Simon Goldhill: The Christian Invention of Time. Temporality and the Literature of Late Antiquity. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press 2022 (Greek Culture in the Roman World). XVI, 500 pp. £ 34.99. ISBN: 978-1-316-51290-6.

In December 2023, the Oxford Union debated the following proposition: "This House believes that God is a delusion." One of the guest speakers, Phil Zuckerman, Professor at Pitzer College in California, endorsed the House's position.[1] He began his intervention by referring to the apparently ineluctable problem of speaking meaningfully about God. He observes that believers claim that God has "always existed" or is "present everywhere," all the while maintaining that one must eschew spatio-temporal concepts. Zuckerman sheds light on a fundamental and perennial problem of Christian theological discourse, namely how to describe the infinite, eternal, incorporeal God using language and categories that are ineradicably finite, temporal, and spatial.

Simon Goldhill addresses this topic and many others in his magisterial monograph on time in Christianity. Goldhill's research is motivated by the observation that time structures how one lives and understands one's life (pp. 3, 173). Yet the very measurement of time always implies theoretical assumptions (ibid.). These assumptions can be so fundamental that they escape notice, yet they determine every aspect of one's life. In particular, Goldhill identifies three major themes: "Modern Western culture has inherited thus a triple compulsion: the desire to see time as a natural and inevitable linear flow from birth to death; the desire to impose the order of measurement and regulation on this flow; the desire to break free from this linearity and transcend the bounds of time" (p. 215). Specifically, Goldhill emphasises the fact that Christian accounts of time have shaped and influenced both how we understand ourselves (= descriptive) and how we (should) live (= normative) (pp. 13–14). The encounter with Christian ideas challenges one to conceptualize oneself in temporal terms, to situate oneself within a specific temporal framework (p. 14). In other words, Christianity transformed the concept of time, which in turn changed how people live and experience time.

1 Prof Phil Zuckerman Asks Why God Would Allow Such Misery in so Many Devout Countries (3/8), video, 11:49, posted by Oxford Union Society, December 18, 2023. URL: https://youtu.be/y8NxAFnNphI?si=P-pgQu_VSlw39ZI0, (especially 2:50 to 4:08), accessed April 12, 2024.

Goldhill sees the explanation of such comprehensive changes as a question demanding explanation (p. 16).[2]

Goldhill opens his book by referring to the art installation "The Clock" by Christian Marklay (p. 1, cf. pp. 215–217), which "speaks to a uniquely modern sense of time, dependent on the social pervasiveness and accuracy of the clock" (p. 2). Such measurement of time – not to mention its monetization – is a new and specifically modern phenomenon, not present in past ages and cultures (pp. 3–4). A further example of this transformation of life through the measurement of time can be seen in relation to the rise of train travel, for instance within Europe in the late nineteenth century. As Columbia professor Brian Greene explains in his documentary "The Fabric of the Cosmos," Albert Einstein's theory of relativity arose within the context of the pragmatic challenge of synchronizing train schedules across vast distances, where small variations could have significant consequences.[3]

1. Motivation and Methodology

Goldhill's erudite study combines breadth and depth within multiple domains, including early Christianity (both East and West), Judaism, and Greek and Roman culture. Furthermore, the kinds of texts that he analyses come from a wide range of genres, such as poetry, scripture, commentary, mythology, and hagiography. This research reveals the fluid and reciprocal interaction between theory and praxis in early Christianity, one of the 'red threads' present throughout his argument. In Part I, several chapters include a detailed discussion of the context and background of Christian sources – whether in Judaism, Graeco-Roman culture, or both – before proceeding to an analysis of the Christian reception and innovation of earlier ideas.

A great virtue of Goldhill's monograph is the fact that, although he admirably builds a case for a distinctively Christian reconfiguration of time, he complements this with nuanced attention to the differences between various

2 For a book of similar scope and methodology, see M. Letteney: The Christianization of Knowledge in Late Antiquity. Intellectual and Material Transformations. Cambridge/New York 2023.

