

‘WHAT NOW LIES BEFORE THEIR EYES’:
THE FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY PILGRIM VISUALITY IN THE HOLY LAND

Julie Ann Smith

University of Sydney, Australia

In the Western Christian tradition, pilgrimage operates, at least partly, through spiritual ways of seeing which are culturally constituted, and responses to holy places are constructed upon complex ‘culturally inflected visual practices’.¹ Motivations for pilgrimages to Palestine in the fourth and early fifth centuries included prayer, self-instruction, and seeing the holy places.² This paper analyses the culturally specific visualities of pilgrims to Palestine during this period, locating individual responses in contemporary theologies of vision and the exploitation of the visual at holy sites.

As historical settings of biblical events, the holy places were conducive to spiritual visualisation. Christ’s presence had sacralised the ground, and the places of the Gospels made tangible his presence and reaffirmed the reality of salvation. The visual strategies of pilgrims generated or intensified spiritual engagement with the holy places and prepared their eyes to witness physical places and things, and to perceive, or visualise, the spiritual truth which those things manifested. In many cases the pilgrims had read about the places and the paths in the Scriptures and in accounts by other pilgrims before setting out, and had imagined what they would see. They were likewise encouraged to visualise events at historical sites through the accounts of the monastics who lived nearby. At the holy sites architecture (churches, monasteries, shrines and hostels) provided visual

1. Martin Jay, ‘Vision in Context: Reflections and Refractions’, in Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (eds.), *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 2-12 (3).

2. Pierre Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’orient: Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête Arabe* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1985), pp. 137-42.

signs to historical events, and the performance of rituals and the liturgy commemorated those events before the eyes of participants. During this same period churchmen such as Cyril of Jerusalem and Augustine of Hippo were exploring the theological implications of visuality, and the potential for visuality as a means of accessing spiritual knowledge. Accounts by pilgrims to Palestine make clear that seeing the holy places broke down temporal boundaries and enabled visualisation of holy events and people.

In this essay *vision* is understood as the physiological process in which information about the physical world is conveyed to the brain through the eye. *Visuality*, that is, what the mind perceives, is culturally constructed and conditioned.³ The mind does not apprehend the world through the physical act of seeing; it interprets or converts physical stimuli through cultural understandings about the world. This interpretation is the process of perception based in a personal cumulative experience of seeing which is conditioned through culture and memory. The eye and the brain produce vision; the mind perceives the world and invests it with cultural meaning.

For early Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, seeing was believing. The Old Testament, as prefiguring the events of Christ's career, was part of salvation history and hence its sites shared with New Testament sites their appeal to pilgrims who sought to immerse themselves in the spiritual events and meaning of the holy places. The early Christians mapped out the holy places, identifying the sites mentioned in the Bible and overlaying biblical accounts onto the physical landscape. The actual physical sites provided empirical evidence for, and evoked the spiritual reality of, holy events.⁴ The visuality of the pilgrim was predicated on receptivity, on the willingness and faith of the seer. Seeing provided access to spiritual knowledge or truth, and provided visual encounters with the sacred. Biblical realism was based in the history of the faith as articulated in the Scriptures. At the heart of biblical realism was the belief that real, historical events sacralised the holy places. Growing out of this was the perception that holy places could be imaginatively re-peopled and

3. S. Brent Plate, 'Aisthesis', in S. Brent Plate (ed.), *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 19-26 (21-23); Hal Foster, 'Preface', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (New York: The New Press, 1988), pp. ix-xiv (ix).

4. Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 91.

holy events imaginatively replicated where they were believed to have happened, 'on the very spot'.⁵ Immersion in the Scriptures conditioned pilgrims to see the historical event—seers saw what they expected to see. Between the imaginative and the physical they were able to *witness* the truths of the faith. Their visuality was active and purposeful as they saw the holy places and invested them with meaning. Through the process of biblical realism, seeing holy places and people enabled the eye of faith; visuality generated devotional practice.

There are a variety of texts, ranging from Eusebius's *Onomasticon* in the early fourth century to Augustine's *de Trinitate* in the 420s, which provide insights both into theological perceptions of vision and visuality and into the visual responses of pilgrims to the holy places. The pilgrim texts analysed here relate to the journeys and visualities of three pilgrims: the Bordeaux Pilgrim, and two holy women, Egeria and Paula. These accounts have received considerable scholarly attention yet the visualities they experienced, and explain in their texts, have never been analysed as part of broader contemporary understandings of ways of seeing the holy. These pilgrim accounts were written, in part, with the intention of recording visual experiences and of enabling the visuality of audiences. The other works discussed here provide valuable insights into the culturally specific visualities which informed the experience and spirituality of Late Antique pilgrims.

