

standing social dynamics from the nature of the connections between members of a group at all social levels.” Studying the Honour of Richmond, she demonstrates how existing patterns of Anglo-Saxon estate structure were used to compile it. Ann Williams’s related article on the tenurial revolution reconsiders the Cambridgeshire vill of Abingdon Pigotts, whose patterns of tenure were thought to have been dismantled by the Normans. Through its underlying patterns of soke she successfully demonstrates that it was connected to vills in surrounding hundreds, and that the Normans used these existing structures when granting land to newcomers.

Roffe’s article on scribal devices analyzes the layout and letter forms of the GDB text, which show how the letters *M*, *S*, and *B*, denoting manors, sokes, and berewicks, used in circuit VI were later substituted for square initial capitals (for *M*) and rustic equivalents for subordinate entries (*S* and *B*). This argument, echoing Palmer, indicates that the scribe was developing a style to try to manage the information from a wide array of sources. Thorn’s article describes the attempted standardization of terms in GDB by the main scribe; for instance, by using a few Norman terms to categorize the peasantry and eschewing almost all Old English expressions. Andrew Lowerre discusses GIS databases and mapping software. He reviews existing versions and uses a combination of them to plot a range of data across four counties, attempting to answer the question of whether the Domesday inquest only concerned itself with geldable land—based on the small sample, the answer is no, but Lowerre is circumspect about these early results. Pamela Taylor investigates episcopal returns of the Domesday inquest. Apart from the well-known examples of Oswaldslow and Dorchester, she finds no other instances of bishops inserting their returns directly into GDB, thus little evidence that they “cooked the books”—even Lanfranc’s returns conform to county patterns of standardization. Harvey analyzes the name “Domesday,” suggesting that it was so called by the native English because of the trials they had to undergo (by water, fire, and battle) to prove their claim to land—such trials being very unusual and harsh in civil cases. This interpretation calls into question the consensual nature of the inquest argued by other scholars. Finally, Roffe advances his thesis that the Domesday inquest and book were separate enterprises: the former, a survey capturing information to aid King William’s defense of England from the threatened Danish invasion in 1085; the latter, a slightly later administrative exercise distilling the data of the inquest records, which could be used for several purposes.

This is a stimulating book, which meets its twofold aims. The divide between different scholars’ interpretations of the purpose and aims of GDB remains evident. Yet the articles within show that new approaches to long-standing problems are bearing fruit and have opened new avenues for further research.

HENRY FAIRBAIRN, Independent Scholar

BERND ROLING, *Physica sacra: Wunder, Naturwissenschaft, und historischer Schriftsinn zwischen Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*. (Mittellateinische Studien und Texte 45.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. x, 483. \$216. ISBN: 978-90-04-25804-4. doi:10.1086/693658

The history of exegesis is usually drawn as a history of progress. It is said to have gathered decisive momentum in the philology of sixteenth-century humanism, when the moralizing and allegorizing readings of the Middle Ages were abandoned and the conditions were set for the modern historicocritical approach. The present study aims at telling an alternative story. Based on Henri de Lubac and his finding that, throughout the ages, the *sensus historicus* remained the most persistent starting point and foundation of any lecture on the Bible (4), Roling investigates the continuity of a pool of patristic and, more importantly, medieval approaches that fed biblical exegesis well into the eighteenth century. In order to exemplify this continuity, he centers on the exegetical use of scientific resources for the con-

Speculum 92/4 (October 2017)

firmation of miracle stories: since, according to the *sensus historicus*, the miracles were largely read as historical accounts, they were not demystified by means of allegorical or moralizing readings, but in showing that the sciences at hand failed in giving naturalistic explanations, exegetes from the Middle Ages and far into the early modern era used them to underscore the inexplicable, and thus miraculous, side of these accounts.

This alliance of natural sciences and biblical hermeneutics is analyzed in five “diachronic microstudies” (7): focusing on miracle stories of the Old Testament, Roling investigates their scientific confirmation through the ages, and he chooses the five stories so as to liven up a wide range of scientific interlocutors. The first miracle, Balaam’s talking donkey that was wiser than his master (Numbers 22), challenged the common understanding of the difference and hierarchy between men and beasts, and since this difference was seen in man’s rationality that also accounted for his immortality, the story affected both psychology and theories of cognition. Yet, given that over the centuries theories about animal language continued to fail to explain the donkey’s behavior, regardless of whether they were Aristotelian or Cartesian, one particular solution persisted: as long as exegetes did not want to read this story as a parable, and as long as they did not want to assume that God overthrew the whole order of creation for Balaam’s talking donkey, they had to resort to what medieval commentators most prominently had promoted: namely that it was an angel that spoke. In the second story, the walls of Jericho (Joshua 7), whose well-orchestrated collapse challenged physics, the failure of natural explanations revealed a miraculous side that became even greater over the centuries: the more physical discoveries in geology or acoustics were unable to provide a satisfying naturalistic theory, the more the collapse became seen as increasingly miraculous. Similarly, in the third and probably most famous story of the swap between exegesis and sciences, the halting of the sun (Joshua 10), so eagerly discussed during the Galileo affair, the changing astrological paradigms and their ongoing failure to give a rational explanation did not affect, but confirmed, the miracle; and the same phenomenon appears in the medical loss of explanations for Nebuchadnezzar’s transformation (Daniel 4), where neither earlier accounts in the Galenic tradition nor later “psychiatric” theories about lycanthropy succeeded in explaining away the miracle. In the last study, about the zoological challenges presented by Jonah’s three day survival in a fish’s belly (Jonah 2), Roling illustrates in particular the productive side of this ongoing failure of the sciences: the mere possibility to ask whether the fish was a whale, a shark, or some other known species consolidated the historicity of the biblical account and thus strengthened its authenticity.

