



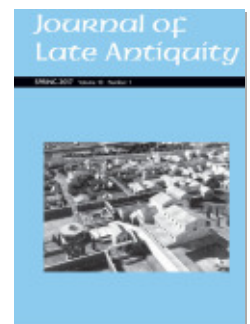
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*Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic
Politics* by Noel Lenski (review)

David Woods

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(Review)

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would seem overwhelmingly to confirm the suspicion that Origen's *Contra Celsum* provided a pervasive intertext in the *Contra Christianos*.

Becker provides a much firmer basis for reconstructions of Porphyry's anti-Christian arguments than any previous edition. While this reviewer wishes that Becker had included the Macarian material in the section of dubia, students of Porphyry may use this collection as the standard by which to evaluate any possible connections to Porphyry in the thought or wording of the later anonymous material. It replaces all previously published collections of the fragments: Harnack's, Muscolino's updated Harnack (in Italian translation), Berchman's, and that of the Spanish team headed by Ramos Jurado.

For the sake of full transparency, the reviewer notes that he has met the author and encouraged him in the present project.

***Constantine and the Cities:
Imperial Authority and
Civic Politics***

NOEL LENSKI

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. x + 406. ISBN 978-0-8122-4777-0.

Reviewed by David Woods
(University College Cork)

Lenski is familiar to students of the reign of Constantine I (306–337) as the author of a number of insightful papers on this period and the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (2006). Hence the present volume represents the mature work of someone who has immersed himself in the vast array of complicated primary materials—archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic as well as literary—and mastered the ever

growing volume of secondary material before offering his own contribution to the field. The result is a volume that convincingly analyses the interactions between Constantine and the cities of the empire, focussing upon the emperor's varied efforts to convert these to Christianity and their different responses to the same. However, a warning is necessary. Lenski reserves his detailed treatment of the relations between Constantine and the two major imperial cities of Rome and Constantinople for another volume, so while they do occasionally receive mention they do not dominate in the way that one might otherwise expect.

The introduction attempts to justify what follows in the sort of tiresome theory that is best ignored. No one should let the pseudo-technical jargon (“pre-reflective knowledge”!) therein deter him or her from continuing into what is actually a well-written, highly accessible text. After the introduction, the book divides into four parts. The first part, “Constantine's Self-Presentation,” consists of three chapters and focusses on the messages communicated from the emperor to the cities through various official channels. In chapter one, Lenski argues that Constantine's self-presentation went through four successive phases, emphasizing in turn his qualities as tetrarch, tyrannicide, champion of Christianity, and divine ruler. In chapter two, he argues that there were four constants in Constantine's self-presentation, which he identifies as Constantine's use of symbols of light, emphasis on the victorious nature of his rule, his constant receipt of divine favour, and his role as a member of a dynasty rather than as an isolated individual. Finally, in chapter three, Lenski analyses how Constantine presented himself to his Christian subjects in the various communications directed particularly at them.

The second part, “The Power of Petitions,” consists of four chapters analysing the communication flow in the opposite direction, from the cities to Constantine. In chapter four, Lenski describes the traditional system of petition and response between city and emperor in order to demonstrate that the system had evolved by the fourth century so that emperors were now encouraging petitions that would further their own policy objective. This argument proceeds through discussion of the dossier of documents preserved at Orcistus in Phrygia, which demonstrate that the leaders of Orcistus knew which policy buttons to press in order to win their request. In chapter five, Lenski analyses the exchange between Constantine and Italian Hispellum in order to demonstrate Constantine’s sensitivity to what was possible in a very different context and highlight his willingness to compromise in order to advance his long-term religious objective. In the next chapter, Lenski examines the nature of Constantine’s relationships with cities in the West bearing his name, or that of some member of his family, in order to discover why these cities were so honored. In chapter seven, he performs the same exercise for cities of the East bearing Constantine’s name or that of a family member. He concludes that Constantine probably promoted all cities so honoured because of the strength of the Christian community within them and as part of a wider policy of strengthening Christian communities against hostile neighbours wherever possible.