Theological Environments

During the fourth and early fifth centuries, which constituted the early years of Palestine pilgrimage, theologians were contemplating the notion of pilgrimage and, in particular, the issue of the visual as it pertained to holy sites. The pilgrims' accounts studied here may not necessarily have been directly influenced by works of particular churchmen but these pilgrims were clearly affected by the environment in which they travelled and wrote. The potential for exposure to the ideas of churchmen such as Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius of Alexandria, Jerome and Augustine, would have varied considerably. The intention here is not to establish direct links but to sketch the theo-

5. *Itinerarium Egeriae*, in A. Franceschini and R. Weber (eds.), *Itineraria et alia Geographica* (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 175; Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 2.2.

logical and cultural environments in which pilgrim visuality was promoted.

Foremost among the texts which informed the spirituality and visuality of fourth-century pilgrims was the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments provided the doctrinal basis for, and empirical realities of, the faith. Reading the Scriptures provided access to the real Jesus and his saints through visualised perceptions of the events described. Surviving pilgrim accounts from the period make clear that the places they chose to see and the spiritual value they gained were determined by the Bible and its narratives. At an imaginative and devotional level, physical presence at sites associated with Christ's life as recounted in the Scriptures enabled the pilgrim to overlay the physical landscape with the spiritual truths provided by the Bible. Through a 'reciprocity of text and topography', they underpinned the scriptural narratives with knowledge of the physical topography and structures of Palestine.⁶ Very few pilgrims could have travelled with Bibles in hand, but it is clear they carried its narratives, and the truths these imparted, in their heads and hearts. While the influence of the Bible on the visual experiences of fourth-century pilgrims was consciously invoked, and has been broadly represented in academic discussion,⁷ what has not been explored till now is the influence of contemporary understandings and concerns about the visual in shaping pilgrim visuality as it was represented in the accounts of their journeys.

During the fourth and fifth centuries a number of churchmen addressed, even if only in passing, the issue of visuality in the holy places. The earliest clerical expression of the potential for encounter with the visual at the holy places is found in Eusebius of Caesarea's guide to the

6. E.D. Hunt, 'The Itinerary of Egeria: Reliving the Bible in Fourth-Century Palestine', in R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), pp. 34-54 (41).

7. See among others Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, chs. 5, 6, 8; Georgia Frank, 'The Pilgrim's Gaze in the Ages before Icons', in Robert S. Nelson (ed.), *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 98-115; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Pierre Maraval, 'The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East (before the 7th Century)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), pp. 63-74; E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, AD 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, repr. 1998); Hunt, 'The Itinerary of Egeria', pp. 34-54.

holy places, his *Onomasticon*.⁸ This catalogue of biblical places emphasises what Christians could *see* when visiting them, and his language of seeing is reinforced when he emphasises that visitors can be *shown* the actual places by the locals.⁹ Likewise, in the *Vita Constantini*, the holy places were visual testimonies to the biblical truths.¹⁰ When the Saviour's burial cave was excavated at Constantine's instruction,

it took on the appearance of a representation of the Saviour's return to life...it enabled those who came as visitors to see plainly the story of the wonders wrought there, testifying by facts louder than any voice to the resurrection of the Saviour.¹¹

For Eusebius, seeing a holy place confirmed the biblical narrative located there and 'bridged the gulf between past and present'.¹²

During Lent in 348–49, Cyril of Jerusalem delivered a series of Catechetical Lectures in the basilica of Constantine's church in Jerusalem.¹³ Though the lectures were specifically directed at the catechumens, the faithful (including pilgrims) might also listen to the instruction.¹⁴ Being 'here' in Jerusalem, in proximity to actual historical places, was a recurrent theme in Cyril's lectures as it placed Christians in proximity to the events themselves.¹⁵ He repeatedly invoked vision as a means of perceiving truths of the faith, saying, 'be taught by what you see'.¹⁶ Under Cyril's instruction his congregation would, through seeing the places, be accorded proof of the events that had happened there:

[On the Cross] He was truly crucified for our sins. For even if you would like to deny it, the place visibly refutes you, this blessed place of Golgotha where we are now congregated.

8. *The Onomasticon by Eusebius of Caesarea* (trans. G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville; Jerusalem: Carta, 2003).

9. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 99.

10. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 3.25–28, 33, 40–41, 43.

11. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.28.

12. Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, p. 90.

13. *Cyril of Jerusalem* (trans. Edward Yarnold; London: Routledge, 2000).

14. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 46.1.

15. P.W.L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 333.

16. *Procatechesis* 4, in *Cyril of Jerusalem*, p. 80.

[On the Ascension] If anyone does not believe what I say, let them believe the very power of what now lies before their eyes.¹⁷

Both Eusebius and Cyril voiced an understanding that, it would seem, exemplified the Christian attitude to the holy places: once the site of a biblical event had been identified it became proof of the spiritual or salvific quality of that event.

