Children and Family in Late Antique Egyptian Monasticism. By **Caroline T. Schroeder**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. xiv + 256 pp. $99.99 hardcover.

In the study of early church history, children are having a moment. Over the course of the past decade, the work of Cornelia Horn, Christian Laes, John Martens, and others has successfully centered "the child" as locus for understanding the world of the later Roman Empire and its early Christian communities. Caroline T. Schroeder's recent monograph nevertheless pursues children into a realm still commonly regarded as devoid of their presence: early Egyptian monasticism. Christian asceticism's famous "anti-familial tendencies" have been complicated in recent years through the work of Ville Vuolanto, Rebecca Krawiec, and Schroeder herself. This book nevertheless conclusively demonstrates the presence of children in the cradle of monasticism from the movement's very beginnings. Already in the fourth through seventh centuries, Schroeder suggests, children were thus a challenge to communities' social and ideological functioning, as well as a means by which these communities constructed and sustained themselves.

Children and Family unfolds in three parts: "Finding Children," an initial exposition of children's complicated and complicating presence in the textual and material records; "Representations," which examines children's presence in monastic communities against the backdrop of some of their most pervasive literary associations; and "A Social History," which traces the lives and relations of children and families in greater depth.

Chapter 1 ("Documenting the Undocumented") accordingly presents an overview of both the surprisingly large number of sources that point to the existence of children in Egypt's monastic and ascetic communities and the diverse ways in which children arrived there. In light of this evidence, Chapter 2 ("The Language of Childhood") faces the task of establishing the vocabulary for speaking of children. Monastics, like early Christians more generally, used the terminology of sonship, fatherhood, and infancy to speak metaphorically to the experience of being "young in the faith," or immature in one's monastic profession. The concomitant homonymy adds a layer of challenge to Schroeder's project, which this chapter both elucidates and addresses.

Chapter 3 ("Homoeroticism, Children, and the Making of the Monk") expounds children as objects of sexual desire in monastic writings. Through both prohibitions against "desire-filled" contact with children and the narration of such encounters and their consequences, monastic literature marked children as threats to the masculine monastic ideal. These very passages, Schroeder argues, nevertheless also kept alive apprehensions of children as sexualized and generated a kind of persistent voyeurism in which monks could continuously reexperience them in this erotic capacity. Chapter 4 ("Child Sacrifice") turns to some of the most troubling passages in monastic literature, namely those that narrate the actual or attempted killing of children. Underlying these texts, Schroeder identifies the biblical narratives of the binding of Isaac and the killing of Jephthah's daughter, depictions of which appear prominently in Egyptian monasteries. Drawing on Kathryn McClymond's theory of sacrificial events, Schroeder here examines the deployment of children to generate different effects: the initiation or confirmation of monks, the bounding of the community, and even the creation of an ascetic bloodline.

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Chapter 5 ("Monastic Family Values"), by contrast, focuses on ascetic narratives that center monks' healing children from illness or demonic possession. Both literary and historical sources accordingly attest to the role monastic communities played in supporting families—and, by extension, society—beyond the monastery. A potentially similar use of children as conduits between monastic and extra-monastic settings emerges in chapter 6 ("Making New Monks"). The latter discusses the education children would have enjoyed in Egyptian monasteries, the primary aim of which was the creation of suitable monks. As a result, children were regarded as both an investment and a resource for the monastery: a means by which the community sought to propagate itself, and which, accordingly, called for particular formation.

Chapter 7 ("Breaking Rules and Telling Tales") continues the thread of the preceding chapter by documenting children's lives, deaths, labors, and daily habits in Egyptian monasteries. The rules set forth by Shenoute and the Pachomian federation point to the recognition of a special status for children: on the one hand, they required special accommodations to thrive; on the other, they constituted a potential threat for the monastery's adult members, including their biological parents. Much of the surviving literature thus attests to the twin processes of children's integration into the monastic *familia* and their extrication from their families of origin.

Chapter 8 ("The Ties that Bind") and the book's conclusion mark the expansion of its literary horizons to include sources from the penumbra of Egyptian monasticism. The writings of Jerome and particularly John Cassian thus appear in these chapters as interlocutors and *comparanda*. Chapter 8 accordingly explores the affective ties connecting children—of the literal or metaphorical variety—with other members of the community. Schroeder locates her analysis at the intersection of ancient theories of emotion and biblical discourses, both of which figure prominently in the writings of Shenoute, as well as his Latin contemporaries. Each of these authors uses the language of family bonds to shape monastic identity and to forge a form of "filial piety" directed towards the head of the monastery.

