

more attention to intersectionality and global considerations. Moore writes well and there is no doubt that she is capable of engaging and informing a wide spectrum of readers.

Margaret Susan Thompson
Syracuse University

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John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching. By **David Rylaarsdam**. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. xxvi + 317 pp. \$105.00 cloth.

This is an excellent contribution to the current reassessment of John Chrysostom's writings. The author has perceived the importance to Chrysostom of the principle of "adaptability" or "accommodation" (*synkatabasis*) in his understanding of the way in which God deals with the human race and the way therefore in which Christians must witness to the Gospel with which they have been entrusted. The author offers a thorough and extremely helpful review of the extent to which the principle informed the oratory and pedagogy of the classical and late antique culture in which Christianity grew up in a relationship of occasionally fruitful rivalry. Chrysostom maintains, against the Eunomians, that while God (or at least the divine essence) cannot be known, the divine goodness has chosen to manifest itself in ways adapted or accommodated to the various conditions of the human race in the different times of its history: the supreme example of the adaptation to students practiced by all competent teachers. All teachers, from the master craftsman to the philosopher, seek to bring about some improvement in their pupils, and Chrysostom understands the divine dispensation as the great pedagogical project encompassing the human race throughout its history. He also sees the apostle Paul, the supremely accomplished imitator of God's pedagogy, as the model which he is to follow in his own ministry.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is its illustration of the extent to which the classical model of oratory and pedagogy influenced Chrysostom's assumptions about how God deals with humankind. God is the great Teacher, the supremely wise and skilled Educator, whose practice of adaptation displays a range of strategies perfectly suited to the varieties of human beings, their cultures, and their moral states. The book shows how well Chrysostom thought that Paul had learned this, and how determined he was to mold himself upon the apostle's example. His practice of adaptation in his homilies had as one of its chief purposes to encourage his listeners to adopt

the same techniques in presenting the Gospel message to others: to take into account the conditions that might influence their receptiveness. Their adaptation or accommodation was always to be informed by their imitation of the loving-kindness (*philanthrōpia*) which, as the author stresses, is the hallmark of God's communication with humankind, even when that communication is colored by the salutary severity which a Father must use with recalcitrant children who would be deaf to anything else.

A study as thoroughgoing as this one is will often prompt questions for further consideration. One such which occurs to the reviewer concerns the extent to which the classical model of the teacher as an instructor, in the use of words, influenced the assumptions which Chrysostom (and others) had about the way in which God deals with humankind. It is extremely unfortunate that almost all of Eunomius's writings have been lost, since, as the author notes (13–14), the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers, as well as Chrysostom's, was formed around the denial of his claim that humans can know the divine essence. The denial entails the counterclaim that the knowledge of God granted to people is a sheer grace, a supreme accommodation to the need for salvation. If Eunomius's writings setting out his theory of language had survived, we might be able to see why his opponents were so anxious to show why verbal communication about God was still possible, even if the divine essence was ineffable. The requirement that bishops be skilled in the use of language then becomes paramount: they must be able to judge what the scriptures are intended to communicate, and know how to pass that on to their flocks in language suited to them.

Hence the importance of the images evoked in teaching, as the author astutely elaborates in chapter six. Chrysostom's debt to monastic spirituality is never clearer than in his concern to train his flock in the discernment of the mental images which may help or hinder them in their progress in virtue. But here of course the limits of verbal communication come into view: it is one thing for the catechist to explain, however eloquently, what the water of baptism means, and another to feel that water as one is immersed in it. It is one thing to have explained to one what the Eucharist means, and another to eat and drink it. Both experiences, the verbal and the other, will result in or contribute to the mental images which help form the Christian identity.

This suggests another question, that of the extent to which Chrysostom was influenced by the classical model of pedagogy in his understanding of the role of the Christian teacher in the formation of the identity of his pupils. The philosophers belonging to his culture intended to bring their listeners to a better appreciation of their identity: of who and what they were in their world. If Chrysostom followed their model, then he might indeed have seen his ministry in connection with baptism as "identity construction" (220). For his revered master Paul, however, Christian identity was conferred, not

constructed, a sheer gift; not the realization of latent human potential, but the rejection of the old self and the assumption of the new, that of Christ. The water, as with the material elements in the other sacraments, communicates without words, and even the words are taken from the ritual and not devised by the minister's eloquence. This may raise the further question of how Chrysostom integrated into his overall ministry the sacramental elements which, however wordlessly, contributed to the formation of the mental images he considered so important to the building up of his flock.

Neither question is meant as criticisms of Rylaasrdam's work, which should encourage a reading of Chrysostom that is informed by a critical awareness of his intended audience.

Philip Amidon, SJ
Creighton University

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The Final Pagan Generation. By **Edward J. Watts.** Transformation of the Classical Heritage 53. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015. xvii + 327 pp. \$34.95 cloth.

Modern scholars write grandly about the consequential transformations of the later Roman empire, such as, most notably, the rise of Christianity and its churchmen. But were the later Romans themselves aware of living in an era of great transitions? In *The Final Pagan Generation*, Edward Watts examines the biographies of four celebrities from the fourth century. Their careers lead Watts to an intriguing response to the question about contemporary awareness. While these elites were indeed constantly adjusting their activities and values in response to immediate circumstances, the larger social transformations were not so substantial after all. Our macro-histories about great transformations do not coordinate well to their micro-biographies of stable expectations.

Most of Watts's chapters include parallel narratives. One focuses on the political and religious policies of emperors, from the Tetrarchs to Theodosius. The starting point is the ubiquity of temples, statues, and rituals devoted to the traditional pagan gods. In the 310s children still grew up "in a world that . . . always would be full of gods" (36). A hidebound educational system and the need for cooperation with local notables consistently tempered the personal disapproval and the legal penalties of Christian emperors. The emperors Valentinian and Valens hence did little to restrict traditional cults. "They were . . . to be the last emperors who shared this idea