The third part, “Reconstructing the Ancient City,” consists of three chapters analysing the main methods by which Constantine sought to promote the Christianization of the cities. In chapter eight, Lenski examines the redistribution of wealth from temple to church,

that is, Constantine’s confiscation of the landed estates and movable wealth of the temples and his transfer of these, or their revenues, to local churches. In the next chapter, he describes the massive program of church-building that Constantine promoted throughout the empire, although the main focus is on Rome and Palestine. Finally, in chapter ten, he surveys the legal privileges granted to bishops, which eventually resulted in their becoming the dominant figures in their cities. These privileges included the right to act as judges in civil cases, the right to use the public post system, and exemption from curial service.

In the fourth part, “Alternative Responses to Constantine,” Lenski investigates resistance to Constantine’s message, observing how some communities managed to resist his efforts to Christianize them without provoking a harsh response, while others, a small minority, received more severe treatment. In chapter eleven, he surveys the archaeological and epigraphic evidence to show how many cities—Termessus, Sagalassus, Lepcis Magna, and Paestum—emphasized their loyalty to Constantine but also stressed those elements of his propaganda that best suited their situations. In particular, Lenski emphasizes the importance of picking the right patron to intercede with Constantine. Chapter twelve examines the limits of Constantine’s toleration, emphasizing his use of physical force against a limited number of pagan sites of worship at Jerusalem, Mamre, Aegae, Aphaca, and Heliopolis. In chapter thirteen, Lenski explores Constantine’s changing responses to Christian resistance to his religious policies, focussing on the Donatists in North Africa. Finally, chapter fourteen examines Constantine’s response to the challenges posed to his policies by the large, religiously diverse

populations of Antioch and Alexandria, highlighting how he acted with due regard to what was practical without provoking bitter urban riots.

The immediate response to this volume has to be admiration of the author's knowledge of the sources, primary and secondary. It is likely that many readers will never have heard of the Misurata hoard of coins, let alone know that it contains "a new coin type from Ostia datable to 313 depicting a divine hand reaching down from heaven to defend the emperor in battle" (56, a pity that there is no photograph of this). Similarly, the statues of Constantine from Termessus and Lepcis Magna (213–14, 217–18) are now drawn to the attention of a wider readership. Disagreements over minor details or points of interpretation are possible, but these seldom affect the larger arguments. For example, one could argue that Lenski takes too seriously the accusations of ritual prostitution made against the shrines at Aphaca and Heliopolis (245) considering that allegations of sexual misconduct were a standard feature of religious polemic. It is also difficult to reconcile the claim that the Lateran *Basilica Constantiniana* in Rome, work upon which began in late 312, was "outfitted with wealth, at least some of which must have been derived directly from the spoils of Constantine's encroachments on civic and temple finances" (183) with the evidence that Jerome specifically dates the "subversion" of the temples to around 330 (171) and that the estates bestowed upon this church were all located "in Italy, Africa, and Greece" (183), that is, in the territories controlled by Constantine before 324. Otherwise, there seem to be few, if any, factual errors, although some slight confusion between the term *labarum* as used of the military standard

bearing the new Constantinian symbol and the name of this new symbol itself hinders immediate comprehension in that instance (9–11).

In conclusion, this book, well-illustrated with high quality photographs, maps, and diagrams, synthesizes a huge amount of primary and secondary material to produce a highly readable argument on an important subject. The picture that emerges is one of Constantine as a sincere but practical Christian who realized that he could not convert the whole empire immediately without provoking significant, possibly even violent, resistance, and therefore wisely accepted the limitations of his situation. If one attempts to situate Lenski's Constantine among the range of "modern Constantines" as described in the introduction (4–6), then he probably sits somewhere between those of N.H. Baynes and T.D. Barnes. Lenski's main point, however, is that it was possible for Constantine's contemporaries to create their own image of Constantine, and that Constantine let them do so as long as these constructions represented a move towards a Christian state. There was never an essential Constantine, at least not one that he cared to reveal to his empire at large.

Treasure in Heaven: The Holy Poor in Early Christianity

PETER BROWN

Richard Lectures for 2012

Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016. Pp. xxv + 162. ISBN 9780813938288.

Reviewed by Susan R. Holman
(Harvard University)

Few scholars have traced the nuances between power dynamics of wealth and ideas of the sacred in late antique Christianity with the creativity, persuasive