



The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity

Edited by Andrew Cain, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA and Noel Lenski, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA



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Late Antiquity witnessed a dramatic recalibration in the economy of power, and nowhere was this more pronounced than in the realm of religion. The transformations that occurred in this pivotal era moved the ancient world into the Middle Ages and forever changed the way that religion was practiced. The twenty eight studies in this volume explore this shift using evidence ranging from Latin poetic texts, to Syriac letter collections, to the iconography of Roman churches and Merovingian mortuary goods. They range in chronology from the late third through the early seventh centuries AD and apply varied theories and approaches. All converge around the notion that religion is fundamentally a discourse of power and that power in Late Antiquity was especially charged with the force of religion.

The articles are divided into eight sections which examine the power of religion in literature, theurgical power over the divine, emperors and the deployment of religious power, limitations on the power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the use of the cross as a symbol of power, Rome and its transformation as a center of power, the power of religion in the barbarian west, and religious power in the communities of the east. This kaleidoscope of perspectives creates a richly illuminating volume that add a new social and political dimension to current debates about religion in Late Antiquity.

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