

elites born during the 310s that he is prepared to include even Ausonius, a Christian, as a typical member of this final pagan generation.

Yet another challenge is defining the trajectory of a normal life course. All four men had very long lives, with at least one surviving into his eighties. Although their long lives certainly facilitate Watts's survey of the entire fourth century, great age was atypical in antiquity. The usual demographic assumptions about Roman society suggest that only about eight percent of an age cohort would survive to age seventy, and less than two percent to age eighty. Almost half of a defined generation died as children, and most of the survivors died in their forties or fifties. As a result, the period that Watts designates as the apogee of his final pagan generation, the reigns of Julian and Jovian in the early 360s, can be characterized more properly as the end. The generation of Libanius, Themistius, Praetextatus, and Ausonius would hardly have overlapped and competed with the next generation of ecclesiastical dropouts. Although these four men were among the fortunate few who lived on, most of their peers had already died.

Integrating "the seemingly mundane concerns" of biographical studies with the "impersonal historical forces" (16) of modern narratives has a promising future. The four aristocrats whom Watts selected had charmed lives; now we need to figure out how to include the failures, the peasants, and, especially, the women and girls. Watts's stimulating book is also incentive to reconsider just what changed during the fourth century. In terms of religion, his conclusion is remarkably similar to his starting point: "The cities of the empire remained nearly as full of the sights, sounds, and smells of the traditional gods in the 390s as they had been in the 310s" (209).

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Faithful Narratives: Historians, Religion, and the Challenge of Objectivity. Edited by **Andrea Sterk and Nina Caputo.** Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014. viii + 278 pp. \$83.95 cloth; \$26.95 paper.

For the past thirty or so years, various forms of postmodernism have challenged historians' commitment to the nineteenth-century notions of objectivity foundational to the modern academic discipline of history. Peter Novick's magisterial *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) showed

how anxieties over objectivity were in fact as foundational to the discipline as objectivity itself. The myriad symposia and roundtables on Novick's book generally confirmed his own conclusion that while historians may never achieve the certainty of the natural sciences, they achieve a close enough approximation of objectivity, so long as they remain aware of the limitations of their own particular perspectives and the contingency of all historical knowledge. At first, the debate over objectivity took place primarily among secular historians concerned to preserve the values of the Enlightenment. By the late 1990s, scholars such as George Marsden began to consider the implications of the postmodern challenge to objectivity for the classic Enlightenment separation of faith and reason. If secular scholars could acknowledge liberalism, Marxism, and feminism as distinct 'perspectives' compatible with some sort of objectivity, should not they also accept the compatibility of objectivity and the 'perspective' of faith traditions such as Christianity? The profession has generally held the line separating 'legitimate' secular perspectives and 'illegitimate' faith traditions. Still, the essays collected in *Faithful Narratives* show that the relation between faith and reason in our postmodern times remains, at least at the rhetorical level, contested terrain.

Sadly, the engagement with these epistemological issues never really gets beyond rhetoric. The essays originated in a three-semester lecture series hosted by the University of Florida in 2008–2009, followed by a panel cosponsored by the American Society of Church History and the American Historical Association in 2011. The organizers of this project recruited some of the leading historians of this generation, including Peter Brown, Anthony Grafton, Carlos Eire, and Mark Noll. Sterk and Caputo's "Introduction" does an excellent job of laying out the epistemological and methodological issues at stake in addressing the relation between religious faith and the study of history. Initially, the editors suggest that the essays in the collection will push the debate beyond stale categories, binary oppositions, and so on. Unfortunately, it soon becomes clear that the promised breakthrough amounts to little more than scholars taking religion seriously "as a historical force that had consequences in the lives of individuals and the development of communities" (4). Coming to the late realization that religion should receive the same scholarly consideration as any other object of study is hardly cause for self-congratulation. This may count as an advance over an earlier, more reductive, or dismissive treatment of religion as mere symptom or effect of some deeper (usually material) reality, but it hardly addresses the issue of the special challenge presented by various religious traditions: the claim to represent a truth beyond empirical verification by the historian.

