



Independent Agents or ‘The Devil’s Gateway’?

Women and Christianity in Late Antiquity: Perspectives from Material Culture

VORTRAG

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The rise of Christianity in Late Antiquity has an ambiguous reputation when it comes to its impact on women. The new religion offered novel opportunities for agency and authority, but it also reproduced enduring patriarchal structures. Whether we see Christianity as a force for liberation or a force for oppression, it cannot be denied that it changed women’s lives across the Mediterranean and beyond. In this paper, I introduce my research as the new Postdoctoral Assistant for Late Antique and Early Christian Archaeology. The main thematic focus of my work is the investigation of how material and visual culture can help us to better understand the relationship between women and Christianity in Late



Antiquity. I am particularly interested in how archaeology can offer new perspectives on the diversity of women’s lived experiences, especially women outside elite circles. In this paper, I will give an overview of my past, current, and future research

and will highlight selected aspects to illustrate my methods. I will discuss how visual culture can help us to reassess the role of female ascetics in society, how the archaeological remains of pilgrimage sites can reveal gendered practices, and how we can begin to build methods for gendering monastic space. Through these topics I will explore the role of women as religious and social agents, and the tension between material and textual sources.

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