3 The Fabric of the Cosmos The Illusion of Time, video, 52:43, posted by Jamie C, July 11, 2021, URL: https://youtu.be/8Y-JmocB84Y?si=cBsZFhMl_q2j6x44 (8:30 to 10:53), accessed April 12, 2024.

sources from within the same tradition. Within early Christianity, the question of how to live within the world remained an open debate, for instance in the ambivalent relationship between the ecclesial hierarchy and the increasingly robust institution of monasticism (pp. 99, 389). Goldhill methodically brings to light these differences through his treatments of Nonnus, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Sulpicius Severus, and Orosius, *inter alia*. Even one author, Sulpicius Severus for example, presents contrasting understandings of time in different works, namely the *Vita Martini* and the *Chronicon*, respectively (pp. 396–398).

Goldhill takes great care to explain his research methods, which provides helpful clarity to his intricate arguments. For an adequate exploration of the complex and multifaceted conception of time, Goldhill argues that a wide-ranging analysis is necessary (p. 217), one which extends across both contemporary academic disciplines and different realms of life in antiquity (Jewish, Christian, Graeco-Roman). The importance of a critical account of time extends to all facets of human identity, personal, social, cultural, etc. (p. 215). Goldhill deliberately opts to study what he calls "the discourse of time" (p. 217) in recognition of the porosity between the theoretical and practical aspects of the experience of temporality. The author argues that to understand the Christian transformation of time, one must understand the various cultures with which Christianity was in dialogue and how the experience of time (re)structured human life (p. 8). In addition to the analysis of the intellectual content of the novel Christian conception of temporality and its implications for personal and social life, Goldhill also examines how such ideas were enabled to gain influence, in particular by their presence in institutions, such as literature (pp. 8–9). Late Antiquity was a liminal period, during which various groups were in competition for dominance, both within Christianity and Christianity in competition with other cultural influences (p. 10). Rather than giving a complete 'genealogy' or 'encyclopaedic' account of the conception of time throughout Christian history, Goldhill describes his chapters as "thematic." He deals with individual figures and sources, a strategy which enables him to demonstrate the effect of the Christian transformation of the understanding of time; through his treatment of these sources, Goldhill strives to reveal how the Christian transformation of time is seen in action (p. 14).

Goldhill's extensive discussion of his methodology includes reflections on the current state of affairs in contemporary academia and what he sees as

the accompanying negative results. He laments the effect of secularization on the academy, arguing that certain disciplines neglect the essentially religious nature of the texts they study (pp. 376–377, cf. p. 359). For example: "classical philology aggressively performs its institutional severance from theology" (p. 377). Certain fields, such as Classics, claim to be fundamental. If this is true, they must engage with broad questions. Thus it is necessary to cast a wide net in terms of genres and figures to explore a question as grand as that of time (p. 16). Goldhill endeavours to trace the antecedents of the modern understanding of time, locating this change within the context of Late Antiquity, in particular the literature, culture, and theology of Christianity. He writes that one has neglected how Christianity shaped and even continues to shape both the cultural understanding and experience of time. The correct understanding of time as a concept requires an understanding of its transformation in Late Antiquity and early Christianity (p. 6). Goldhill believes that this lacuna is partially due to the secularization of scholarship (p. 7).

Similarly, Goldhill argues that Philosophy and Intellectual History suffer from an inability to integrate a theological understanding of time and thus suffer from serious limitations. The Christian understanding of time grounds and explains the lives and actions of certain historical figures (Goldhill provides the admittedly exceptional example of Simeon Stylites), yet philosophy alone does not possess the ability to give a theoretical account of the lived experience of time within a theological context (p. 216). In other words, the explanation of Simeon's life requires theological and religious categories which certain disciplines simply ignore.

Despite his plea for the necessity of theology in exploring the complex matter of time, Goldhill's work also contains trenchant critiques of this discipline (pp. 376–377, cf. p. 359). For one, he acknowledges the difficulty of navigating the study of history, especially when one's (religious) sympathies can influence one's findings (pp. 11, 359). Furthermore – and in my estimation, of tremendous importance – is his observation about the residual presence of supersessionism within *contemporary* Christian theology: "faith determines reading, and the violent logic of Christian supersessionism continues to distort scholarship" (p. 359). In this respect, Goldhill's research brings to light a question which should open novel if vertiginous horizons of enquiry.