However, while Eusebius and Cyril both promoted the salutary benefit of being in the holy places and encouraged the visualisation of the events which had sacralised them, other writers were less convinced. In the 380s Gregory of Nyssa wrote his letter 'On Pilgrimages', which was to become a hallmark for those who would decry the practice of pilgrimage. In this letter Gregory expresses concern for the maintenance of a rule of life if a monastic goes on pilgrimage, and points out that pilgrimage was not one of the good deeds named in the Beatitudes by the Saviour. Gregory questions the potential for place to encompass the Divine: the pilgrim should not 'imagine that our Lord is living, in the body, there at the present day, but has gone away from us foreigners; or that the Holy Spirit is in abundance at Jerusalem, but unable to travel as far as us'.¹⁸

While Gregory maintains in this letter that it was not necessary to see Jerusalem in order to know the truths of its history, elsewhere he refers to his own journey to Jerusalem 'in order to see in these places the signs of the Lord's coming in the flesh',¹⁹ and where he experienced great joy.²⁰ Bitton-Ashkelony points out that while Gregory may indeed have considered pilgrimage as unnecessary to faith, his criticism of journeying, to Jerusalem in particular, may have had its roots in personal animosities he encountered there.²¹

Athanasius of Alexandria was likewise concerned for the undermining of monastic stability which pilgrimage necessarily entailed. In his 'Second Letter to Virgins' (late 360s) he briefly rehearses their visual experiences in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and acknowledges their sadness

17. *Catechesis* 4.10 and 4.13, in *Cyril of Jerusalem*, pp. 100-102.

18. 'On Pilgrimages', in *Gregory of Nyssa: Select Writings and Letters* (trans. W. Moore; Oxford: Parker, 1893), p. 383.

19. In *Vita Macrinae* quoted in Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, 'The Attitudes of the Fathers toward Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999), pp. 188-203 (195).

20. Bitton-Ashkelony, 'Attitudes of the Fathers', pp. 195-96.

21. Bitton-Ashkelony, 'Attitudes of the Fathers', p. 196.

at having to leave the holy places and return to their community in Alexandria.²² This brief acknowledgement of their pilgrimage (two paragraphs out of thirty) is then followed by a long disquisition on the ideal monastic life for virgins in which he reminds them they are brides of Christ and should eschew 'the world's entanglements'.²³ Athanasius assures them that they 'have not journeyed far from the holy places, for where Christ dwells, there is holiness'.²⁴ It is not clear if Gregory or Athanasius influenced the flow of pilgrims to Palestine, but the few surviving accounts of pilgrims to the holy places do not reflect the concerns of either churchman.

Jerome, who himself made a pilgrimage around Palestine before settling in Bethlehem, seems to have expressed conflicting views on the appropriateness of pilgrimage and the value of seeing the holy places. As he was involved in the writing of at least one of the pilgrim accounts discussed below, at this point a brief review of his positions on pilgrimage and pilgrim visibility will suffice. Jerome lived in Palestine for the last thirty years of his life and wrote eloquently of the spiritual value of living in the holy places. In his *Introduction to Paralipomenon* he wrote 'the man who has seen Judaea with his own eyes... will gaze more clearly upon holy Scripture'.²⁵ In a letter (c. 393) to his friends, Desiderius and Serenilla, Jerome maintains that it is 'the duty of faith to have adored where the Lord's feet have stood, and to have seen the traces, as if still fresh, of his birth, his cross and his passion'.²⁶ Jerome encouraged several of his correspondents to make their own pilgrimages, and indeed wrote of the heavy strain on the budget of Paula's communities caused by the many pilgrims who sought shelter there. It has seemed a little surprising then to read in his letter of c. 395 to Paulinus of Nola a number of arguments against his friend's planned pilgrimage to Jerusalem. There are resonances with Gregory of Nyssa in Jerome's declaration that it is inappropriate to limit to 'a narrow strip of earth Him whom Heaven cannot contain'.²⁷ Paulinus should not be perplexed by Jerome's own

22. Athanasius, 'Second Letter to Virgins', in *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (trans. David Brakke; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Appendix B, chs. 1–2.

23. Athanasius, 'Second Letter to Virgins', ch. 5.

24. Athanasius, 'Second Letter to Virgins', ch. 3.

25. Quoted in Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 94.

26. Jerome, *Epist.* 47, *Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Latina* (ed. J.-P. Migne; Paris: Garnier, 1844–93), XXII, pp. 492–93.

