

Christianity And Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis Of Natural Theology In The Christian Encounter

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CHURCH HISTORY

Miller lists and explains various ancient theories of dreams (chapter 2), for example, their origins in psychobiological causes or in demonic and angelic activity. She next (chapter 3) considers ancient interpretive theories of dreams. Emphasizing their relation to the larger culture, Miller argues that "These oneiric strategies were firmly rooted in ordinary experiences . . . which were conceptualized in terms of relational networks linking the self with social and cosmological arenas" (p. 75). This is a particularly informative chapter, linking Artemidorus, Ovid, Macrobius, Philo, and some Christian allegorists. At times the author seems reluctant to give up her method. For example, in discussing a rabbinic anecdote about a dream with twenty-four meanings, she says that "its images have an astounding plasticity, that is, an astounding signifying potential" (p.74). Perhaps, but could not so many meanings signify that it really had none? She closes the first half of the book by discussing dreams and therapy, particularly the cult of Asclepius.

The second part of the book discusses six dreamers in five chapters: Hermas, Aelius Aristides, Perpetua, Jerome, and two Gregorys, Nazianzen and Nyssa, in one chapter. Five diverse chapters cannot be treated individually in this review, but Miller's method appears best in her analysis of Perpetua's dreams. Noting that the idea world of Perpetua's day was patriarchal, she suggests that this is why even women martyrs were portrayed as virile, an attempt to denigrate their bodies which had suffered for Christ: "As opposed to these various strategies that deflect a reading of Perpetua's diary as a woman's testimony, I suggest that, when it is so read, it expresses the plight of a woman caught in the cross-currents of a theological debate in which sexual politics played a prominent role" (p. 175). Thus some of the less virile male images in Perpetua's dreams, such as the "sinister shepherd, cancerous brother" (p. 182), suggest that oneirically the dominant male trope can be embraced by Perpetua because she can use it to express her otherness from these male figures, her sexual worth. It is a brilliant analysis.

This is a challenging book; no doubt this reviewer will not be the only reader who has to go back over some sections. But it is also an important book on what the author demonstrates is an important topic when analyzed by an appropriate methodology.

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Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism. By JAROSLAV PELIKAN. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993. xvi + 368 pp. \$40.00.

This book derives from Pelikan's Gifford Lectures on natural theology (1992-1993). Pelikan follows and transcends the contributions of his predecessors Etienne Gilson, Karl Barth, Werner Jaeger, Arthur Darby Nock, and

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