Heath also notes that the church fathers accepted that God had granted the state the right to use the sword for justice and that Christians were enjoined to obey the political leadership of their state for they were placed over them under God's approval. This issue became even more salient in the period following Constantine which caused bishops to take a more activist role in secular government, leading to a fusion of church and state that required a rethinking of the consensus (47). The result was a more militant form of Christianity as the state could now be used to bolster Christian orthodoxy (50).

Chapter 4 is the most interesting part of the book as it delves into the issue of just war and the practical problem of determining what is the proper use of violence. Heath lists twelve issues that hamper the ability of Christians to make such a determination, such as propaganda, national chauvinism, the fusion of national and religious motivations, and so on. This is made even more problematic when Christian denominations endorse their respective national government's war policies, which serves to allay the consciences of the faithful. Ultimately the church is very much a part of the culture in which it participates and is often a reflection of societal views rather than a voice of conscience.

Ultimately the book speaks to an ideal which few Christian individuals or institutions ever lived up to, and such an enormous survey covering so many centuries of Christian history leaves itself open to the criticism of too little focus on a particular issue. What I would like to have seen is more discussion of the historical tendency of establishment churches to use state power to secure a dominant position for their own particular denomination at the expense of competing Christian movements. There is much food for thought here and each one of the five points of consensus documented by the author could lead to a book length study in its own right.

John Shean
Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College/CUNY
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The Monasteries and Monks of Nubia. By **Artur Obłuski**. Leuven: Peeters, 2022. xxii + 414 pp. € 90.00, hardback.

Artur Obłuski, director of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, is a central figure in Nubian studies. His first book (*The Rise of Nobadia: Social Changes in Northern Nubia in Late Antiquity* [Warsaw: Journal of Juristic Papyrology, 2014]) will remain a standard work on late antique Nubia for the foreseeable future. This book, his second, will prove more influential. This 2022 Peeters publication is a reprint of the 2019 *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* Supplement 36, which in turn had its roots in a National Science Centre grant in Poland in 2014. The work is lavishly illustrated—hardly a page goes by without multiple pictures, maps, or floorplans—and well documented, with table after table of references to support every stage of discussion.

Obłuski aims to "present the material record of Nubian monasticism in a systematic manner" (3) and study it in a comparative perspective. The comparative approach is crucial, as Obłuski notes, because the Nubian textual record leaves little with which to understand Nubian monasticism on its own terms. Reference to Egypt and

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Constantinople—two centers of Nubian focus in the Christian period—is key. Obłuski sees "several fundamental issues" (5) in the study of monasticism: the presence and spatial organization of various monastic forms; monastic titles, hierarchies, and internal organization; and the relationship between monks and the world they claim to have left behind. The book's six chapters explore these fundamental issues.

The first chapter—and at over 100 pages, by far the longest—is a register of known or potential monastic sites in Nubia. The entries in this register are generous: Obłuski includes floor plans, photographs, bibliography, and extensive descriptions quoted from original excavations. His approach is cautious, noting where earlier scholars have asserted a monastic identity for a site that cannot be supported on present evidence. One comes away from this chapter with the impression that previous generations of archaeologists were overly optimistic, "finding" monasteries in too many cases where churches, forts, or mere habitations were at stake instead. By Obłuski's reckoning (113) only 20 of his 43 cases "can be confirmed or considered likely" to have been monastic.

The second chapter surveys textual sources for Nubian monasticism, including two understudied references in the Ethiopian synaxary. Obluski also notes the Ge'ez life of Saint Ewostatewos, on which see the more recent work by Olivia Adankpo-Labadie ("An Ethiopian Fugitive Allied with a Nubian King? Ēwosṭātēwos and Sābʾa Nol at Nobā through Hagiographical Narrative," *Dotawo* 6 [2019]: 9–22). This chapter accompanies the annex at the end of the book, a 65-page table of epigraphic sources from monastic contexts in Nubia. This table produces one or two minor irritations. It relies on material in the Database of Medieval Nubian Texts (DBMNT) and is therefore arranged by DBMNT number. This makes it difficult to know how many *total* texts we are talking about, or how many texts *per site*, since the sequence of texts in the DBMNT does not correspond to provenance. Further analysis of the data in the tables would be helpful: distribution by language, distribution by date, distribution by place, etc.