27. Jerome, *Epist.* 58.3.

residence in Palestine as the latter assures him that ‘nothing is lacking to your faith although you have not seen Jerusalem and that I am none the better for living where I do’.²⁸ Jerome then describes the undesirable atmosphere in Jerusalem and advises Paulinus to remain in monastic seclusion at home. There were two interlinked problems informing Jerome’s position in this letter: his genuine concern that city life was antithetical to monastic life, and his personal and theological dispute with Rufinus, Melania and Bishop John in Jerusalem.²⁹ Jerome had lost other friends in the conflict and hoped to limit its impact on Paulinus. In neither of the letters relating to Paula’s pilgrimage (discussed below) is there any reflection of this ambivalence expressed by Jerome. He encouraged his friend and spiritual protégé to leave Rome and make her pilgrimage to the holy places, and helped her to establish their monasteries and hostels in Bethlehem. They both wrote letters encouraging others to make similar journeys and to visit them, and perhaps settle, in Bethlehem. Paula’s letter to Marcella was written shortly after her arrival in Bethlehem and she emphasises the quietness of their lives, thus reinforcing Jerome’s concern for the threats to the integrity of the monastic life presented by the bustle of Jerusalem. Jerome believed as earnestly as Cyril in the visual benefits of the holy places; his antipathetic stance in his letter to Paulinus had its foundations in other issues.

All of the churchmen outlined here expounded to their audiences both what they perceived as the implications of pilgrimage and the value of seeing the holy places. While they held strong views on the benefits or perils of visiting Palestine, none of them appears to have contemplated the relationship between bodily seeing and its spiritual implications. In contradistinction to this sits the work of Augustine of Hippo, who made no journeys to the holy places and apparently was not concerned with the potential, for either good or ill, of pilgrimage for others, but who invested considerable care in explaining the practices and value of visuality.³⁰ Augustine was concerned with the quality and nature of forms of vision,

28. Jerome, *Epist.* 58.4.

29. See Hunt’s discussion of the dispute and its impacts on alignments of other monks and pilgrims, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 191-93.

30. What follows is an attempt to encapsulate some fine scholarship on Augustine’s theology of the visual; in particular see Margaret Miles, ‘Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine’s *de Trinitate* and *Confessions*’, *The Journal of Religion* 63 (1983), pp. 125-42, and Roland J. Teske, ‘St Augustine and the Vision of God’, in Frederick van Fleteren *et al.* (eds.), *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 285-308.

and the value of, and capacity of the individual for, spiritual seeing. In keeping with Patristic and Neoplatonist ideas of his day, Augustine acknowledges an epistemological primacy of vision over the other senses. He theorises three levels of vision. At the lowest level is corporeal vision which is a conscious process; the eye can only see when the mind projects a visual ray to an object. While light is necessary to enable vision it is also necessary for the seer to project the visual ray consciously toward an object which is then absorbed into the mind where it is preserved in the memory and produces knowledge.³¹ Corporeal vision requires training to strengthen the eye enabling it to see brightly lit objects. The second kind of vision is spiritual and constitutes a conscious act of the imagination on the part of the seer. It enables a person to 'represent in thought the images of bodies even in their absence'.³² Spiritual vision, like corporeal vision, requires both external light and a visual ray. In this case the visual ray is a longing projected by the soul and the external illumination is divine; both the seer and God participate consciously.³³ As with the corporeal eye, spiritual vision requires strengthening exercise through a concentration of longing on the desired object. Through this process it was possible to see the Divine, though because of the strength of the 'light inapproachable' the spiritual eye can only glance at it momentarily.³⁴ But spiritual vision is not achieved through faith alone; it is attained through knowledge which can only be attained through authority (found in the Scriptures and Church teachings) and reason.³⁵ Spiritual vision is more valuable because it takes the individual mind to knowledge equal to that of the souls in Heaven. In order to achieve the *visio Dei*, intellectual training and commitment must combine with faith, though a momentary glance is the best the spiritual eye can achieve. The highest level of vision is intellectual and in this 'pure, imageless understanding, "transparent truth is seen without any bodily likeness"'.³⁶ This last form of visuality is not reflected in any of the pilgrim texts studied here and will not form part of the discussion. It is Augustine's first and second levels of vision, and his understanding of

31. Miles, 'Vision', pp. 127-28.

32. Augustine, *Gen. litt.* 2.190, quoted in Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 25-26.

33. Miles, 'Vision', pp. 128-33.

34. Miles, 'Vision', p. 134.

35. Teske, 'St Augustine and the Vision of God', pp. 291-92.

36. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment*, p. 25.

the need for visual training, which will be compared with the visuality of Late Antique pilgrims.

