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VAN WAARDEN, *WRITING TO SURVIVE. A COMMENTARY ON SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS, LETTERS BOOK 7. VOLUME 1: THE EPISCOPAL LETTERS 1–11 (Late Antique History and Religion 2)* . Leuven: Peeters, 2010. Pp. ix + 659, map. isbn 9789042923201. €85.00.

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emperor out of pastoral concern; also, once emperors began attending church, they became vulnerable to pastoral critique (53–4).

Part Two surveys Ambrose's ecclesiastical career, with an emphasis on his ascetic treatises and his interaction with imperial authorities. His ascetic treatises emphasized celibacy, which he required of his clergy (66). L. observes that asceticism must have been an especially appealing topic for Ambrose and Chrysostom because it was 'theologically neutral ground' for Nicene and *Homoian* Christians (71, 140). In his account of priestly duties, Ambrose includes resistance to authority when the laws of God are at stake. His sermons teach that kings must accept criticism from priests, or face exclusion from church and salvation (82–3, 91–4). Ambrose followed these instructions when he resisted imperial demands. When Valentinian II and his mother, Justina, asked for a church for the *Homoians*, he refused (85–9). In his most famous act of outspokenness, Ambrose required the emperor Theodosius to repent for the massacre in Thessalonica (89–91). Although nothing like this had happened before or would happen again, the authority of the Church over the emperor was brought out of the realm of theory and into reality.

The section on Chrysostom begins with a background chapter on asceticism in Syria and Mesopotamia, where an even greater emphasis on celibacy and a wide variety of ascetic lifestyles prevailed. The following chapters focus on Chrysostom's early life and writings, many of which deal with asceticism. L. compares Chrysostom vividly to a 'student radical' who hoped to convince ordinary Christians to embrace asceticism (139). After gaining pastoral experience, Chrysostom remained idealistic, but developed more empathy for laypeople (177–84; 199). His writings propose that priests hold authority over rulers (148–52; 216–17). His career shows that he lived according to this precept. L. provides a lengthy account of Chrysostom's conflict with the imperial court (ch. 15). Standing his ground, Chrysostom refused a Gothic general's request for a church for the Arians. Later, when faced with a powerful empress, Chrysostom criticized her greed and vanity despite her power to retaliate against him.

In his conclusions, L. summarizes his comparisons of the two men: both were educated men who were raised by single mothers and drawn to the ascetic life (251–4). Both wrote treatises on the duties of priesthood and both acted on these beliefs with varying measures of success. Their similarities resulted in large part from the unity of Christian culture in East and West at this time. L. argues persuasively that Ambrose's success and Chrysostom's failure to wield authority over emperors were due to the different political situations rather than to the differences in their personalities (257–61). While there is no proof that Chrysostom read anything by Ambrose, L. suggests that Chrysostom was likely influenced by Ambrose's refusal to provide a church for *Homoian* Christians (5, 89, 229, 240, 261–4).

This book contributes to current scholarship on bishops in Late Antiquity. L. convincingly argues that these two famous Church Fathers were products of their times in their asceticism, their advice for laypeople, and their complex relationships with imperial authorities. The main weakness of this book is the structure: the seventeen short chapters are not all clearly related to the main themes of the book (especially chs 7, 13 and 17). L. acknowledges in the introduction that the book is lopsided in Chrysostom's favour, but one would still expect, for example, an introductory chapter on Western asceticism as a counterpart to the chapter on Syrian and Mesopotamian asceticism.

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J. A. VAN WAARDEN, *WRITING TO SURVIVE. A COMMENTARY ON SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS, LETTERS BOOK 7. VOLUME 1: THE EPISCOPAL LETTERS 1–11* (Late Antique History and Religion 2). Leuven: Peeters, 2010. Pp. ix + 659, map. ISBN 9789042923201. €85.00.

Sidonius Apollinaris is many things to late antique historians: senatorial eyewitness to fifth-century turmoil; emblematic case of Christianization (the Urban Prefect of Rome who would become bishop of Clermont-Ferrand); spokesman for a southern Gallic aristocracy coming to terms with barbarian rulers. Partly as a result of Jill Harries' seminal study of his career in *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome* (1994), Sidonius has become a central figure in any number of weighty late antique debates. Johannes van Waarden's commentary on Book 7 of his letters is a valuable addition to the recent scholarship on Sidonius, not least because it steps back from these grand historiographical themes to consider Sidonius' literary output on its own terms.