The authors assiduously avoid this issue by focusing instead on breaking down conventional distinctions between the sacred and the secular and expanding our understanding of the variety and diversity within particular

religious traditions. Again, at one level, this is all well and good. Susanna Elm's essay linking Julian the Apostate and Gregory of Nazianzus is a good example of the potential for this kind of scholarship to help us rethink, in fruitful ways, the distinctions between pagan and Christian late antiquity. Peter Brown and John Van Engen's essays render a powerful sense of the dizzying variety of attitudes toward wealth, poverty, and labor in late-antique and medieval monasticism. Still, for all their erudition, these, and other essays of similar quality, lack direction; complexity, so aimlessly catalogued, slides into monotony. The challenge of religion in these essays is that, for millions of people, the relation between pagan and Christian culture, or the question of what constitutes an authentically Christian attitude toward wealth and poverty, remains a live issue of more than mere historical interest. Every historian has the obligation to be faithful to the empirical reality of the past, yet a living past is always more than just an empirical reality. Religious intellectual traditions, at their best, provide a context for the fruitful interaction of the empirical and the non-empirical. Despite some teaser lines in the "Introduction," the essays in this volume provide little by way of examples of what such a religious intellectual practice would look like.

Still, the duty to be "faithful to the demands of critical analysis" seems to leave space for the contributors to offer examples of how the tradition of secular professional history combine faith and reason (4). David Nirenberg's essay on ideas of tolerance in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam deconstructs all essentialist readings of these traditions, but assures us that each has elements within it that have the potential to be compatible with modern liberal notions of tolerance. Phyllis Mack's essay on Protestant women preachers in eighteenth-century England argues that Christianity promoted ideas of agency, conventionally thought of as distinct to the secular Enlightenment—with the caveat that "this new agency was limited by increasingly rigid standards of bourgeois femininity" and "the new evangelical Christianity meant . . . a more circumscribed self-definition and spiritual ambition" (167–168). Even Mark Noll, who more than any other contributor has actively advanced the dialogue on Christian scholarship, seems to hold religion accountable to the standards of secular modernity. His essay on the Bible and American political life seeks to reclaim public Christianity from the Religious Right by invoking the biblical foundations of two of the masterpieces of liberal political rhetoric, Abraham Lincoln's "Second Inaugural" and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. These exemplars of American civil religion suggest the limits of American civil scholarship. In the republic of letters, religion is a particular that must serve a higher, 'universal' end. Still, ideologies that now shape the mainstream of the profession were once thought to be unfit for the public

sphere. Perhaps would-be Christian scholars need to take a page out of the feminist playbook and, to paraphrase Alice Echols, dare to be bad.

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***Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium.* by Derek Krueger.**

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\$75.00 cloth; \$75.00 e-book.

Derek Krueger, the Joe Rosenthal Excellence Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, offers a pioneering contribution to the study and definition of Christian self-identity in the Byzantine world. *Liturgical Subjects* is pioneering because the author underlines the centrality and importance of the liturgical experience in our understanding of the Byzantine world and culture, and he masterfully highlights the formative power of liturgy. As a historian of Christian culture in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, not only does Krueger offer an engaging approach to the Byzantine self, but also points to a new direction in the field of Byzantine liturgical studies: the necessary philological (what are the texts) and comparative liturgical (what is the history of these texts) methodologies are beautifully complimented by Krueger's exploration of the formative power of liturgical texts on the Byzantine religious subject (what do the texts do).

Krueger presents his material in a very engaging way, providing the reader with a chronological sweep of the sixth to the eleventh centuries through a series of case studies, which make the book succinct, lucid, clear, convincing, and manageable, even for the uninitiated. After chapter one, which serves as an introduction to his methodology, chapter two looks at the work of Romanos the Melodist (sixth century) and the hymnological genre of the *kontakion* in which he composed; chapter three explores the Byzantine liturgical year and its major feasts through the *kontakia* of Romanos. Then, chapter four focuses on the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and particularly on the Anaphorae or the Eucharistic Prayers; chapter five takes us to the late seventh or early eighth century and the examination of the *Great Canon* composed by Andrew of Crete; chapter six focuses upon the Studite Lenten hymnography of the ninth century; chapter seven examines the preaching of Symeon the New Theologian at the turn of the first millennium. In putting