period which opens at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. with the emperor Constantine's adoption of Christianity. Indeed, in this volume, 'late Antiquity' seems almost boundless, running from West's Mesopotamia through classical Greece, the Gnosticism of the second century A.D., to Liebeschuetz's fifth-century Rome. More often than not (and somewhat confusingly at times), 'late Antiquity' refers to the first four centuries A.D.

As Gregory of Nazianzus knew well, such arresting rhetorical tactics can both reveal and obscure. From time to time, it is undoubtedly worthwhile for historians to kick over the boundary markers which divide and demarcate the past. In this case, the dilution of late Antiquity has the startling effect of emphasizing the substantial continuities which connect monotheist thought after Constantine with much preceding religious practice and theological speculation.

But the centuries after Constantine might also have been noticeably different for polytheism as well as for Christianity. In an elegant paper, Polymnia Athanassiadi neatly explicates the complex, intricate, and often conflicting exegeses of the late second-century Chaldaean Oracles by the neo-Platonists Proclus in the fifth century and his pupil Damascius in the sixth. Despite their differences, both philosophers were keen to explicate these sacred texts in monotheistic terms. Importantly too, they both conceived of their project as 'the formulation of an orthodoxy based on the correct interpretation of a canon of texts' (p. 181).

Of course, it may be that these expressions of polytheist theology were part of a long-term internal process of elaboration, or that the monotheistic 'spiritual globalization' of the ancient world—in A.'s pleasing phrase (p. 181)—was the result of a series of convergences and overlaps between long-standing monotheistic theologies and Christianity. But it also seems attractive, at least in part, to think of these developments as an explicit reaction to the insistent pressure of Christianity's exegetical and rhetorical strategies. These may also have been important factors in provoking 'sharper contours and a clearer definition to polytheistic belief' (pp. 126–7), as well as a growing sense amongst polytheists of 'themselves as a group with a common cultural past and a common interest' (p. 5).

For that reason, a 'late-antique boundary' might for the moment be worth retaining. Not because it signals the triumph of one religion over another, nor because it represents the victory of a particular set of beliefs in One God, but because the unsteady rise of Christianity after Constantine may still be indicative of a wider shift in the religious sensibilities of the Mediterranean world, a shift which itself had a marked impact on the understanding and expression of monotheism in both Christian and polytheist theologies.

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge CHRISTOPHER KELLY

SEEING AND BELIEVING

G. FRANK: *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*. (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 30.) Pp. xiii + 219. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2000. Cased, £24.95. ISBN: 0-520-22205-9.

Eastertide in Antioch in A.D. 390 was unsettling for newly baptized Christians. Instructed in the mysteries of the Christian faith by their priest John Chrysostom

© Oxford University Press, 2002

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.1.136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(one of the finest orators in late antiquity), these catechumens were unexpectedly joined by a group of monks who had come into the city. The presence of such unalloyed and evidently unwashed exemplars of holiness clearly disturbed some members of John's congregation. The preacher skilfully directed the catechumens' gaze. They were not to look at these wild ascetics' tattered robes, nor be distracted by their uncouth habits, nor laugh at their rustic speech. Rather, they were to learn to see through this and to experience directly these monks' holiness and their fulfilment of biblical ideals. 'Let us not look simply at their appearance and the language they speak, while we overlook the virtue of their lives. Let us observe carefully the angelic life they lead' (*Catech*. 8.4; ed. A. Wegner, *SChrét*. 50 [Paris, 1957], p. 249).

In many ways, John Chrysostom's Eastertide congregation could be considered fortunate. They had seen the holiness of the ascetic without having to leave their city. For most Christians, such an experience could only be sensed vicariously through the eye-witness accounts of those who had themselves journeyed into the desert. Georgia Frank's book focuses on two of these travelogues: the *Lausiac History*, written around A.D. 420 by Palladius, bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia, and the *History of the Monks in Egypt*, written by an anonymous monk in Jerusalem probably about twenty years earlier. The core of F.'s book is dedicated to a careful and sophisticated explication of these texts and to the various ways in which they seek (like many other forms of travel writing, both ancient and modern) to construct a particular reality for their readers.

'Armchair pilgrims'—in F.'s neat phrase (p. 4)—had their tours carefully managed by pilgrim-authors. F. identifies three important narrative patterns which inform the presentation of the monastic project in these travelogues. First, a desire to portray the exotic and foreign as knowable and therefore accessible; secondly, a conviction that holiness was perceptible by the senses, especially by sight and smell; and thirdly, a powerful belief that the ascetic project might be viewed as fulfilling a need in pilgrims (active or passive) to make close contact with the biblical past. This latter tactic of 'biblicizing the desert' (p. 63) both authenticated the holiness of the ascetics and suspended them, like the Bible itself, between the past and the present. 'Like monuments, these ascetics bear the legacy of the biblical past while living in the present' (p. 75).