It is a shame that van W. had to restrict himself to a general introduction (1–68), as his insights into the text open up numerous profitable lines of enquiry for a book-length treatment. After setting the scene (1–4), van W. sketches out the biographical, historical, and ecclesiastical contexts of the letters, drawing upon recent historiography (4–30). The concise explorations of epistolography (30–52) and lateantique literary style (52–66) which follow are particularly useful. Themes which recur across the commentary (opening sentences; uses of different forms of ‘you’ and ‘I’; stylistic patterning) are briefly and elegantly summarized. Van W. is surely right to stress that the use of rhetoric and formalized prose should not be considered ‘empty’ or divorced from reality (62–6 and e.g. 339, 359, 362–3). He also makes clear his debt to Harries in his analysis of Sidonius’ ‘coded communication’ and ‘allusive technique’ (39), while prudently noting the danger that he, as a critic, might indulge in ‘excessive subtlety’ (40). Van W. is generally successful in avoiding this pitfall, although his attempt to discern thematic coherence in Book 7 (41–4) as a sort of ‘unity in diversity’ (38), while ingenious, is not entirely convincing. It is not always obvious what this pursuit of ‘unity’, as a single authorial programme, adds up to — particularly given Sidonius’ range of messages and registers, which van W. brings out so well throughout.

The commentary (69–562) serves both as an introduction and guide to this group of letters and, read as a whole, the raw materials for a compendium of late antique Latin literary style. Van W. is particularly adept at teasing out the dual contexts of the letters: the time of their original composition, and their placement in a published volume. So, the chronologically earlier *Ep.* 7.10 to Graecus of Marseille becomes an apology for the blunt *Ep.* 7.7 (see the comments at 534 and 546); the address from the election of Simplicius of Bourges, attached to *Ep.* 7.9, is published as a manifesto for the ideal noble-bishop (433–4); and the light-hearted *Ep.* 7.2 acts as a distorting mirror for aspects of *Ep.* 7.7 (337–8) and *Ep.* 7.9 (442).

Of course, an effective commentary needs to provide both the full ten-course ‘Gallic table’ (1) and easy access to individual gobbets. In this regard, the commentary is a qualified success. For each clause, van W. clearly sets out the basis for his interpretation and how it might differ from those of previous scholars. The reader is steered carefully through Sidonius’ syntax, rhetorical figures, and the various potential meanings and connotations of his words; plentiful comparanda are also presented as guides. Nevertheless, a running English translation (promised at 1, but not consistently carried out) could have made the commentary more user-friendly. Often the reader is left to piece together the final translation for themselves across numerous paragraphs.

One aspect which perhaps deserved sustained analysis is that of the relationship between Sidonius’ literary persona as a preserver of Roman culture and his contemporary circumstances. Van W. takes seriously the turmoil of the 460s and 470s, and its potential to disrupt the livelihood of the Gallo-Roman elite (10–16): ‘sooner or later, economic instability and precarious safety forced everyone to decide on the future’ (15). Thus, Sidonius’ rhetoric of ‘writing to survive’, the commentary’s leitmotif, is taken as an understandable and justifiable response to historical circumstances. But this sits uneasily with the commentator’s valid concern to present Sidonius the artful literary operator, self-consciously (re-)shaping his presentation of recent events (39–40). This tension is evident in the introduction to letter 7.7, where the socio-economic impact of the fifth and sixth centuries on Gaul is suddenly downplayed: ‘the one plausible answer seems to be that Sidonius’ alarming picture reflects not so much the historical reality as his own frustration ... In all probability, there was no economic crisis in Southern Gaul before the seventh century’ (336; but cf. 377 ‘some had to face execution, and quite a few economic ruin’ — on the same letter). There are various ways through this juxtaposition of Sidonius’ writings and his immediate context; van W. could usefully have signalled his own route from the start.

The great merit of van W.’s commentary derives from its sustained effort to explicate Sidonius’ letters in their original literary context. Recent work in the burgeoning field of late antique epistolography has consistently stressed the necessity of reading the composition of letters and collation of collections as a means of authorial self-presentation. In van W.’s hands, this approach has borne significant fruit.

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