The conclusion, finally, draws together the threads supporting the book's central argument that monasticism sought to construct itself both as a new incarnation of and as a rival for the classical Roman *familia*. Monastic "households" shared many of the latter's anxieties and preoccupations: fatherly authority, the role of children in carrying forward the family's legacy, and the concomitant creation of genealogies. In both practical and theological terms, monasteries in late antiquity, accordingly, took up the mantle of the ancient *domus* alongside other late ancient households.

Throughout the book, Schroeder's meticulous work brings to the fore the children hiding in the literary and material record of ancient Egyptian monasticism. One of the predictable challenges, as well as one of the book's greatest strengths is, nevertheless, the relative paucity of material: many of the ascetic corpus's central stories, commands, and references recur throughout the book, with each chapter providing a different lens through which to view them. Their meaning and import shift kaleidoscopically in light of Schroeder's deft handling of the material. The book's eminent clarity and literary flair belies its methodological sophistication; while each chapter is thus self-contained, taken as a whole, the book generates continually thicker and more exciting descriptions of the experiences of children, families, and ascetics in monastic communities. Its contribution to a wide range of disciplines, from childhood studies to Coptic Christian thought and the social history of the later

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Roman Empire, as well as its eminent "teachability," makes *Children and Family* an essential resource for all students of early Christianity.

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The Cross in the Visual Culture of Late Antique Egypt. By **Gillian Spalding-Stracey**. Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity 19. Leiden: Brill, 2020. xxiii + 241 pp. $197.00 cloth.

Egypt has long offered a panoply of appropriations of the cross, from the famous *crux ansata*, or *ankh*-cross, to the various *apotropaic* uses of the cross: "Where the sign of the cross occurs," declared Antony of the Desert, "*mageia* is weakened and sorcery has no effect" (Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 78 [my translation]). Spalding-Stracey's published Macquarie dissertation in art history covers the range, not so much of uses, functions, or conceptualizations of the cross as of its specific shapes and where (especially among monastic sites) they could be found. In this regard, the title is somewhat misleading, since "the visual culture of late antique Egypt" would properly comprise popular images of saints (like the Menas ampulles), figurines, and the remains of statuary and temples—contexts never broached in this book. The methodology, S.-S. claims, is "art-historical" (xiii, 10), which here means design-centered, only rarely venturing into religious context.

Chapter 1 gives a brief summary of Christianity and cross veneration in Egypt, illustrating the importance of the cross as an object of study with a long quotation from an anaphora hymn. Chapter 2 explains that crosses in scribal or graffiti contexts are excluded from the study (again limiting the meaning of "visual culture") before turning to a survey of those crosses S.-S. will address: those in monastic archaeological sites, like Kellia, Naqlun, Kellis, and the Shenoute monasteries of Atripe. S.-S. notes the predominant cross designs in each place, as well as some associated artifacts bearing crosses (amulets, book covers, lamps, etc.). Chapter 3 reviews the types of materials used for crosses, from paint pigments to wood to textiles. Since crosses, their manufacture and use, remain the center of discussion, there is little attention to different kinds of workshops as sites of reimagining the cross or of carving crosses alongside other objects.

Chapter 4 covers "The Design and Symbolism of Egypt's Crosses" and attempts to correlate cross-types with particular functions, as well as with a tendency toward what S.-S. calls "personal expression"—any sort of elaboration of a received type (although most interpreters of material culture would attribute such elaborations to artisanal or even regional innovation). Here S.-S. attributes the distinctively Egyptian *crux ansata* not to regional iconographic traditions but rather to wreathed crosses on early Roman sarcophagi (94–95), a derivation that would make this design's uniqueness to and increasing popularity across Egypt more difficult to explain. Clearly there must have been something "indigenous" about the *ankh*-like design. S.-S. then covers the simple Greek and Latin crosses and the flared *pattée* cross, with brief reviews of their backgrounds, before noting their ceremonial implications. The chapter then turns to crosses' occasional decoration or juxtaposition with animals, plants, and other symbols. S.-S. sees in these motifs simply "a great freedom of expression" (123); and yet, as many Coptic art

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