And, like the viewing of monuments or holy places, what dominated the pilgrim's expectations and itinerary was the sight of an ascetic. Pilgrimage was, above all, as F. proposes, 'a visual practice' (p. 100). To behold the holy with the 'eye of faith' (p. 102) was the aim of a pilgrim. In the desire to see God, the Christian traveller sought to follow in the footsteps of Moses on Mt Sinai, or to imitate the holy men who had been granted tours of Paradise and had seen face-to-face the glories that were to come.

In a fascinating and closely argued chapter (Chapter IV), F. argues for sight as 'a primary mode for religious understanding' (p. 104). Late-antique authors, following in a long classical tradition, conceived of sight itself as 'a form of physical contact between the viewer and the object' (p. 133). The gaze (especially the lingering gaze) was a way of penetrating mere appearances. It could elide the past and the present, and permit pilgrims who visited holy sites to visualize themselves as part of biblical events. Combined with a knowledge of physiognomies (explored in Chapter V), it could allow the pilgrim to see through the glowing countenance of the saint and reach out to comprehend something of the holiness beyond. Looked at in this way, sight was not opposed to touch. Rather, as F. attractively argues, for the pilgrim these two senses were complementary parts of the same religious experience. 'Sight was not replaced by touch; it had always been a form of touch' (p. 132).

The strength of F.'s book is the subtle and elegant way in which she unpicks the

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.1.136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'tightly controlling narrative device' (p. 171) which the writers of pilgrim narratives used to present these highly visual experiences of the holy and to make both a distant biblical past and a far-off hostile desert seemingly accessible to their readership. It was these perilous divides which so starkly confronted John Chrysostom in Antioch. In constructing a resolution by inviting his congregation of newly baptized Christians to see though the crudities of the monks who had come into the city, John sought both to make monasticism's holiness visible and to locate it within the Church.

Unlike other rigorist Christianities, such as Donatism or Pelagianism, monasticism was not represented and rejected by the Church as heretical. Artfully constructed narratives about monks and their holiness were key to the presentation of monasticism as compatible with civic Christianity. One highly successful literary form was the saint's life, brilliantly exploited by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in an attempt to domesticate St Antony's disturbingly anti-social form of Christianity (see the splendid exposition in David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* [Oxford, 1995]). It is arguable that, for bishops like Palladius, travel narratives—deploying all the literary tactics which F. so skilfully elucidates—also presented another persuasive literary possibility. As F. convincingly demonstrates, they offered attractive ways of linking monks with Old Testament archetypes, of eliding the biblical past and the post-crucifixion present, and of making the holy visible. In so doing, these narratives also helped to construct an argument in favour of the acceptance of a minority radical ascetic project by the vast majority of Christians. The urban faithful, inspired and directed by these travelogues, might be better prepared to undertake a perilous pilgrimage from city to desert—or at least be more willing to imagine such a journey in their mind's eye.

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge CHRISTOPHER KELLY

APOLOGETICS

M. Edwards, M. Goodman, S. Price, C. Rowland (edd.): *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians.* Pp. x + 315. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Cased, £48. ISBN: 0-19-826986-2.

'Apologetic' is a multi-purpose term. The basic definition followed in this book, with some refinement in individual chapters, is 'the defence of a cause or party supposed to be of paramount importance to the speaker'. The fact that Chapters II–XI have one Jewish, one pagan, and eight Christian themes (of which two are Latin and eight Greek) shows the orientation of the genre—if it can be seen as a genre at all. The various works considered to be apologies take the form of speeches, letters, and dialogues, often placed in fictional dramatic settings, as well as theological treatises.

After an introductory chapter, the contributions are arranged chronologically: Loveday Alexander on Acts; Martin Goodman on Josephus, *Against Apion*; Tessa Rajak on Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*; Frances Young on second-century Greek apologists; Simon Price on Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian; Michael Frede on Origen, *Against Celsus*; Simon Swain on Philostratus, *In Honour of Apollonius*; Mark Edwards on Lactantius and Arnobius; Frede again on Eusebius' apologetic writings; Edwards again on Constantine's *Oration to the Saints*.

Alexander discusses the historiography of the apologetic interpretation of Acts,

© Oxford University Press, 2002

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.1.136 Published online by Cambridge University Press