Exploitation/Organization of the Visual at the Holy Places

Among the many processes which contributed to the visuality of pilgrims in Palestine was the development of the architecture and liturgy which marked the holy places. As a result of the conversion of Constantine, Christianity had acquired a more public face, and open expressions of faith and recognition of holy places were endorsed. The emperor took personal interest in the physical denotation and celebration of key places of salvation history, and opened the way to a ritual celebration of its events. As part of his celebration of the life of Constantine, Eusebius described the visual significance of the site of the Holy Sepulchre as 'proof' of the suffering of the Saviour.³⁷ This promotion of the holy places as evidence or substantiation of the truth of biblical accounts was a recurring motif in clerical and pilgrim writings of the period. The architectural demarcation of biblical and early Christian sites was part of a visual and discursive rhetoric which claimed the holy places of Christianity and proclaimed the sacredness of its sites.³⁸ The strategic construction of churches and shrines in the holy places was designed, in part, to make them visible, to assist the faithful in recognising the sites, and, of course, to make the places beautiful as worthy markers of events and people in the history of the faith. Conant points out that in the construction of the Holy Sepulchre church, the natural features of Calvary and the tomb were not preserved but were covered with ornate structures and decorations.³⁹ From the main part of the basilica the faithful saw not the tomb or Calvary, but an opulent mark of their presence. In order to see the actual historical sites, the faithful had to enter the structures which enclosed them. The architectural marking of the holy places of Palestine exploited the symbolic and revelatory potential of the visible,⁴⁰ and the

37. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.30.

38. Cynthia Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early Medieval Saints' Shrines', *Speculum* 72 (1997), pp. 1079-1106 (1081-82).

39. Kenneth John Conant, 'The Holy Sites at Jerusalem in the First and Fourth Centuries', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 102 (1958), pp. 14-24 (17-21).

40. David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 161.

sacred itself thus became visible. Proofs of the holy came from an aggregation of two visual processes: the identification of a historical site and the architectural marking of it.

The transposing of textual accounts of biblical events onto the topography of Palestine and, in particular, Jerusalem, also gave rise to a place-specific liturgy in which the Christian year replicated key events of the New Testament.⁴¹ During the fourth century, a processional liturgy was developed that enabled congregations to move around and between holy sites and to incorporate them physically and visually into their devotions. The liturgy and processions were designed for visual impact and their performances presented visual lessons in the history and doctrines of the faith. Liturgy is premised upon visibility, that is, upon cultural ways of seeing, in order to fulfil its mimetic and doctrinal intentions. Spiritual relevance of place is fundamental to performance and meaning of liturgy, and in holy places this suitability of place is most acutely felt.⁴² The congregation of the faithful for a liturgical celebration of a biblical event formed what Vikan has called a 'living icon', that is, temporal distances dissolved and the worshippers were visibly part of the event.⁴³ This exploitation of the visual value of the holy places is most specifically articulated by Cyril of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Lectures delivered in the very place which witnessed the Resurrection.⁴⁴ For Cyril, the rock of Calvary, the tomb and the stone which was rolled away were clear evidence of the reality of the death and resurrection of Christ.⁴⁵ His hearers were called upon to recognise these facts, thereby separating themselves from the unbelievers and from those who decried Jerusalem as cursed. This physical presence of places and things which had witnessed events during Christ's life and death, and had been

41. Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 114-15; Julie Ann Smith, "'My Lord's Native Land': Mapping the Christian Holy Land", *Church History* 76.1 (2007), pp. 1-31 (26-30).

42. Pierre Maraval, 'Liturgie et pèlerinage', *La Maison-Dieu* 170 (1987), pp. 7-28 (12-14).

43. Gary Vikan, 'Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art', in Robert Ousterhout (ed.), *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 97-107 (101).

44. Cyril was Bishop of Jerusalem, c. 350-85; the Catechetical Lectures were originally delivered during 348-50 and continued to be delivered with revisions throughout his episcopate. See below, n. 63.

45. Catechesis 14.22, in *Cyril of Jerusalem*, p. 166.

touched by him, made those events accessible and seemingly contemporaneous.⁴⁶ During Cyril's episcopate, the stational and mimetic liturgy of Jerusalem was formulated as a means of letting worshippers participate visibly in biblical events, and as a set of visible lessons in Christian history. The liturgy exploited the site-specificity of the churches in which it was performed.⁴⁷ Only the faithful were permitted to witness the central elements of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, and to access the most sacred parts of the Holy Sepulchre church and its relics.⁴⁸ Catechumens were not permitted to enter the Anastasis or see the True Cross; their visuality was not sufficiently prepared to enable them to *see* the truths inherent in these things or in the liturgy.

Physical places were important to pilgrim faith and visuality, and the architectural settings impacted on their visual experiences. In addition to the official liturgy of the holy places were the everyday rituals of pilgrims, what Maraval has termed 'private liturgy'.⁴⁹ Many of the sites outside the main centres or the great monasteries visited by pilgrims were largely unadorned. At these sites pilgrims listened to site-specific readings and participated in appropriate prayers which were fashioned to enhance spiritual experience and enable visualisation of biblical events on the very spot. These rituals were not liturgical re-enactments but processes in which events were imaginatively witnessed. Both the official stational liturgy and the private devotions of pilgrims were elements of the visuality which, in part, formulated their experiences at the holy places.

