

Salvation, or atonement, is sought by those who embrace the monastic way of life not only on a personal level, but also on behalf of the rest of humanity. This book will be useful for teachers of church history, theology and religious studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as for scholars and lay readers who are interested in the place of monasticism as a spiritual movement within Christianity. The book is written in a readable and lively style that helps to make this rich, but sometimes overlooked, aspect of Christian history accessible to modern readers.

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*Heilig-Land-Pilgerinnen des lateinischen Westens im 4. Jahrhundert. Eine prosopographische Studie zu ihren Biographien, Itinerarien und Motiven.* By Eva-Maria Gärtner. (Jerusalem Theologisches Forum, 34.) Pp. 279 incl. 2 ills. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2019 €43 (paper). 978 3 402 11049 2; 1439 4634  
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Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in late antiquity has long been a subject of historical and theological research. For the first time Eva-Maria Gärtner provides a complete prosopographical study of fourth-century female pilgrims from the Latin West, focusing on the motivational factors for pilgrimage.

The main part of the work (chapter iii, pp. 25–207) deals with nine female pilgrims known by name: Eutropia, Helena, Melania, Egeria, Paula, Julia Eustochium, Fabiola, Poimonia and Silvia. Subchapters are arranged in chronological order according to the date of the pilgrimage, and they are all structured in the same way: First, the author presents and discusses the primary sources in terms of their source value. Secondly, she goes on to analyse the life of the respective pilgrims before, during and after the journey, including the description of the pilgrimage itself. Thirdly, each subchapter ends with a summary of the essential results. For some women (Helena, Melania, Egeria, Paula) the achievement of the author consists mainly in gathering together the results of previous research. However, Eutropia, Fabiola, Poimonia and Silvia have been little researched. The study therefore provides very useful new biographical insights. On the whole, each subchapter displays a careful balance between the information in the primary sources and that in previous research literature.

Chapter iv (pp. 209–45) provides a comparative analysis of the findings from the individual studies, both *via* systematic *résumés* and in tabular form. In this regard, the author distinguishes between five different motivational factors for pilgrimage. Two of them apply, according to the author, to all the women examined. Firstly, Gärtner assumes that all show an interest in the Holy Land as the land of the Scriptures, bearing the ‘footprints’ of Jesus. It is understandable that the need to pray in these places seems to have been an essential motivating factor. Less convincing is, in my view, the second aspect: that pilgrimage is an expression of an ascetic lifestyle. This is certainly true of Melania, Paula, Eustochium and Fabiola as well as for Silvia and in a different way also for Egeria. But to what extent an ascetic lifestyle applies also to Eutropia and Helena is not clear either from the historical sources or from the source analysis and the tables presented by Gärtner. The journey to the Holy Land as a ‘completion’, or at least as an important

part, of the asceticism of noble women from the West is perhaps rather a specific phenomenon of the late fourth century. The other three motivational factors are only assigned to some of the women: The importance of role models is Gärtner's third point. Helena is considered as archetypal for all later female pilgrims. And Melania serves as a role model for both Paula and for her own and Paula's grand-daughters. In the fourth aspect, Gärtner focuses on networks and their effect. Here, Gärtner convincingly reconstructs a Jeromian network (Paula, Eustochium, Fabiola) and a Theodosian one (with Egeria, Poimonia and Silvia and, indirectly, Melania). The last factor points out the (religious) political motives and their importance at least for Eutropia, Helena, Melania and Silvia.

Gärtner emphasises that penitence – the most important motivational factor for pilgrimage in the Middle Ages – played no role in late antiquity. While this holds generally true, it must also be asked whether the sources do not at least offer clues even for penitence being a motivating factor; such as for Helena with regard to the dynastic crisis of 326, for Fabiola because of her divorce and for Silvia who came to be cured by a monk in the Egyptian desert.