Chapter 3 surveys the varieties of Nubian monasticism and lets us visualize Nubian monasteries in a specific space, "on the outskirts of cities or villages" (146) or "on rocky outcrops dominating over the landscape," their physical presence designed to "manifest. . . Christianity and its victory" (145). Chapter 4 attempts a socioeconomic and spiritual sketch of the typical Nubian monk. The comparative approach is crucial: Obłuski uses the Pachomian Precepts, Syrian monastic rules, Judean hagiography, Byzantine *typika*, and more. The economic impact of Nubian monasteries would have been considerable, second only to the army (214). Nubian monks were active players in the "spiritual economy" (220) as well, praying for the living and the dead and producing magical amulets for local faithful.

Chapter 5, "Monasticism in Society," is the shortest in the book. Obłuski wonders whether "the world of Egyptian monastic literature is a fictitious one" (235), a reasonable question. It is just as difficult to escape rhetoric in Nubian monasticism. Archbishop Georgios, a twelfth-century archimandrite, boasts an epitaph praising his love of the poor and his care for orphans. Rhetoric, yes, but "to some extent it must reflect the charitable activity" of Georgios in real life (238). Archaeological remains suggest a Nubian monastic old-folks home at Hambukol, but without textual evidence we are uncertain. Legal documents are suggestive: Nubian protocols intertwine secular and religious officials, showing that "appointing monks to [state] administrative positions was not unusual" (240).

Chapter 6 discusses Nubian monastic titles. Table 7 collects epigraphic references to men described as *abba* in Nubia, and Table 8 collects monastic terms more generally: *monachos*, *adelphos*, *etc.* The monastic title *archimandrite* "is the most frequently

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occurring monastic title in Nubia" (284). Other titles we know from Egyptian monasticism appear in Nubia, but much less often. Obłuski recognizes a potential problem with the comparative approach here: Egyptian monasteries had a wide range of hierarchies and larger congregations. Transposition to Nubia "may lead to unnecessary complications of a much simpler picture" (300).

Scholars have viewed with skepticism the pure vision of monasteries as oases isolated from the wider world. In Nubia, this takes a specific turn: monasteries may have been state foundations, and one of the most important, at Ghazali, may have been the foundation of Mercurius, Nubia's New Constantine (310). Nubian monasticism, as Obłuski tells it, had a close relationship with the state: its monasteries were royal foundations; prisons for bishops; and homes for abdicated kings (309–311). This makes Nubian monasticism a special phenomenon, more Byzantine than Byzantium, but still a phenomenon at the mercy of the wider world. Its heyday coincided with the decline of Egyptian monasticism, suggesting "a period of Coptic inspiration" (307). Its decline in turn coincided with rising conflict with Mamluk Egypt, and that conflict's "pauperizing effect" on Nubia (311). Nubian monasticism, in this telling, seems to have been too much of this world to survive.

Giovanni R. Ruffini
Fairfield University
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The Slaves of the Churches: A History. By **Mary E. Sommar**. Oxford University Press. Oxford, 2020. xi + 268 pp. $38.95 hardcover.

In this monograph, Mary E. Sommar surveys ecclesiastical attitudes about slavery and the regulations applied to unfree dependents of the churches, from the ancient New Testament period through the thirteenth century. Sommar's central purpose is to correct "popular" claims that Christian teachings and the church "have always condemned slavery and were instrumental in its eventual abolition in Western society" (3). Instead, each of the six main chapters demonstrates that ecclesiastical leaders accepted the social and economic reality of slavery throughout this period and made no institutional effort to end it; in fact, the Roman Catholic Church did not officially condemn slavery until the 1960s (3–4, 253–254). Individual churches and bishops consistently were masters to enslaved persons, which were considered part of the *res ecclesiae*, or property of the church, which like land and other valuable objects could not be alienated.

To avoid teleological conclusions and conflating historical contexts, Sommar takes a chronological and geographic approach, covering territories from the Anatolian Peninsula to North Africa and Iberia, with an emphasis on western Europe (1, 6). Sommar's broad scope is balanced by the narrow focus of her questions, which center on the development of regulations for the slaves owned by churches, *servi ecclesiarum*, and to a lesser extent, ecclesiastical leaders' views on being slaveowners. To answer these questions, Sommar relies heavily on local and ecumenical canonical sources, along with ecclesiastical letters, sermons, charters, royal proclamations, secular law codes, and church donation records and deeds (6–7, 158–165).

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