The Bordeaux Pilgrim

46. Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing', pp. 1079 and 1081, is concerned with saints' shrines but the implications are the same for places associated with Christ's human life.

47. John F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), p. 103. Baldovin points out that it is not clear if 'it was Cyril himself who was responsible for this organization...however, the stational system does seem to have been very well developed by the time he died' (p. 85). Given that Cyril made such compelling representations of the evidentiary qualities of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre church it does seem very likely that he was influential in the development of the liturgy.

48. Georgia Frank, "'Taste and See": The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century', *Church History* 70 (2001), pp. 619-43 (622-24).

49. Maraval, 'Liturgie et pèlerinage', p. 28.

The account by the anonymous pilgrim who journeyed to Jerusalem in 333 CE has been studied by many scholars as a resource for the state of the biblical sites during the early years of their reclamation for Christianity, and as an exemplar of the places which attracted pilgrims during those years.⁵⁰ The Pilgrim locates the places visited in their biblical contexts and is ready to believe unreservedly that actual sites and things have survived unaltered through the intervening years.⁵¹ The account provides an itinerary which a pilgrim might take from Bordeaux to Palestine. It is a relatively unembellished text, only providing sufficient description to identify places of biblical interest. Leyerle has suggested, in his analysis of the biblical places visited, that the Bordeaux Pilgrim only visited sites which had significant architectural development: for example, Nazareth was not visited 'because there was nothing to be seen there'.⁵² The Pilgrim does not specifically address any audience but does intend that readers will visualise the places that she or he has seen.⁵³ Before the altar of the Temple of Solomon, the Pilgrim saw the place where Zachariah was killed and assures the reader, 'you would say that his blood had flowed there today', and of the marks in the stone floor left by the spikes of the soldiers who had killed him, 'you would think they had been fixed in wax'.⁵⁴ As one leaves the eastern gate towards the Mount of Olives, 'on the left are vineyards and the stone where Judas betrayed Christ, and on the right is the palm tree from which

50. See among others R.W. Hamilton, 'Jerusalem in the Fourth Century', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 84 (1952), pp. 83-90; Laurie Douglass, 'A New Look at the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996) pp. 313-33; S. Weingarten, 'Was the Pilgrim from Bordeaux a Woman? A Reply to Laurie Douglass', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999), pp. 291-97; James Elsner, 'The *Itinerarium Burdigalense*: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000), pp. 181-95; Blake Leyerle, 'Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrim Narratives', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996), pp. 119-43; Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 21, 55-63, 83-85.

51. Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place*, p. 235. See Douglass, 'A New Look', and Weingarten, 'Was the Pilgrim from Bordeaux a Woman?' for discussion of the gender of the Pilgrim.

52. Leyerle, 'Landscape as Cartography', p. 124.

53. Elsner, 'The *Itinerarium Burdigalense*', p. 195.

54. *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, in *Itineraria et alia Geographica* (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 175; ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz; Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), pp. 15-16.

the children took branches and spread them before Christ'.⁵⁵ A little later the Pilgrim guides the reader across Jerusalem towards the Neapolis gate and writes, 'on the left is the little hill of Golgotha, where the Lord was crucified. About a stone's throw from there is a crypt where his body was placed and on the third day he rose again; in the same place, by the orders of the Emperor Constantine, a basilica of wondrous beauty had been built to the Lord.'⁵⁶ While the Bordeaux Pilgrim's 'economy of words' may come from a period before the fullest realisation of the liturgy and architecture, and of the identification of the full complement of holy sites,⁵⁷ the Pilgrim was clearly aware of the potential for textual audiences to enhance their piety through reading descriptions of real places by someone who had actually seen them. The Pilgrim believes in what he or she has seen, and such graphic moments convey to the reader an opportunity to visualise the topography and architecture, but more importantly, to perceive the truths implicit in the holy places.

Egeria

Among the pilgrims of Christian Late Antiquity for whom accounts have survived, perhaps the most intentionally visual was Egeria, a Spanish religious woman who spent three years journeying around the holy places of Egypt and Palestine. Egeria visited the holy places for the express purpose of seeing them. The verb *see* appears recurrently, insistently, throughout her account, and is otherwise implied in her constant references to being *shown* places and things which are identified by the local monks and bishops as real sites and objects of the biblical record. Egeria's visuality is informed by the mode of biblical realism preached by Cyril of Jerusalem. Her account also affords the earliest surviving record of the liturgy of Jerusalem; she provides an eyewitness description of its architectural environment and explains its utilisation of the religious topography of the place.⁵⁸ Moreover, her responses are visual because of her commitment to enhance the understanding of biblical

55. *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, p. 17.

56. *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, p. 17. This seems to suggest that when the Pilgrim was in Jerusalem the beautiful basilica had not yet obscured the view of Golgotha and the Sepulchre from the street.