In each of these five studies Roling evaluates an amazing variety of exegetical sources. Starting in patristics, he then always consults both medieval Jewish and medieval Christian literature with, in particular, his favorite fifteenth-century biblical commentator Alonso Tostado, continues with early modern commentaries from the Catholic and the Lutheran camps, and extends his analyses far into the eighteenth century, when finally the literary approach of the Göttingen School retold the stories as fictional parables and put an end to the *sensus historicus*. Ironically, according to Roling’s findings, the fundamental break in the history of exegesis thus did not appear with early modern philology, which abandoned an allegedly medieval allegorical reading of scripture, but came precisely with the reintroduction of a parabolic reading in the Enlightenment. Thanks to the vast evidence adduced, Roling expertly succeeds in substantiating this alternative story of the history of exegesis. Yet, besides showing the continuity of medieval approaches into the eighteenth century, his study is also a treasury of ignored sources. Roling’s merit is not only to bring these sources into light, but also to demonstrate their relevance both for the history of biblical exegesis and, more importantly, for intellectual history in general. The huge bibliography (sixty pages) contains almost twice as many sources as studies and thus reflects both Roling’s accuracy and the lack of modern interest in these writings—it might therefore have been profitable if Roling had shared less of his subjects’ “delight in detail that almost appears pedantic” (8—is there a self-referential smile

in that phrase?) in favor of a bit more contextual information for those whose interest he has awakened. Even so, his study is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the intellectual history of premodern times and an important complement to the common history of exegesis.

Ueli Zahnd, University of Basel

E. M. ROSE, *The Murder of William of Norwich*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xii, 394; 15 black-and-white figures and 2 maps. \$27.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-021962-8. doi:10.1086/694012

E. M. Rose has undertaken to reconstruct the historical and ideological background of the twelfth-century events (or indeed nonevents) that inaugurated the European career of the blood libel, starting with ritual murder accusations against Jews in Norwich (1144), Gloucester (1168), Blois (1171), Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (1181), and Paris (1181). Over time, due to repetition, mention of such incidents became an important feature of martyr cults, informing successive national traditions. Considered somewhat fanciful, these accusations attracted little attention from scholars, who initially insisted that “there is ‘insufficient context for analysis’” or that “next to nothing is known of them” (236), and towards the end of the twentieth century scholarly interest dropped off altogether for unclear reasons. Rose conscientiously fills in the blanks. The result is a fascinating and detailed book about the “first tellers” of the blood libel stories, who, in Rose’s account, turn out to be not “kings or earls” or the “rural masses,” but “people of some substance, some education and conventional piety,” such as—in the case of the cult of William of Norwich—Father Godwin Stuart, William’s uncle, Brother Thomas, and Bishops Eborard and Turbe (“and their educated team,” [90]), and Sheriff John de Chesney. Rose continually emphasizes that, contrary to earlier interpretations, there is no evidence to suggest that anti-Jewish violence during the Crusades was perpetrated by hoodlums. The construction of anti-Semitic propaganda was a more or less joint effort by middle-ranking town and church authorities, with the approval of local nobles.

Rose’s aim is not only to consider blood libels in their immediate historical context, against the backdrop of Christian-Jewish relations, but also to provide insight into the way these accusations were “constructed, fashioned, disseminated and preserved.” As it turns out, “claims originally crafted by a bishop Turbe at a homicide trial in London” in the second half of the twelfth century achieved a career that extended far beyond the convent and courtroom (128). Rose shows that the blood libel functioned first and foremost as a “tool of extortion, used by those familiar with Jews and Jewish money-lending practices” (146). But that wasn’t all; it was also a means of obtaining privileges, be they “legal, constitutional or ecclesiastical in nature” (205). In Gloucester, the charge was used to keep a growing Jewish immigrant community in check and force them to leave. In Blois, Count Thibault V used it to burn thirty Jews at the stake in order to lay claim to his own royal prerogative, having severed his ties to the king of France. In Bury St. Edmunds, blaming the Jews helped one of the monks, exploiting divisions within the convent, to create a cult modeled on that of William of Norwich. The mastermind of this libel rose to the rank of abbot and subsequently—to achieve autonomy from the bishop and the Crown—chased the remaining Jews out of town. Indeed, forcibly displacing Jewish communities also guided Philip II Augustus, king of France, when he employed the charge.

Rose’s book, though in many parts speculative rather than based on direct proof, is nevertheless objective, well researched, and evocative—a solid piece of historical writing, which can also be appreciated by an anthropologist with different methodological preferences. The crucial questions asked in the book are not why and how the blood libel spread but “under what circumstances it was taken seriously by the authorities, who were in a position to take action, influence others, and prosecute purported evildoers” (157).

Speculum 92/4 (October 2017)