

i braku zamykania się w określonym przedziale czasowym. Niezwykle istotnym dodatkiem do pracy są zebrane w jednym miejscu niemieckojęzyczne aneksy źródłowe w postaci m.in. statutów poszczególnych wspólnot wyznaniowych. Warto byłoby jednak umieścić je po części opisującej zakończenie pracy. W mojej ocenie zaburzają one Czytelnikowi lekturę. Może to doprowadzić także do pominięcia niewątpliwie najlepszego fragmentu opracowania, jakim jest zakończenie, gdzie zostały zebrane wszystkie wnioski wynikające z podjętego tematu badawczego. Z punktu widzenia warsztatowego w monografii wykorzystano bardzo bogato zachowany materiał źródłowy zgromadzony w archiwach kościelnych (np. Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Gdańsku, Archiwum Archidiecezji Warmińskiej w Olsztynie, Archiwum Diecezji Elbląskiej, Archiwum Diecezji Pelplińskiej) oraz państwowych (Archiwum Państwowe w Elblągu (z siedzibą w Malborku), Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku), w tym niemieckich (Evangelisches Zentralarchiv w Berlinie, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz w Berlinie), nie licząc niezliczonej ilości źródeł drukowanych z badanego okresu, a także opracowań historycznych. Uzupełnienie monografii stanowi również indeks osób i miejscowości, co ułatwia Czytelnikowi poruszanie się po konkretnych partiach dzieła.

W monografii bardzo trudno o znalezienie jakichkolwiek mankamentów natury merytorycznej. Opracowanie, pomimo obszernej liczby stron, czyta się bardzo dobrze, a język narracji nie stanowi większego wyzwania dla Czytelnika. W zasadzie od strony technicznej można byłoby przemyśleć zasadność wyodrębnienia IX i X rozdziału. W praktyce przedostatnia część pracy poświęcona działalności opiekuńczej i charytatywnej mogłaby zostać wcielona jako podrozdział poprzedniego rozdziału po rekonstrukcji jego tytułu. Z kolei X rozdział mógłby zostać ukazany w kontekście praktyk religijnych duchowieństwa katolickiego. Zważywszy jednak na treść tych części pracy można podjąć próbę obrony struktury założonej przez Autora.

Podsumowując, recenzowana publikacja poświęcona Żuławom Malborskim i Elbląskim bez cienia wątpliwości stanowi nowatorską syntezę opisującą dzieje wspomnianego w tytule regionu. Ponadto na gruncie badawczym Autor kontynuuje podjęte wcześniej tezy, doprowadzając je do 1945 r. Monografię można uznać za wybitną.

Rec. Karol Wilczyński

Catherine Nixey, *Ciemniejszy wiek. O niszczeniu świata klasycznego przez chrześcijan*, transl. Jakub Jedliński, Filtry Publishing, Warsaw 2023, pp. 416.

Catherine Nixey's book was originally published in 2017 and soon caused considerable controversy. Its author, a Cambridge University philology graduate, historian and journalist, has set out to describe the last centuries of the Roman Empire from a perspective that differs from that presented in most studies. Nixey stresses that this is not an attempt to attack the Church and the merits of monks in saving the heritage of ancient culture are very well described. In fact, the conflict between the now extinct pagan Rome and the new, Christian one, has so far not received the attention of many scholars. Despite this explanation, it is sometimes difficult not to notice a certain bias in the narrative. But how does the work present itself overall?

First, it has to be admitted that the subject matter discussed in this book is not very popular, so one can be glad that a translation of this work has finally been published. Apart from individual studies⁹ there are hardly any books on this subject on the Polish market. However, Nixey has attempted to sketch a much wider panorama of the social and cultural phenomena that accompanied the Roman Empire's transition to Christianity. Using numerous texts by Christian and pagan writers, she presents the whole process not from the perspective of the theologians who professed Jesus Christ, but rather from that of the last thinkers of old, pagan Rome – very much attached to the legacy of their predecessors who often disagree with the views of the new administration and most of the emperors who followed Constantine the Great (with the exception, of course, of the emperor Julian the Apostate). The author evokes not only figures of well-known critics of the new doctrine, such as Celsus, but also those somewhat forgotten – such as Damascius and Libanius of Antioch.

