

Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans saw them*. London Yale University Press 1984, pp. XIX–214, Ln. £ 12.95.

How did the early Christians appear to men and women in the Roman empire? In 1948, Pierre de Labriolle, Classical scholar and historian of the early Church in the West published *La réaction païenne: étude sur la polémique antichrétienne du Ie au VIe siècle*, a magisterial work which rightly has remained standard until to-day. In the generation that separates it from R. L. Wilken's study some new evidence has come to light, but more important, some of the quasi-certainties which de Labriolle had taken for granted have been challenged.

A new assessment of the problem is timely.

The author has written an excellent study. His style is easy-flowing and conveys the impression of great learning as well as great powers of assimilation. The book is a pleasure to read. Inevitably, the early sections cover much familiar ground, but Pliny's background is detailed more fully than found in most histories of the early Church. „The Roman gentleman“ emerges convincingly. This reviewer may perhaps ask himself whether in the 2nd century the christian communities did resemble burial societies, as the author suggests. The *areae* were indeed important in their lives (See Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 3.1), but there was more to awake pagan suspicions. The *Hetaeriae* (associations) referred to by Pliny in his letter to Trajan and discussed by the author (p. 13) are surely the clue. Pliny was immediately interested in the common meals held by the Christians and was pleased that these had ended when „in accordance with your (Trajan's) command had forbidden the existence of clubs“ (Pliny, *Ep.* X.96.8). As the author points out, half a century later, the satirist Lucian of Samosata describes the Christians in Palestine or Syria in terms reminiscent of those used to describe the life of an association. Lucian's younger contemporary, Celsus (c. 178) probably a Syrian also, opens his „True Word“ against the Christians by pointing out that some associations were public and lawful, but others, that included the Christians were secret and illegal. There was no reference to a „burial society“ as a camouflage for these illegal activities. Indeed, the Christian communities up and down the Mediterranean at this time, with their close-knit organisation, common funds, common meetings, meals, liturgy and Scriptures and above all, their sense of brotherhood could only have impressed themselves as powerful but secretive Judaistic associations. Their purpose seemed already to undermine the fabric of Greco-Roman society (thus Celsus, cited by Origen, *Contra Celsum* iii. 52 and 55). By 178 Christianity had far outpassed the scope of „burial society“ or even „extravagant superstition“ as it had been described by Pliny.

The author has useful things to say about Galen and the incipient acceptance of Christianity as a „philosophy“ among educated Greeks near the end of the second century. The core of his work however, is the lengthy chapter on Porphyry. Here he faces a dilemma that has been posed largely by the growing interest of Classical scholars in early Christian history who have brought acuteness of literary criticism combined sometimes with hedantry to the subject. He could either follow von Harnack and de Labriolle and accept von Harnack's whole catalogue of alleged fragments from *Contra Christianos* as genuine, or he could bow to the arguments of T. D. Barnes („Porphyry against the Christians. Date and attribution of fragments“, *JTS* N.S. 24, 1973, pp. 424–442) and the even more radical treatment of Anthony Meredith („Porphyry and Julian against the Christians“, *ANRW*. ii, 23.2, pp. 1119–1149) and reject those fragments that come from Macarius Magnes' pagan opponent, i.e. about half von Harnack's total. In fact, the compromise is none too happy. To use „Macarius only when his reports are confirmed by other sources“ (p. 136, n6) is to pick and choose, and divide up a unitary source. Either the pagan opponent quoted at the end of the 4th century by Macarius was Porphyry, whom Macarius did not want to name, or he was some well-informed pagan apologist of the same school of thought as Porphyry, who somehow or another had evaded the notice of Constantine and Theodosius, and whose influence was still active at a time when Christianity had been established by law as the religion of the empire. I prefer the former solution. The onus of proof that this new learned pagan „Anonymous“ existed, rests on the critics of von Harnack.

The date of the *Contra Christians* could well be later than c. 270, but not as late as 303. It is not the work of a writer in his dotage. Time too, would be needed for its influence to be felt to the extent it was, among the ruling circles of the empire. The last decade of the third century would seem more probable, sharing with the „viri novi“ attacked by Arnobius (*Contra Gentes* ii. 15) in a propaganda assault on Christianity, that preceded Diocletian's decision to attempt to force the Christians to conform to the religion of the empire.