This point arises within his discussion of typology in early Christian sources. In Chapter 5 ("Time and Time Again," pp. 100–112), Goldhill demonstrates

how typology within early Christianity replaces the antique tradition of exempla (see also pp. 213–214) and the consequences of this transition. The Christian approach to typology is at the heart of the styling of the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament. Typology allows two realities to become symbols or τύποι of each other, such as Paul's portrayal of the Israelites as the forerunner of the Church or his depiction of Christ as the new Adam. In such cases, the types are temporally distant yet theologically close (pp. 107–108). He notes the contrast between the respective typologies of Origen and Melito of Sardis (pp. 108–112). The former places the emphasis on continuity, whereas the latter stresses rupture, indeed, a form of rupture which issues in a noteworthy theological insight. In any case, the discussion of early Christian typology must not be separated from supersessionism: "The violence of typology, which forces past and present into co-temporaneous models of each other, comes hand in hand with a supersessionist violence against the Jews" (p. 110).

Goldhill returns to this topic in Chapters 14 ("Day to Day," pp. 337–379) and 15 ("'We Are the Times': Making History Christian," pp. 380–419). In this respect, he also issues a challenge to Christian theology itself, accusing even contemporary theologians of neglecting the inherently supersessionist aspects of their tradition. As he writes, "the assumptions of supersessionism continue in Christian readings of late antiquity with a blithe failure to recognize the continuing impact of the anti-Judaism of Christian self-definition. Typology's political force is politely ignored" (pp. 110–111).

2. Structure and Scope

The book is divided into two major parts. The central research question of Part I (pp. 17–219) is: "What were the institutions and languages which structured the experience and understanding of time, and which Christianity inherited both from Greek and Roman cultures and from the Jewish tradition, and how did Christianity reshape such inheritances?" (p. 8). Part II (pp. 221–419) concerns specific locations in which the Christian conception of time is present, and indeed, in the process of transformation. In Goldhill's words, "These two large-scale, interlinked questions – how the fundamental changes in Christian thinking about time are to be understood, and how these changes are embodied and embedded in the writing of late antiquity – structure this book" (p. 9).

In Part I, which consists of ten essays, Goldhill investigates the development of the Christian conception of time. In this respect, he focuses on two distinctive implications. One has to do with the experience of time throughout life. The second is more philosophical-theological in nature, especially concerning how one conceives of eternity and eschatology (p. 8). At the pivot of the book he makes the following remarks: "In this first section, we have seen how the formative categories of temporality are reshaped under the jurisdiction of Christianity in late antiquity. It is time now to turn to see how the imaginary of time is formulated in detail across the texts and genres of the era" (p. 219). In Part II, Goldhill considers how the novel Christian conception of time influenced late antique literature. In doing so, he includes a number of genres, not limiting himself to, e.g., theological texts (p. 9). The entire work presents an argument, though chapters may be consulted individually (p. 13). Some individual chapters may be very useful for researchers in specific areas. For example, some of Goldhill's work deals at length with topics in, e.g., Greek mythology.

3. Christian Inheritance and Innovation

In Chapter 1 ("God's Time," pp. 19–44) Goldhill examines the mythology and epic poetry of the Greek tradition to identify its understanding of time. This includes material on figures such as Hesiod, whose thought about time was paradigmatic for the Greek world (p. 28). Key results of this investigation include the respective differences between the human and divine experience of time (*passim*); different ways of experiencing eternity (p. 27); and how Greek myth can reconcile divine timelessness with genealogy (pp. 28–29). Homer and Hesiod remained influential for the classical Greek understanding of time, which was inherited by the Cappadocians (p. 34).

The classical Greek dispensation admitted of three distinct senses of time: κλέος, καιρός, and χρόνος. Goldhill discusses these throughout Chapter 2 ("The Time of Death," pp. 45–63), situating them within the context of Greek literature and mythology, and the resulting desire to attain immortality through memory and progeny. In Homer, χρόνος denotes time not simply as duration, but associates it with decay. In contrast, κλέος interrupts decay, overcoming it by great events that will be remembered (p. 47). Καιρός is marked by punctuality, as opposed to the continuity distinctive of χρόνος (p. 50).