The first chapters are devoted to the phenomenon of the destruction of pagan statues and buildings, which reached its apogee in 392, when the Alexandrians led by Theophilus demolished the Serapeum. But destructive actions occurred earlier, when statues of deities in the temples of Rome, Ephesus or Palmyra were toppled and their hands and sometimes heads were cut off. In many cases, the sign of the cross was placed on the forehead of the statues. Indeed, it is difficult to defend, from today's point of view, these sacrilegious acts (as they were perceived by followers of ancient cults). However, the author rightly points out that this was due to the specific perception of the function of such statues at the time. For the ancients, they were not ornaments but the dwelling of a deity. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the early Christians, whose ancestors had shared similar views, saw these statues as a home of demonic presence. Also, representations of emperors who enjoyed posthumous worship as gods did not escape destruction. Interestingly, even sculptures depicting Octavian Augustus, who, despite his professed polytheism, had much in common with Christian moralists (e.g., his dislike of Ovid's vulgar works), were also destroyed. But the destruction of the Serapeum is described by the author as an unimaginable tragedy, and indeed was perceived as such by many of the old order's sages.

Problematic is the discussion of the phenomenon of requisitioning and burning books whose message Christians considered harmful. One can see here an all too strong attachment to classical literature, which may not be surprising, given that the author is a graduate in philology. Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford, Peter Thonemann, has stated that Nixey makes over-generalisations on the subject, based on rather vestigial mentions in the source texts. It is difficult to disagree with this opinion.

Further on, Nixey also devotes some space to the figure of Hypatia of Alexandria and her favouritism towards this scholar is not surprising. This is also an opportunity for the author to introduce groups of peculiar "God's soldiers," executing the will of individual bishops, such as the Fossorians and the Parabalans. The latter, at the instigation of the Bishop of Alexandria, murdered Hypatia in 415, although the circumstances of this event remain uncertain due to differing source accounts. Despite the divided opinions of historians, the author presents Hypatia's conflict with Cyril through a religious prism whereas many scholars tend to favour the claim that it was a political murder.

⁹ E.g., A. Krawczuk, *Ostatnia Olimpiada*, Wrocław 2008; P. Chuvin, *Ostatni poganie*, transl. J. Stankiewicz-Prądzynska, Warsaw 2008; M. Dzielska, *Hypatia z Aleksandrii*, 3rd ed., Krakow 2010.

A great asset of the work is its juxtaposition of the social teaching of the Church Fathers (e.g., Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom) and the views of the pagan Romans on morality. It is not surprising, therefore, that they went to great lengths to prevent young people from reading the works of Catullus or Ovid. An interesting development of this is a passage (in Chapter XII), devoted to the discovery of the ruins of Pompeii in the mid-eighteenth century. For the next two centuries, many of those finds shocked the public by their boldness, just to mention the images of the god Priapus. They were even not available to all visitors to the Royal Museum of Naples. This shows that, until relatively recently, the public living in the former Western Empire expressed similar objections to Rome's pagan heritage as did the early Christians.

In conclusion, Catherine Nixey's book is a worthwhile document, even if the reader disagrees with the author's point of view. Indeed, she is not entirely impartial. Practically always her sympathies are firmly on the side of the "pagans," which does not mean that the whole book is a pamphlet on the Christians of the first centuries AD. Most quotations from the source texts are accompanied by an appropriate footnote. Unfortunately, there are also isolated instances where there is no information as to where the quoted passage came from. The book fills a gap, and it is hoped that similar works will encourage researchers to undertake an even more thorough study of this difficult but important topic. Indeed, the author touches on a broad spectrum of issues (both those mentioned above and many others); but this makes individual chapters relatively short, as if there was not enough space for a more in-depth analysis of some issues. However, this is a matter of the author's conception and can hardly be seen as a drawback.

Rec. Tomasz Mączyński

Francesco Barbaro, *De re uxoria*, ed. C. Griggio, Ch. Kravina, Leo S. Olschki, Firenze 2021, pp. 425.

In 2022, the Leo S. Olschki publishing house brought a critical edition of *De re uxoria* by the Italian humanist and politician Francesco Barbaro (1390-1454) compiled by Claudio Griggio and Chiara Kravina. This work can be considered a „guidebook” addressed to men at the time, in which its author advised what exactly to follow when choosing a wife and what to expect from her in the marriage. This treatise belonged to one of the most widely read works due to the issues it raised, and for a long time enjoyed great popularity, despite the fact that its author spoke about issues he did not yet know from his own experience. When writing *De re uxoria*, Barbaro was about 25 years old and unmarried. As Chiara Kravina notes, it is difficult to determine when exactly this treatise – Francesco Barbaro's “first and only book” (p.3) – was written. It is only known that the work was a wedding gift for Lorenzo di Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici who married Ginevra Cavalcanti in 1415. In the introduction, Barbaro writes that while considering a suitable gift for Lorenzo, he concluded that the latter would be more pleased with a gift that would come from Francis himself rather than from his estate (p. 177-179), which indicates their friendship.