57. Hamilton, 'Jerusalem in the Fourth Century', p. 84.

58. Egeria's description of the physical appearance of Jerusalem would have been made in the (now lost) part of her account relating to her initial arrival in the city.

events and places for her intended audience, her spiritual sisters at home. Part of the text has been lost but the surviving material provides wonderful details of the places she visited, the monks and people she met, and the roads still protected by Roman guards. But most especially it provides insights to her personal visual experiences;⁵⁹ she is diligent in relating as much as possible of what she sees, explaining how the sites provide witness to biblical events.

Egeria's visuality is informed by her knowledge of the Bible and the information supplied by local monks and bishops in the places she visits. She desires to see places where biblical events took place: she climbs Sinai to see the place where God told Moses to remove his shoes, is shown the rock where he broke the tablets of stone, and traces the paths taken by Moses and the Children of Israel in their wanderings. These places need no physical markers, only to have been identified from the Bible. Near Mount Nebo, Egeria's group visits a monastery where they see 'a plentiful spring flowing from the rock, beautifully clear and with an excellent taste'. The local monks tell them it is 'the water which holy Moses gave the children of Israel in this desert'.⁶⁰ On the summit of Nebo they are shown a church containing the burial place of Moses, and Egeria points out, 'it is certain he was buried there by angels for there is a memorial to him shown there today'.⁶¹ Egeria's visuality, as she expresses it in the surviving part of her account, reflects Cyril of Jerusalem's perception of holy places as proofs of sacred events. By the time she was writing this description of her second trip to Egypt, she had already spent a considerable part of her three-year pilgrimage in Jerusalem, and her explanation of the Jerusalem liturgy suggests that she could well have been present during the annual preaching of the Lenten Catechetical Lectures. Wilkinson suggests that the surviving lectures from the late 340s continued to be delivered, perhaps with revisions, each year during the period of Cyril's episcopate,⁶² and Egeria may have engaged with

59. The surviving part of the *Itinerarium Egeriae* covers perhaps only the last year of her pilgrimage. There is no surviving description of her travels or places she visited from the period before the text's opening during her second journey to Egypt and Sinai.

60. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 11.2-3.

61. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 12.2.

62. John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 3rd edn, 1999), p. 57.

Cyril's ideas of the evidentiary nature of the holy places and employed them in her visual experiences at Mount Sinai and the other holy places.

Egeria was very impressed with the Jerusalem liturgy as it reflected the historical significance of the places where it was performed.⁶³ She describes the visual effects of processions of old and young (singing hymns and carrying branches on Palm Sunday or candles on Good Friday) between the sites where key events of Jesus' life took place. At the close of the morning prayers on Good Friday the bishop encourages the faithful to return at eight o'clock 'so that from that hour till midday you can see the holy Wood of the Cross, which, as every one of us believes, is beneficial for salvation'.⁶⁴ The Wood of the Cross is placed on a table so each member of the congregation can see and kiss it.⁶⁵ On major festivals such as Epiphany and Easter Sunday, the decoration of the great churches of Jerusalem and Bethlehem

is too much to write about. You can see nothing but gold and jewels and silk; for the hangings you see are gold-striped silk, and the curtains are also of gold-striped silk. Moreover any vessel that is displayed on that day is of gold and jewels. And how is it possible to write of the number and weight of candles and tapers and lamps, and of the various vessels which are visible?⁶⁶

Egeria makes clear that the exploitation of the visual had the anticipated impact on those who saw it: it enhanced belief and encouraged devotion. On the Sunday after Easter, in the Sion church, the bishop read the Gospel account of Thomas's refusal to believe in Jesus' resurrection unless he had seen for himself.⁶⁷ Egeria and the rest of the congregation could not ask for such bodily evidence, but they might effectively visualise the events and their truths through being at the actual sites and through witnessing these sites in all their sumptuous glory.

Egeria likewise appreciated the site-specific rituals of the holy places away from the main centres. She and her fellow-pilgrims heard passages appropriate to the places they were visiting read from the Bible on many occasions. She recounts, 'it was always our practice when we managed to reach one of the places we wanted to see to have first a prayer, then a

63. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 31.1, 32.1, 35.3-4, 37.6, 39.5, and especially 47.5.

64. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 36.5.

65. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 37.1-2.

66. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 25.8-9.

67. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 39.5.

reading from the book, then to say an appropriate psalm and another prayer'.⁶⁸ There was the (often quoted) moment when, in the unpretentious (*non satis grandis*) church at the summit of Mt Sinai, they had a reading from the Book of Moses 'on the very spot', after which they made the Offering and received Communion.⁶⁹ These readings, rituals, and usually simple settings, formulated pilgrims' experience of holy sites and allowed them to visualise biblical stories on the very spots where they happened, and to fill the visible landscape with invisible holy people and events.