Following an extensive exposition, Goldhill specifies the importance of Greek conceptions of time, in particular καιρός, for Christianity. Within Christianity, time itself is essentially a form of waiting, indeed *how* to wait, and thus a question of ethics and praxis. According to Goldhill, "the arrival of the Messiah is the very definition of *kairos* as event or turning point" (p. 93). The Christian life becomes therefore a matter of waiting, of constant anticipation. This shift is evident in sources such as Gregory of Nazianzus, who "redrafts how the ordinary time of life is to be evaluated" (p. 63). This understanding is grounded in the scriptural and especially the prophetic tradition, leading to the Messiah's initial arrival and later return (p. 93). Central to New Testament literature, especially Paul, is how to inhabit this middle time, awaiting the παρουσία (p. 95). The promise of heaven makes life a source of anxiety, an experience Martin Heidegger located and analyzed in Paul (p. 99).[4]

The weight of this concept is received in the Christian worldview as the challenge of determining not simply the right course of action but the correct time to act, a decision which is definitive for one's (after)life (pp. 55–56). How one comports oneself especially at the time of death is crucial, as exemplified in the tales of the martyrs (p. 58). "The promise of immortality after the transition of death changes how human life can and should be experienced" (ibid.). As with καιρός, Christianity inherits yet transforms the Greek tradition on the time of death (p. 59). Within Christianity one witnesses a tension between the desire to remove oneself from this life versus the necessity of remaining within the world, as well as between contemplation and engagement (pp. 59, 63). As is clear, Christianity's understanding of the end changes the narrative of life and one's own relationship to time. Exploring the way that these fundamental changes occurred is a foundational element of Goldhill's research (p. 63).

Furthermore, this reconfiguration of life is inseparable from theological speculation. In Late Antiquity, time becomes theologically framed, thus changing the concept of the divine (p. 44). Christian and Jewish sources generate a distinct set of challenges about the nature of time, which distinguishes them from the Greek world. One must think of how God can be timeless

4 See R. Coyne: Heidegger's Confessions. The Remains of Saint Augustine in *Being and Time* and Beyond. Chicago/London 2015, specifically Chapter 1, "Heidegger's Paul," pp. 17–52.

and how God can act within time (p. 43). Furthermore, one must also consider how an understanding of God's timelessness can be congruent with the inherently temporal nature of narrative (p. 44). Thus Goldhill: "In the conceptualizations of late antiquity, however, at least for the rabbis, the Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine, the question is how to imagine God as timeless, how to imagine a divine existence without time, and the agency of a timeless God in the history of humans. There is now a theology of time" (p. 43).

4. The "Theology of Time"

In Chapter 13 ("Regulation Time: Gregory's Christmas Day," pp. 314–336), Goldhill treats of Gregory of Nazianzus' Christmas sermon, *Oration* 38 (in particular pp. 330–337). This homily is dated (not without controversy) to Christmas Day (likely 25 December) of 380 (p. 330). In this text, Gregory appeals to epic literature to argue for his understanding of divine time, in a polemic against both Christian and non-Christian adversaries (ibid.). This sermon begins with what Goldhill calls "the classical statement of God's time" (p. 332): "God was always and is and will be. Rather, 'he is' always. For 'was' [ἦν] and 'will be' [ἔσται] are the severances of our time and of nature in flux" (ibid.). In this formulation, one is reminded of Zuckerman's concern with which this review began. Talking about "divine time" often implicates the divine within human time (p. 34). Both Greek and Latin sources recognised the paradox of expressing the idea of timelessness in language, which is inherently tensed (pp. 34, 36–37, 42, 330, 334). Remarkably, even the original text of the Fourth Gospel includes sensitivity to the theological implications of verb tenses. As John Behr writes, the imperfect tense (ἦν) implies a sense of continuous existence, which could just as well be rendered with the present.[5] Indeed, divine eternity is incomprehensible to a temporal, finite mind (pp. 42, 330, 334). This position is influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy (p. 36). "Gregory repeatedly," writes Goldhill, "recognizes the insufficiency of such temporal language for God's time" (p. 332). The mystery of

5 J. Behr: John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel. A Prologue to Theology. Oxford/New York 2019, pp. 259–260. A similar point can be made regarding the tetragrammaton (YHWH) in Exodus 3:14. The interpretation of this term in the imperfect implies a sense of an action awaiting completion. See V. Kennick Urubshurow: Introducing World Religions. New York/London 2008, p. 63.

the Trinity is a primary locus for reflecting on the limits of human language and concepts (p. 37) and the incomprehensibility of God (p. 334). Goldhill draws attention to how the theology of time influences less obvious aspects of both theology and lived experience. Despite the abstruse nature of Gregory's theological speculation, it nonetheless "informs less directly theoretical discussion and becomes part of the narrative and the performance of Christianity" (p. 336), a point to which I return *infra*.

