

and more consistently comparative thematic chapters that cut across the regional boundaries and assess the consequences of the geographically-focused contributions for topics inherent in each of them: the uses and purposes of the past; narrative structures in historical discourse; patterns of periodisation and chronological arrangement; causation and standards of interpretation; the location and alignments of historical understanding on cognitive maps. But, given the magnitude of the enterprise, we should rest content with a coherent set of invariably highly informative and thoughtful, and in several cases genuinely incisive, studies which will hopefully challenge historians of historiography to engage in the kinds of comparisons just outlined.

LÁSZLÓ KONTLER

*Central European University, Budapest*

doi:10.1093/ehr/ceuo64

*Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great*, by Matthew Dal Santo (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2012; pp. 399. £75).

The topic of this book is a debate about the supernatural powers of saints and about the afterlife that took place during the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Chapters One and Two are devoted to Books II and IV of Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*. In the former of these books Gregory explains how the miracles and prophecies of saints come about, and in the latter he deals with the afterlife and the efficacy of masses for the dead. In both cases, Gregory formulates his theories in response to questions posed by an interlocutor named Peter, who highlights inconsistencies inherent in the roles traditionally attributed to saints and points to the absence of proof for the condition of the souls after death. In his analysis, Matthew Dal Santo argues that Peter's queries are not merely a literary device but reflect views that were held in Rome at the time and which Gregory felt the need to rebut. In order to corroborate his hypothesis, Dal Santo compares Gregory's *Dialogi* with a contemporary text from Constantinople, the treatise *De statu animarum post mortem* by Eustratius. This text is directed against people who argue that all souls are inactive after death and who therefore claim that in dreams and visions dead saints are impersonated by divine powers and that the ordinary dead do not profit from the masses said in their name. From this comparison, Dal Santo concludes that Gregory, Eustratius and their respective adversaries engaged in a Mediterranean-wide debate about the saints and the afterlife. In Chapters Three and Four, Dal Santo presents further evidence for this debate. First, he discusses references to doubt and disbelief in contemporary collections of miracles and saints' lives from the Roman East. He then shows that belief in the posthumous inactivity of souls was widespread in the Nestorian church of Mesopotamia, and discusses the consequences of such a belief for the understanding of the role of the saints.

Dal Santo's book provides an important corrective to the commonly held view that saints were an uncontested feature of social and religious life at the end of Late Antiquity. His thesis as such is not new, since it has already been formulated in articles by N. Constan and especially by G. Dagron. However, by gathering and analysing a much broader range of sources, Dal Santo has for the first time shown to a broader readership how widespread doubt and criticism was. His most important contribution is, without doubt, his thorough and thoughtful discussion of Gregory's *Dialogi*, with which he has transcended the boundaries between academic disciplines. Yet the broad scope of his study

also has drawbacks. One has the feeling that he is not always probing deeply enough. In Chapter Three, for example, he could have identified specific debates such as the question as to whether a saint can change the lifespan of a person. Further problems arise from his use of Eustratius' treatise in his chapters about Gregory's *Dialogi*. Eustratius' text as a whole only comes into view in a brief section at the beginning; later on it is only mentioned when it can furnish a parallel for one of Gregory's views. Accordingly the reader does not get a clear sense of the nature of Eustratius' treatise. Moreover, the parallels are not always as close as it seems from Dal Santo's discussions. Eustratius' treatise focuses on a much smaller range of topics and often discusses them in much less detail. A case in point is the relationship between saintly and divine power, which is a major theme of the *Dialogi* but is only mentioned in brief apologetic statements by Eustratius. Here one would have welcomed a discussion of the broader Eastern context, in particular the debate about the wills and activities of Christ. In one case the search for parallels results in a misinterpretation of Eustratius' text. Dal Santo claims that Peter's query whether the soul does not die with the body has a counterpart in the view of Eustratius' adversaries that the soul is to be identified with blood. A closer look reveals that the reference to blood is part of Eustratius' refutation. In order to prove that souls are active after death he points to Genesis, where Adam's blood calls for vengeance, and then has to counter the objection that Adam's blood cannot be identified with the immortal soul because it is corruptible.

Dal Santo seems aware of the insufficiency of Eustratius as a parallel text because he also draws on the treatise of Stephen Gobaros. However, a much more obvious choice would have been the *Questions and Answers* of Anastasius of Sinai and Pseudo-Athanasius. As Dagron has highlighted, these texts contain views about the afterlife such as the sleep of the soul and angelic impersonation that are very similar to those of Eustratius' adversaries. However, in his discussions of Gregory's *Dialogi* Dal Santo refers to them only in passing and he relegates an in-depth discussion to an appendix. This appendix contains an excellent analysis of the two texts, which shows their relevance for comprehending some of Gregory's arguments and which draws attention to the similarity of the format. Dal Santo justifies his decision not to discuss the *Questions and Answers* in the main part of his text by the time limits that he has set for his study. However, he goes well beyond these time limits in Chapter Four, which deals with the sleep of the souls of saints in the Nestorian church. The striking similarities between the Nestorian position and that of Eustratius' adversaries and the *Questions and Answers* call for an integrated discussion.

These criticisms should not detract from Dal Santo's achievement. With this book he has effectively challenged wide spread views about Late Antiquity and has prepared the ground for a paradigm change.

DIRK KRAUSMÜLLER

doi:10.1093/ehr/ceuo48

*Mardin Artuklu University, Mardin, Turkey*

*Begegnungen zwischen dem ostfränkisch-deutschen Reich und England (850–1100): Kontakte – Konstellationen – Funktionalisierung – Wirkungen*, by Andreas Bihrer (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2012; pp. 668. €82).

This book unfolds with a vignette. In 1062/66, Otloh of St Emmeran undertook to write a new life of Boniface, basing his text on the earlier life by Willibald of