The introductory chapters (i, 'Introduction to the topic' and ii, 'Methodological remarks') are very short (five and seven pages respectively). This has implications for the work as a whole. Whereas the research question concerning motivational factors for pilgrimage as well as the definition of 'Western' pilgrims are plausible, other aspects would have deserved more attention. For example, what exactly is meant by 'pilgrimage' both in terms of space and time, is not made clear. Some of the women stayed only for a short time in the Holy Land, others remained for their whole lives. Should one not distinguish between a pilgrimage of limited duration on the one hand and emigration on the other hand – especially when the focus is on the motivation? Thus, it would be worth considering why not all women limited their pilgrimage to Palestine. Melania, for instance, seems to have had the Egyptian desert in her sights and landed in Jerusalem accidentally because she accompanied the exiled monks. What, one could ask, did the 'Holy Land' mean to those women? In addition, should one not add visiting and learning from the ascetics in the desert as an important motivating factor at least for Egeria, Melania and Paula?

Moreover, the methodological difficulties with regard to the primary sources are not considered deeply enough. How can one ascertain the motivation of historical figures who left no testimonies? What difficulties must be considered? Although it is pointed out that the sources are all written by men with their own agendas (with the exception of Egeria, whose pilgrimage is documented in self-testimonies), what exactly this means for the evaluation of these women's motivation is not sufficiently considered. This leads to the fact that, for example in the case of Paula and Julia Eustochium, Jerome is repeatedly mentioned as 'mentor', 'spiritual director' and 'ascetic teacher'. Could it not also be that Jerome, in his writings about these women, wants to give just this impression? But if so, one would have to ask whether the ascetic and intellectual independence of women should not be valued more highly by reading Jerome's testimonies against the grain. Instead, Jerome is considered as the spiritual father and motivator even for Fabiola's pilgrimage, although she only met him during her journey. At these and other

minor points the impression arises that the author has named the general source problem, but has not drawn any consequences for her individual analyses.

Overall, the great value of this book lies in the provision and presentation of all the primary information on western female pilgrims to the Holy Land in the fourth century. Due to its clear structure, the volume serves well as a reference book for researchers, rather than as a book to be read at one go.

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*Quodvultdeus. A bishop forming Christians in Vandal Africa. A contextual analysis of the pre-baptismal sermons attributed to Quodvultdeus of Carthage.* By David Vopřada. (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 154.) Pp. xii + 367. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2020. €127. 978 90 04 41237 8; 0920 623X  
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Quodvultdeus of Carthage is the nearly man of late ancient Christianity. Figuratively, in that he is an understudied witness to the transformation of the fifth-century Roman West, and literally, since his authorship of a substantial textual corpus – perhaps thirteen sermons and a massive exegetical treatise, the *Book on the promises and predictions of God* – remains a matter of debate. As a rare English-language monograph devoted to Quodvultdeus, David Vopřada's book on Christian formation in the bishop's sermons makes several meaningful contributions. After a historical excursus (ch. i), ch. ii provides a shrewd and lucid introduction to the bishop of Carthage and his works, including a strong (though still inevitably speculative) case for the validity of this attribution as against recent agnosticism (including mine). Ch. iii similarly summarises what we know of pre-baptismal procedure in North Africa, largely from Augustine. Part II then walks the reader through the stages of preparation – the catechuminate (ch. iv), renunciation of the devil (ch. v) and baptism itself (ch. vi) – setting each individual pre-baptismal sermon in its specific liturgical context. These discussions will be required reading for historians keen merely to skim these texts for references to life in 430s Carthage. Part III discusses Quodvultdeus' use of typology to collapse Old and New Testament time and the rites which the candidate was undergoing in the here and now (ch. vii), and the bishop's attacks on religious rivals in these sermons (ch. viii). Vopřada seeks to defend Quodvultdeus' violent rhetoric as explained by the sermons' educational purpose. He is right that the dehumanisation of heretics, pagans and Jews was primarily a means to shape the candidates as Nicene Christians, but I am not convinced that this should stop us from calling these sermons 'polemical' or their preacher a 'polemicist'. In this chapter, as in the epilogue, the author's deep sympathy for his subject and his teachings is obvious; it is made explicit at p. 46, with the claim that a theologian's pursuit of revealed truth requires them to 'choose sides as [they find] one or other form of doctrine part of the "rule of faith", or not'. Partly as a result, recent developments in historical scholarship are acknowledged, but held at arm's length: Arians really were Arians and the Vandals really were violent persecutors (pp. 46–56). Likewise, although the book brilliantly evokes the intense dramaturgy of Christian initiation in 430s Carthage, its desire to present the bishop's construction of a Christian community as a success story (for example, at p. 307) rather