Goldhill dedicates two chapters to Nonnus of Panopolis (*floruit* fifth century CE), one on a Christian theological work, the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* (Chapter 11: "Beginning, Again: Nonnus' *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*," pp. 223–266), and the other a non-Christian work, the *Dionysiaca* (Chapter 12: "The Eternal Return: Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*," pp. 267–313), the former of which admits of certain resonances with Gregory, *inter alia*. Goldhill describes Nonnus' *Paraphrase* as an example of elite theological literature in Late Antiquity, as well as a paradigmatic example of the Christian transformation of time (pp. 265–266).

It is clear from the start that Nonnus' *Paraphrase* is highly influenced by Nicene theology and Christology (p. 244).[6] According to Goldhill, Nonnus' work constitutes an instance of "paraphrastic poetics at work" (p. 247), insofar as the *Paraphrase* offers a new way of understanding John. Nonnus incorporates language from the creed into his text, thus rendering his *Paraphrase* a theological argument for continuity between the Gospel and the Nicene Church (pp. 250, 265). Nonnus' gloss of John results in placing an emphasis on the continuous generation and procession of the Son from the Father (p. 249). The same challenges of language and conceptuality in Gregory are present in Nonnus' *Paraphrase* (p. 248).

Nonnus' version of John also raises a further implication of the early Christian reconfiguration of time, and indeed, one which constitutes a major focal point of this book. The Jesus of Nonnus' *Paraphrase* emphasizes the necessity of turning, conversion, in particular away from death, which is the end of one's lifetime (p. 260). In this sense, Goldhill speaks of Nonnus' writing as a "*metatropic* poetics" (p. 262–263). Through reading Nonnus' *Paraphrase*, "we

6 For a concise introduction to the intricacy of early Trinitarian theology, especially concerning concepts and terminology, see F. Dünzl: A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church. Translated by J. Bowden. London/New York 2007.

participate in a continuing reflective process of *conversio*, a turning to God, a turning of John, that allows no completion – the enactment of the *achronos*, the timelessness, with which the poem starts" (p. 265). It is to the matter of the living of Christian time, especially through conversion, that we now turn.

5. Conversion

Chapters 4 ("Waiting," pp. 85–99) and 9 ("Life-times," pp. 181–205) examine the complexity of 'conversion' in early Christian literature (see pp. 203–204).[7] Goldhill's research reveals that conversion is uniquely Christian, focused on a point of rupture, and analyzed retrospectively (p. 186). Within classical authors, one finds discussions of reversals, but nothing of the fundamental change of life that one finds in the narration of conversion (ibid.). Conversion seems to be a distinctively Christian innovation, developed from anticipations in the prophetic tradition (p. 183). In this respect, Goldhill focuses extensively on Augustine, whose account of his conversion is completely novel and becomes the normative model for conversion (p. 185). The call to conversion is a call to inhabit time in a new way (p. 184). For Augustine, one way of inhabiting time is delay, namely the refusal of conversion (pp. 384–385), a refusal which represents resistance to grace (p. 190).

Augustine views his biography through the tension between the present and eternity (p. 181). He can only understand himself as a creature, which is to say that he is always defined in relation to the timeless God (p. 182). Augustine's own account of his life is premised on theological commitments, namely his incarnate nature and *peccatum originale* (pp. 182–183).[8] Conversion is a movement from the now to the future and the afterlife, a reorientation of narrative (pp. 183, 190). "Life is divided between a before and after of conversion, and after conversion, life is structured as a process of witnessing with the constant anticipation of death as its climax. In contrast to the life-writing of Greco-Roman culture, education and character are not formative in the key moments of life" (p. 188). The decision to repent, turn, and change

7 See M.-A. Vannier: Aversion and Conversion. In: T. Toom (ed.): The Cambridge Companion to Augustine's 'Confessions'. Cambridge 2020 (Cambridge Companions to Religion), pp. 63–74.

