

The mantle of Cyril is seldom claimed anymore, yet there is still conversation and debate about the nature of Jesus Christ. Thus, Patrick Gray's final sentence in his monograph, "So it continues."

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***Schützende Heilige des lateinischen Westens (370–600 n. Chr.).***  
By Jan Seehusen. Beiträge zur Hagiographie 24. Stuttgart: Franz  
Steiner Verlag, 2021. 351 pp. 62.00 € paper.

In this thoroughly researched and meticulous tome, Jan Seehusen proposes a new typology of protector-saints who emerged ca. 370–600 CE in Latin Western Europe, as centered on Gaul. This category extends beyond the longest-rooted classifications of sanctity that defined some of the earliest saints and continued to appear in *vitae* and martyrologies, such as martyrs, virgins, or offices like bishops and abbots, and in fact, it is not contemporary. Nevertheless, Seehusen argues convincingly that the type of saint recurs, drawing it from a carefully selected corpus of 28 hagiographical texts. These feature some well-known saints such as Martin, Ambrose, Genevieve, and Radegund, and were written by luminaries such as Jerome, Sulpicius Severus, Venantius Fortunatus, and Gregory the Great, though these texts and authors were never considered previously with this focus. The forms of protection holy men and women could offer to endangered Roman citizens boiled down to serving as emissaries to negotiate for them; guarding those in danger of life and limb, especially against the invasions of "barbarian" armies (here referred to more delicately by the newly coined term *Gentilheeren*) but also the ravages of poverty and hunger, or releasing people from captivity. Seehusen views these saints as filling a role once held by pagan Roman patrons to their clients, in that they addressed certain material and physical needs, but Christian patrons had the additional benefit of providing supernatural aid. While both varieties of patrons could arrange to supply hungry populations with food, saints could multiply bread for them in imitation of Jesus' example. They ransomed captives with money but also released prisoners miraculously as with Paul. Further, they were able to pave the way to salvation.

One of the most noteworthy arguments here is the gendered nature of the way these saints were envisioned, as embodied by Genevieve. She became famous for having defended Paris against the attacks of the Huns, but as a woman lacked any official position like bishop. This opened her up to charges of being a pseudo-prophet and exposed her to death threats. In such an ambiguous position, she needed to fall back on her personal asceticism to advance her cause, as well as the legitimation provided by male authority figures who provided support.

Seehusen's work is a lightly revised version of his doctoral research, and the monograph shares all the strengths and weaknesses of German dissertations. It is rigidly organized, exhaustive, copiously footnoted, and it contains a close reading of sources useful to scholars interested in the lives on which he touches. Yet it is often tedious and

repetitive, and most of its original findings could have been compressed into a long article. Too many of the chapters have information that will appear uncontroversial to those who study saints, and they do not do enough to advance the author's novel arguments. At times, this leads into distracting digressions, such as one on the nature of history that engages with Herodotus and Thucydides (74–76). A few smaller points would profit from revision. Oddly, in one instance (18), the author confuses virginity and chastity.

This study was never intended as a quantitative analysis of saints in the period he chooses, such as in the research of André Vauchez, but I was left wanting more of a rough sense of what percentage of saints in this period could be classified as protectors. The impression one wins here is that they had become a standard model of sanctity, but it is hard to confirm that based on the book. And just why did some saints become holy protectors while others did not? Although generally Seehusen provides excellent references, there were a few cases in which looking at scholarship on saints' lives from a later period might provide more of a comparative basis. He mentions the tendency of hagiographers to rewrite saints' lives (61–62, 213–216), which in this case meant inserting references to the protective capacity of their subjects that did not appear in the original versions. This discussion would have benefited from scholars who looked at this topic from later in the Middle Ages, such as Robert Bartlett, Léopold Genicot, and Samantha Herrick. So, I concur with Seehusen's assertion that there was only so much one could do to rewrite saints' lives, but he might have done more to provide a concrete sense of the limits. It was surprising that Bartlett's magisterial *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) appears nowhere in this study.

One of the more difficult questions that this volume suggests is the reason that protective saints emerged in the late antique world. The obvious answer seems to be that they were needed in this period precisely because of some of the unsettled conditions that the Western Roman Empire faced as it dissolved; not a few of the saints' careers appear to be related to the military campaigns of those who invaded and sacked it. This line of argumentation would put Seehusen in agreement with scholars such as Bryan Ward-Perkins who think that recent scholars taking a page from Peter Brown have downplayed the destruction contemporaries faced. It is somewhat unexpected, then, that the author is instead very hesitant to press this claim, even though it would provide added relevance to the holy figures he studies. Instead he displaces the problem to a rhetorical level, claiming that the chaos in the lives demonstrates the Christian discourse of violence and, in reality, violence had never been absent from Roman life (226–230). This position jars badly with some of the frequent descriptions of armies and their ill effects that are referenced in the *vitae* he analyzes, and he should consider that there might be a difference in the extent and targets of violence in the later Roman world that was not true of the Empire at its height.

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