A final chapter is devoted to the emperor Julian's long – meditated attack on the „Galileans“. The connection between Judaism and Christianity stressed in the *Adversus Galilaeos* struck Christianity at its most vulnerable point. Celsus had seen this, so did Eusebius of Caesarea and so too, did some of the Church Fathers in the 4th century. The real objection of the eastern bishops to the *Homoousios* was that it was Sabellian, i.e. „Jewish“ (also see, Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 210 and 236). The author's emphasis on this aspect of the anti-Christian case is one of the most useful features of this scholarly and well-researched book.

In so valuable a guide it may seem ungenerous to cavil at the Bibliography. Where however Jewish – Christian relationships are so important a theme, one misses references to any work by Neusner or E. M. Smallwood, while some useful works on the Church side which have anticipated this aspect of the author's views have been omitted. Students are entitled to learn something of the developing trends of scholarship in a work written with their needs in mind. This is especially the case with a book that will remain the standard work in English on pagan – Christian relations seen from the pagan standpoint, for a long time to come.

One significant misprint is noted. The emperor Hadrian's dates are 117–138 and not 133 or 134 as on p. 68 and 99 respectively.

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Eusebius Werke, VII. Band: Die Chronik des Hieronymus, hg. und in 2. Aufl. bearb. von Rudolf Helm. 3., unveränderte Aufl. mit einer Vorbemerkung von Ursula Treu, Berlin (Akademie-Verlag) 1984, pp. LII, 455; DM 86.–.

Karl Mras bezeichnete dieses Werk Eusebs von Caesarea, das im wesentlichen durch die Übersetzung des Hieronymus erhalten ist, als „Monumentalwerk des Altertums, ohne das wir z.B. in der lateinischen Literaturgeschichte oft ohne verlässlichen Wegweiser wären“ (DLZ 78, 1957, 390) und rühmte zugleich die hervorragende Qualität der Ausgabe dieses Werkes durch Rudolf Helm. Auch andere Kritiker haben ihre außerordentliche Sorgfalt, aber auch ihre Handlichkeit – vor allem gegenüber der zweibändigen, als Autograph gedruckten 1. Aufl. (1913/1926) – und ihre praktische Anlage hervorgehoben. – Dieses bedeutsame und anerkannte Werk liegt jetzt in 3. Auflage vor, wobei es sich um einen im wesentlichen unveränderten Nachdruck der 2. Auflage von 1956 handelt. Lediglich kleinere Druckfehler wurden stillschweigend verbessert – z.B. S. XXXII, Z. 17 v.u. und S. 341, Z. 3 v.u. – Auf S. 219, Z. 9 v.u. hat sich bei der Verbesserung allerdings ein neuer Druckfehler eingeschlichen. Denn O. Bardenhewer hat zwar eine Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur verfaßt (die angegebene Seitenzahl sollte allerdings in II 626 ff. korrigiert werden!), A. Harnack aber eine Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Außerdem hätte man vielleicht die beiden Hinweise von K. Mras mit berücksichtigen sollen: a) Eine Korrektur zu S. 281 zu 15,05: „In der Chronik handelt es sich um die Zeit zwischen Abraham und Adam, bei Eusebius P.E. X 9,18 aber um die Zeit zwischen Moyses und Inachus“ – und b) eine Ergänzung zu S. 285 zu 27 f.) Sync. 126^a: „Eusebius P.E. X 9,20“. Technisch bedingt ist es wohl, daß bei den Randbemerkungen in der Einleitung (S. XX, XXI, XXII, XXXVIII) – jedenfalls in meinem Exemplar – gelegentlich Buchstaben ausgefallen sind. Doch das beeinträchtigt den Wert dieses Buches kaum. Vielmehr spürt man auch bei der 3. Aufl. die sorgfältige Betreuung durch Frau Dr. U. Treu, die bereits die Drucklegung der 2. Aufl. überwachte und die für die Neuauflage eine knappe, aber inhaltsreiche Vorbemerkung mit