8 For more on the incarnate nature of the human being in Augustine, see J. M. Rist: What is a Person? Realities, Constructs, Illusions. Cambridge/New York 2020, pp. 46–47.

one's life is implicitly associated with timing, and indeed, urgency (p. 183). "The timeline of a life-time is now structured around a moment of rupture. As human history is structured between the Fall of Adam and the Resurrection of Jesus, the Second Adam, so an individual life needs its crisis of change and rebirth" (p. 189). Conversion includes a retrospective account of one's life, in which one interprets one's entire biography around a crucial turning point (p. 183).[9] The narrative account of a person's conversion can always be reread and reinterpreted: "'the conversion account is both anachronistic and apologetic.' Conversion stories rewrite the past, and such rewriting is always open to re-reading (and further rewriting) by its audiences" (p. 189).[10]

Though they both underwent conversion experiences, Paul's and Augustine's were very different (p. 188). Augustine's approach to conversion differs from that of other accounts, for whom the 'before' of one's conversion matters little. As Goldhill notes, in the respective cases of Paul and Thecla, conversion happens immediately with no resistance, whereas for Augustine, it is a long and tortuous process, as recounted in the early books of the *Confessiones*. For Augustine, one gains extensive access to his interior psychological state, whereas this is not present in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (pp. 188, 191).

With regard to Augustine's view of the Christian life as a form of waiting, Goldhill also discusses the respective concepts *distentio*, *extentio*, and *attentio* (pp. 97–98). For Augustine, *distentio* is always related to dispersion and distraction. Time has a disorienting and obscuring effect on the mind (p. 97).[11] The answer to such disruption is *attentio*, "the attempt to turn oneself towards the immutability of God's time" (ibid.). By *extentus*, Augustine means extending oneself towards the eschatological future (p. 98). One can counteract distention through *attentio* and *extentio*: "For Augustine, to inhabit time

9 See also W. B. Parsons: Freud and Augustine in Dialogue. Psychoanalysis, Mysticism, and the Culture of Modern Spirituality. Charlottesville, VA/London 2013 (Studies in Religion and Culture), p. 20, n. 51; and B. Stock: The Integrated Self. Augustine, the Bible, and Ancient Thought. Philadelphia, PA 2017 (Haney Foundation Series), p. 27.

10 Goldhill quoting P. Fredriksen: Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self. In: JThS 37, 1986, pp. 3–34, here p. 33.

11 For more on the epistemic effects of the fact of time, see M. W. Knotts: On Creation, Science, Disenchantment and the Contours of Being and Knowing. New York/London 2020 (Reading Augustine).

is made bearable only by translating the *distentio* of the present, through *attentio*, to an *extentio* towards God's time" (ibid.).

6. Theory and Praxis

As already indicated, Goldhill repeatedly stresses the interrelationship between theory and praxis in the Christian imaginary of time. Concerning the latter, one can see how the theology of time shapes the institutional church (pp. 147–155), monasticism, and the practice of pilgrimage. Christianity builds upon historiography by imbuing it with theological content. History becomes a part of the argument for the truth of Christianity (p. 148). Eusebius operates within the classical conception of historiography but innovates by crafting a new way of viewing the world through his version of history (pp. 150–151). His overarching goal is to integrate Roman and Christian history (p. 154).

The Christian institution of monasticism was a major factor in the Christian transformation of time, and the importance of John Cassian in this respect cannot be overstated (pp. 82–83). Monks and nuns live according to a highly regimented order of the day, performing particular actions and reciting certain prayers at the appointed times (p. 82). Within monasticism, the "now" of conversion is indefinitely extended (p. 191). Monasticism collapses the aforementioned χρόνος/καιρός distinction. "The rule of the monastery," Goldhill writes, "provides a template in which the distinction either of *kairos* and of *chronos*, or of work and leisure, does not apply: all time is regulated to direct humans towards the worship of God" (p. 83).

Though some antecedents to pilgrimage are present in sources such as Pausanius and Lucian, Christian practice is far more complex (pp. 120–122). The novelty of Christian pilgrimage consists in how it transforms the pilgrim by making present past events, rather than simply recalling them. Pilgrimage sites, writes Goldhill, "[work] to efface memory and replace it with the present vision of the eyes of faith; to suffer alongside; to inhabit Christian time" (p. 126). Pilgrimage illumines the past and allows one to travel through time, to live the experiences of others (pp. 122–124): "Pilgrimage is to change one's experience of time, to inhabit another time's present" (p. 123).

