

Claudian. Given the significance of this usurpation to the period itself and the impact it would have on the course of imperial politics in the fifth century, it is a notable omission.

The monograph is clearly written and generally free of spelling mistakes and other typographical errors. However, on multiple pages (49, 81, 82 and 84) the emperor Maximian is inexplicably referred to as 'Maximus'. Likewise, O. notes (72) that Constantine led 40,000 men into Italy against Magnentius, where clearly he means Maxentius.

Overall, this is a very welcome work that deftly handles a vital yet contentious collection of source material in order to provide fresh perspectives on, and a greater understanding of, a phenomenon that in many ways shaped the expression of imperial power in the later Roman Empire.

Macquarie University, Sydney
mark.hebblewhite@mq.edu.au

doi:10.1017/S0075435819000510

MARK. K. HEBBLEWHITE

P. C. DILLEY, *MONASTERIES AND THE CARE OF SOULS IN LATE ANTIQUE CHRISTIANITY: COGNITION AND DISCIPLINE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 350. ISBN 9781316875094. £90.00/US\$120.00.

There has been a great deal of interest in recent years in applying insights from cognitive neuroscience to early Christian and other ancient texts. If much historical methodology is concerned with articulating the differences in cultural identity and value that separate antiquity from the present, cognitive approaches promise commonality. Such approaches are concerned with features of human thought that lie below cultural determination, and which may even be evolutionarily hard-wired into the brain. In this volume, Paul Dilley marries insights from the cognitive sciences with careful philology and prodigious reading in early Christian texts to argue that monastic life entailed a robust theory of mind which ascetics applied in individual and corporate practices of cognitive and affective self-transformation. The aim was health for the soul, which included both intellectual and emotional habits directed toward pure living and pure prayer. D.'s work takes readers beyond the now familiar rehearsal of Evagrius' 'eight thoughts' and Shenoute's blistering rhetoric of repentance to articulate the often unspoken assumptions in these authors about how human minds operate, how they fail, how they can be manipulated or interrogated. The study represents, therefore, an exciting new approach to the cultural and intellectual world of early Christian asceticism.

In his tremendously lucid introduction, D. offers one of the clearest readings of the promises and perils of the cognitive science of religion that I have read. He also lays out an ambitious project. Methodologically, he strives to marry the sensibilities of New Historicism with a focus on cognitive and emotional disciplines. He wisely abandons the more sweeping claims of 'cognitive historiography' that attempts to find evolutionarily adapted cognitive rules for human behaviour that hold true across time and space — cognitive equivalents of Durkheimian social laws. D. draws instead on humbler — but more useful — conceptual frameworks, including Barbara Rosenwein's 'emotional communities' as well as Tanya Lurhmann's work on 'theory of mind' to develop his thesis: that monastic communities engaged in individual and group practices aimed at developing what he calls a 'monastic theory of mind' (15) marked by emphasis on the power of thoughts, on permeability by other forces, visibility to God and, above all, embodiedness. D. seeks to show the connections between cognitive and emotional practices, which he calls 'heart-work' (15), and the dietetic and regimental practices of asceticism.

In the chapters that follow D. traces these practices and their transformational aspirations in a variety of ways. The book is divided by discipline, rather than author or genre, and so D. will return to the same authors to explore different practices. Thus, Part One begins with the entrance of would-be monastics, and the means by which their motivation and commitment were discovered. In this D. offers a particularly provocative, and useful, discussion of what he calls 'hazing' rituals — the cruel treatment often meted out to new monastics, which is treated rather glibly in the literature. D. then turns to explore individual disciplines of scriptural recitation, self-scrutiny, meditation on punishments and prayer. These topics will be well known to readers of monastic literature, or of Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault. I, at least, found much of this section treading

familiar paths. Finally, D. examines what he calls ‘collective heart-work’ — the corporate practices of commemorating monastic founders and holy people, as well as the stark rituals of repentance found in Shenoutan literature. In this section, D. strives to align the individual practices of Part II with the communal life dictated and described in so much of the literature under survey. I was left with the sense of three domains of practice — entrance exams, spiritual exercises, group work — rather than a holistic view of monastic life. This may be a function of the texts as much as of D.’s argument, but I cannot help but wonder if greater attention to the liturgical life of the community, for example, would not open up new connections between individual and corporate experiences.

D.’s study is founded on wide reading in monastic texts. It takes in Coptic, Greek and Latin material and, though Pachomian and Shenoutan material are most prominent, readers will find discussions of Basil of Caesarea, Jerome, the *Rule of the Master*, etc. The array of texts is, undoubtedly, intended to demonstrate that the ideas D. discerns in, for example, Pachomian literature, hold true for others as well. This is quite true, at least to some extent. It would, however, have been useful to have more discussion of *difference* — at times, the similarities between texts struck me as more superficial than salient, and a more nuanced discussion of differences in practices would have been helpful. Nevertheless, there are seeds of further study sown throughout this book, and the inclusion of a number of more obscure texts should spur them to greater recognition.

D.’s work raises an overarching question — how successful is his (or, indeed, any) application of ideas from cognitive science to monastic texts? I am wary of the often rather expansive promises made by cognitive scientists, and so I was naturally sceptical of D.’s approach. I can say, though, that I am very impressed by his reading of the monastic texts, which is consistently sensitive and probing. I am, however, unclear as to how much impact cognitive approaches have really had. Certainly, they have helped D. formulate a language of ‘cognitive disciplines’ and ‘collective heart-work’, but these seem to me merely new names for the kinds of practices described by Pierre Hadot, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Sorabji and others. That is not to say that D. has done nothing new. Rather, his contribution lies precisely in his attention to both individual and group practices and the ways in which bodily, affective and cognitive practices are united in the instructions and stories of monastic communities. The nomenclature does not seem to me to add much, and D.’s insights do not owe much to it. Thus, I would heartily recommend this book as a fine study in cultural history and spirituality that unites key elements in early Christian monasticism. The cognitive scientific contribution, I think, remains to be seen.

Australian Catholic University

Jonathan.Zecher@acu.edu.au

doi:10.1017/S0075435819000832

JONATHAN L. ZECHER

D. FRANKFURTER, *CHRISTIANIZING EGYPT: SYNCRETISM AND LOCAL WORLDS IN LATE ANTIQUITY* (Martin Classical Lectures). Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018. Pp. xix + 314, illus. ISBN 9780691176970. £32.95/US\$39.95.

David Frankfurter has set out a generous and humane assessment of what Christianity may have meant to late antique individuals and communities in Egypt (A.D. 350–700). In doing so, he sets out to remodel Christianity, not as ‘a historical achievement or monolithic cultural institution’ (6), but as a syncretistic process, ‘on-going and historically contingent’ (257), a ‘cluster of authoritative strategies ... and sensational forms’ (260). Foregrounding agency, he invokes Lévi-Strauss’s concept of ‘bricolage’ to describe the diverse range of materials from which local Christianity might be assembled (16, 48–54). F.’s syncretism is active, assertive and dynamic, with an emphasis on individuals as part of communities (72), thus complementing other recent appraisals of group identity.

In some ways, the book is the converse of F.’s *Religion in Roman Egypt* (1998), with the benefit of twenty years of further scholarship. At the core of both studies are corpora that F. has actively produced, e.g. editions, translations and studies of apocryphal and ‘magical’ texts. His ability to guide the reader through these sources, and his selection of useful interpretative frameworks are