder why Susanna Elm (on Gregory of Nazianzus) comes before Rebecca Lyman (on Justin Martyr); but Elm's interest is centred on baptism, and she shows how insecure a preacher like Gregory might be, when explaining and recommending so central a component of Christian commitment. She also starts a hare that bounds through the rest of the book, by distinguishing between an individual's experience of baptism and the ritual programme erected by others to prompt and control it. 'Experience' is, in any case, an undefined description: Elm emphasizes the extent to which the newly baptized were committing themselves above all to a new view of the cosmos and of their place within it.

Rebecca Lyman, taking her cue from Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, treats Justin as a colonial come to town, bringing to Rome both an Asian's restricted discontent and an Asian's loyalty. He at once resembled and disavowed; at once transcended the local and defended it. Lyman, always careful in the structure of her arguments, makes the point succinctly in an early remark: 'As an "apologist" [Justin] did not translate an existing "religion" into another "culture" for explanation and defense as often assumed, but reflects an attempt within Roman Hellenism as an Asian provincial to address contemporary problems of religious authenticity and cultural multiplicity' (p. 38). She writes elsewhere of 'a reconfiguring within the culture itself' (p. 48). So much for being converted *to* Hellenism and then *from* Hellenism.

Éric Rebillard is brief and more restricted, but with similar results. The surprising but unavoidable sight of the Christian dead being happily laid beside those of other faiths, including Jews, provokes at once the question of how boundaries among the living were defined and defended. Rebillard's main contention is that families counted for more than corporations—a point that reflects on the ability of the Christian churches to enforce a broader view of identity. The world was at once more clannish and more disordered.

Richard Lim seems very particular, in that he plays chiefly with accounts of conversion starring actresses and other undesirables. However, we meet once again the anxiety of the clergy to organize and define a process that others seek to take on their own terms. In what is a later period, we also detect how the task of conversion (if it can be so simplified) had shifted gradually to a need to Christianize those already ostensibly Christian. A contentious desire to hang on to old patterns of entertainment could now be recognized as a contention *among* Christians. Among the items of the argument was the status of baptism, which reminds one of Susanna Elm's analysis.

Raymond Van Dam offers a useful account of the different interpretations attaching

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to Constantine's Christianity. Eusebius is at once the chief informer and the chief deceiver. However, Van Dam is anxious to demonstrate Constantine's own control of his image, and to prove in the process how prone he was to conversions, undergoing or contriving several. The emperor was liberated, therefore, from the clerical agenda, and provided his successors, in a veritable swirl of developing mythology, with their own models of how to keep expectations at bay.

Michael Maas brings us suitably to Justinian, and mines Procopius above all for evidence of a changing ethnography of otherness and similarity. As in the case of Rebecca Lyman's Justin, the question was how (like the Tzani of the Taurus foothills) one could elevate oneself to the level of imperial culture without ceasing to be what one was—an issue made additionally complex when any such move involved an acceptance of Christianity on Justinian's terms. Solutions revolved around a distinction between *diaita* and *ēthos*. While neither species of 'custom' was automatically compatible with the religious expectations of the empire, the shade of difference between them (one more social, perhaps, the other more personal) might allow alliance without imposing either absorption or denial of self.

Finally, we have Julia Smith's expedition into the world of Einhard. At the heart of her inquiry lies competition between the courtly and the clerical: both wish to assist in and define the régime's drive to 'emend' what is already a Christian society; and both do so by prompting and orchestrating veneration for the relics of martyrs. Two dialogues are thus exposed: one among the élite themselves, the other between the élite and the broader population. Just as startling as the rivalry among the powerful is the variety among the populace. While their betters jostle for the control of policy, the people—local peasants, eager pilgrims, chance passers-by—invest the objects of devotion with a range of enthusiasms somewhat distant from the preoccupations of Aachen.

What will be drawn chiefly from this exciting collection? Probably, an awareness that Arthur Darby Nock is definitively dethroned. It is no longer acceptable to interpret conversion as a predominantly psychological and individual event. The circumstances of conversion varied, models (especially written models) competed, expectations were often narrow, and commitment was neither immediate nor total. What made that the case was the social context within which conversions were played out; a context not only divided among quarrelling parties but not even always particularly religious. Total abandonment of one's past is rarely convenient and often unstable; yet a culture can change as its inhabitants adapt to fashion and advantage.

Catholic University of America PHILIP ROUSSEAU
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SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

J. W. Drijvers, J. W. Watt (edd.): *Portraits of Spiritual Authority. Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient*. (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 137.) Pp. xiii + 227. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1999. Cased, US$75. ISBN: 90-04-11459-9.

This volume presents revised versions of ten papers delivered at a workshop in Cardiff in May 1998: Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Rewriting Early Christian History:

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