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Pilgrims' Way in the "Holy Land"

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Published in:
Catholic historical review

DOI:
[10.1353/cat.2016.0215](https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2016.0215)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2016

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Drijvers, J. W. (2016). Pilgrims' Way in the "Holy Land": Contributions to the Religious Geography of the Old Church. *Catholic historical review*, 102(4), 827-828. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2016.0215>

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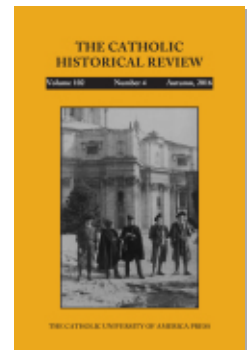
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*Pilgerwege ins "Heilige Land": Beiträge zur
Religionsgeografie der Alten Kirche* ed. by Ulrich Fellmeth,
Ulrich Mell (review)

Jan Willem Drijvers

The Catholic Historical Review, Volume 102, Number 4, Autumn 2016, pp.
827-828 (Review)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2016.0215>



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This is a book to be read as a whole. The opening discussions of Pauline injunctions, and (often patrician) ancient attitudes toward work and religious entrepreneurs—perhaps inevitably, somewhat peripatetic in their chronological and geographical contexts—store up rich rewards for the later chapters (which constitute the real heart of the book). Its signal merit is to open up new vistas: not least, in its tantalizing pan-Eurasian coda (pp. 114–18), which leaves the reader with a sense that Brown—and no doubt many others—will continue to worry about the “poor” in late antiquity for some time to come.

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ROBIN WHELAN

Pilgerwege ins “Heilige Land”: Beiträge zur Religionsgeografie der Alten Kirche. Edited by Ulrich Fellmeth and Ulrich Mell (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012). Pp. 128. €31,95 paperback. ISBN 978-3-631-60025-2.)

This little volume is the result of a symposium on early Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land, organized in 2009 at the Universität Hohenheim in Stuttgart. The focus of the conference (and of these proceedings) was on the beginnings of Christian pilgrimage to Palestine in the fourth century and the early pilgrimage accounts in relation to changing theological perceptions with regard to religious geography and travel to sites of Christian memory. The volume contains six contributions (all in German) of different length and varying scholarly significance.

The volume opens with a fairly superficial contribution by Marion Giebel about the beginnings of pilgrimage to Palestine starting with Constantine’s mother Helena (who, despite recent scholarly consensus, is unfortunately considered here as a pilgrim), the journey of the Bordeaux pilgrim (333) and then focusing in particular on the itinerary of Egeria, who visited the Holy Land and the nearby regions at the end of the fourth century. The second article, by Hanswulf Bloedhorn, also focuses on Egeria’s journey, which the author dates past 390 instead of the generally accepted date of 381–84, and summarizes her travels to and along Jewish memory sites. Ulrich Fellmeth discusses Constantine’s religious and church-building policies. Fellmeth deals with matters that have filled extensive bookshelves: the development of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity and the nature of his religious conviction, and the influence of the emperor’s Christianity on his religious policy. He argues fittingly that Constantine’s religious policy was more pragmatic than dogmatic, that he did not prohibit pagan practices, and that his program of church building—twenty-two ecclesiastical buildings are known to have been constructed during his reign—fit well with his strategy to make Christianity visible. A second article by Fellmeth discusses the fourth-century pilgrim’s accounts in the context of the geographical circumstances of the period—in particular, the Roman network of roads as we know it from written *itineraria* and so-called *itineraria picta* or maps, the best known of which is the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. Fellmeth reconstructs the sources of information the early pilgrims had at their disposal, the routes they (may) have followed, and the means of transportation. The best articles have

been preserved for the last. Ulrich Mell provides an interesting discussion on the concept of *holy* or *sacred* from a theological perspective. He argues that the idea of Christian sacredness goes back to Jewish precursors; in particular, the city of Jerusalem was considered sacred to the Jews, and Christians adopted this idea. The last contribution, by Oliver Dyma, also focuses on Jerusalem and Jewish religious travel to the holy city for the celebration of the various religious festivals; Jews also visited the sites of their patriarchs. Although the author does not explicitly say so, Christian religious travel from Constantine onward must have been inspired by Jewish travel to Jerusalem and the patriarchal tombs of the Second Temple period.

The topic of Christian pilgrimage and religious geography has received considerable attention in the scholarship of early Christianity and in late-antique studies concerning the Holy Land. Fundamental questions have been raised: Was there Christian religious travel to Jerusalem and Palestine before the age of Constantine? Were there Christian holy sites before Constantine, and if not, how and why did places become sacred? Why and when did the Christian theology regarding locality change? These questions are not addressed in this volume, which offers nice introductions but unfortunately lacks in-depth discussion of important issues concerning early Christian pilgrimage, accounts of pilgrims, and sacred geography as raised in recent scholarship.

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JAN WILLEM DRIJVERS

MEDIEVAL

The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages. By James T. Palmer. (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2014. Pp. 254. \$29.99. ISBN 978-1-107-449-091.)

James T. Palmer's new book is a carefully presented, groundbreaking study of apocalyptic thinking that successfully cuts through the often impenetrable scholarly debates over the role of End-Time prophecies in the early Middle Ages. Palmer's learned yet highly readable book introduces a new understanding of the function of eschatology and End-Time prophecy that will change the way we think about this central aspect of the medieval past. The book is divided into seven chapters that work chronologically from the waning of the Roman Empire through the early-eleventh century, focusing on essential periods during which the destiny of the world, the Christian Roman Empire metonymically speaking, was imagined in eschatological terms: the fall of Rome, the Arab invasions, the empire of Charlemagne, the decline of Carolingian power, and the turn of the first millennium during the reign of Otto III. Although structured largely around these key periods, the book is in no way limited to the problem of imperial eschatology. Instead, the book considers a wide variety of articulations of concern over the coming of the end of time, which is how Palmer is able to make his argument work so successfully. Summoning evidence from around Europe, he shows that anxiety was rarely consistent, since factors such as varying intellectual traditions; differences in political, religious, and social practice; and uneven approaches to the Augustinian prescription against prediction produced a wide variety of individual and communal visions of the End.