7. The Politics of Time

One of the other red threads running throughout the book is the political, cultural, and social significance of time as a concept, and indeed, a construct. This material will be especially interesting to classicists and historians. Chapter 3 ("Telling Time," pp. 64–84) includes an extensive discussion – especially with respect to Judaism – about the religious importance of measuring and telling time; the ways in which time can and has been used as an instrument of political power and as a means to resist external authorities; and how social and cultural developments of the Industrial Revolution and modern science (not least of all geology and the novel concept of "deep time," p. 74) have radically changed how people inhabit and experience time.

Treatments of such topics can also be found throughout Chapters 5 ("Time and Time Again", pp. 100–112) and 6 ("Making Time Visible," pp. 113–131), the latter of which focuses on how time is employed for political, social, and cultural agendas, for instance in the case of inscriptions, sculpture, and architecture. Chapter 10 ("The Rape of Time," pp. 206–219) includes a discussion of the construction projects commissioned by Anicia Juliana (pp. 206–209). According to Goldhill, the ambition, scope, and speed with which her vision was implemented represents a 'violent' relationship with time. Indeed, power is often closely bound to time. Also noteworthy is the attention given to the political significance of simultaneity (pp. 132–141). Goldhill notes how the Jewish resistance to the Seleucid kingdom was premised on an alternative framework of time, which also provided a way to maintain identity (pp. 175–176).[12] This work also includes an extended treatment of how empires measure and narrate time (pp. 173–180). Following Paul Kosmin, Goldhill locates a key historical turning point in the Seleucid empire. This was the first political entity to measure time through a sequential ordering of years, rather than referring to the title of previous rulers (p. 173).

Philosophers will find pp. 156–172 of Chapter 8 ("Timelessness and the Now," pp. 156–180) particularly valuable. These pages contain an extended

12 For a more recent example, one could consider the changes in the celebration of Christmas in Ukraine. F. Dana/D. Litvinova: Ukraine Moves Official Christmas Day Holiday to Dec. 25, Denouncing Russian-Imposed Traditions. In: Associated Press, July 29, 2023. URL: https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-christmas-orthodox-church-calendar-b658c9ebecc91a470866c34b1c1847eb, accessed April 14, 2024.

and wide-ranging discussion of philosophical attempts to explain and account for time, as well as the metaphysical and existential challenges it raises. Somewhat surprising however, is the complete absence of Heraclitus (though his Eleatic counterpart Parmenides does appear). In this respect, the work of Patrick Lee Miller[13] can complement Goldhill's perceptive discussion of the philosophy of time.

8. Closing Thoughts

The foregoing discussion has revealed the extensive range of Goldhill's study. Nonetheless, there are still noteworthy omissions from this book. I offer the following not by way of critique, but rather areas of further interest for research. Goldhill gives relatively little attention to the Liturgy of the Hours, surprising given his overall argument. Apocalypticism and millenarianism are not mentioned, let alone discussed. His comments on Augustine's *Sermo* 80, famous for its idea that "we are the times" (*quales sumus, talia sunt tempora*), raises a broader theological question with variations in different sub-fields of theology. Historically speaking, is it possible to speak of arguments from providence? From the perspective of contemporary ethical and social interests, how is one to read the 'signs of the times,' so crucial to post-conciliar Catholic theology? It seems that from the affirmation of the goodness of matter within Christianity the goodness of time should follow. However, it is well known that the former topic is an extremely vexed question. Is there a 'discourse of matter/space' within Late Antiquity? If so, how does it relate to that of time? Is it possible or desirable to perform an analysis of it in similar ways to what Goldhill has done in this work?

13 P. L. Miller: Becoming God. Pure Reason in Early Greek Philosophy. London/New York 2011 (Continuum Studies in Ancient Philosophy), especially Chapter 2.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

Matthew W. Knotts: Rezension zu: Simon Goldhill: The Christian Invention of Time. Temporality and the Literature of Late Antiquity. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press 2022 (Greek Culture in the Roman World). In: Plekos 26, 2024, S. 351–365 (URL: https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2024/r-goldhill.pdf).