Egeria's seeing in the holy places is translated into words to be read by her sisters, her descriptions giving visual fullness to the biblical narratives and providing testimony of their reality. It is very clear that she had prepared her visuality before she left home. She was well-versed in biblical history and had reassured her sisters that she would write to them of the spiritual evidentiary quality of the places she would visit. Egeria and her sisters wanted to know what the holy looked like; they could imagine it from biblical accounts, but Egeria's physical access and her descriptions provided the absent women with another level of visuality. Egeria conveys what she has seen to her sisters through evoking the biblical events, which she is confident will be adequate to help them visualise what she has seen physically. After several strenuous days of being shown around the Mount Sinai sites associated with Moses and his followers, Egeria comments:

So each thing, whatever was written in the books of holy Moses as taking place here, that is in the valley which he said lay below the Mountain of God, that is holy Sinai, was shown to us. To write of every single thing has been quite a task, because it is not possible to remember so much. But it may help you, in reading the holy books of Moses, accurately to see, loving sisters, what happened in that holy place.⁷⁰

For Egeria, seeing is proof, and her account of seeing is intended to be proof to her sisters: 'Along the way the holy men, that is the priests and monks, showed us every place mentioned in the Scriptures, which I always asked [them to do].'⁷¹ While Egeria is confident that she is seeing actual sites from biblical accounts she is also candid when she cannot see something:

68. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 10.7.

69. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 3.6.

70. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 5.8.

71. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 7.2.

Also the place with the inscription to Lot's wife was shown to us, which you may read about in the Bible. But believe me, reverend ladies, the very column is not visible, only the place itself is shown. The column is said to be covered by the Dead Sea. Certainly we saw the place but we did not see the column, and I cannot deceive you about this matter.⁷²

She is also entranced by some of the physical sights of the places she visits; of the mountains around Sinai she explains:

I want you to know, reverend ladies and sisters, that from this place where we were standing, that is, near the wall of the church, from the summit of the mountain in the middle...I do not suppose that I have ever seen any that were higher.⁷³

From the summit of Mount Nebo 'can be seen most of Palestine, which is the Promised Land, and also all the land of Jordan, as far as the eye is able to see'.⁷⁴ Egeria's description of her journeys about the holy places constitutes a witness to the biblical sites. Her work is not simply a record of her journey but is designed to provide elucidation for her sisters to enable them to visualise the physical places they could only read about in the Bible. Egeria and her sisters were convinced that seeing the places where biblical events took place provided substantiation of those events. Places are situated in their biblical contexts to ensure that her audience can share in what was seen, and to reassure herself and her sisters of the authenticity of her experience of the holy. Her journey was for her own spiritual benefit, in order to see the physical places of the Bible; her account was to help her sisters see the holy places with spiritual eyes.

72. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 12.7.

73. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 3.8.

74. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 12.5.

Paula

The Roman matron Paula also journeyed about the holy places of Egypt and Palestine in the late fourth century. The accounts of her experience as a pilgrim come from two letters included in the extensive correspondence of St Jerome. The first was written to Marcella, a holy woman living in Rome, inviting her to join Paula and her daughter Eustochium in the Holy Land.⁷⁵ Paula devotes part of the letter to describing the pilgrimage they would make together to the holy places if Marcella would make the journey.⁷⁶ This letter, dated to 386, was written shortly after Paula settled in Bethlehem subsequent to her pilgrimage around the holy places. The second was included in a very long eulogistic letter written by Jerome ostensibly to Paula's daughter, Eustochium, shortly after her mother's death and some twenty years after the pilgrimage it recounts.⁷⁷ As both Eustochium and Jerome were living in Bethlehem and had been inseparable from Paula during her years in the Holy Land, this form of address is clearly a rhetorical device and the letter intended for another audience. In both of these letters Paula's visual experience of the holy places is recounted. The letters emphasise the visibility achievable in places which had witnessed key moments in Jesus' human life; in the historical places, they declare, it is possible to *see* him.

Paula arrived in the Holy Land shortly after Egeria's departure. Cyril's legacy is unlikely to have changed and she would have been exposed to the same liturgy and architecture which had impressed Egeria. Paula does not mention either, but shares Egeria's visibility in seeing the actual places as biblical realities. Paula's letter traces biblical sites as a proposed pilgrimage itinerary for Marcella, starting with their

75. Jerome, *Epist.* 46.

76. This letter is usually assumed to have come from Jerome's pen even though the manuscript tradition assigns it to Paula and Eustochium. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, repr. 1991), p. 286 n. 70, makes a strong case for Paula's authorship. She was clearly capable of performing the task of letter writing (as was Marcella, to whom several letters in the collected correspondence have been ascribed), and Jerome himself praises her scholarship.

77. Jerome, *Epist.* 108. The account of the pilgrimage of Paula, Jerome, and their companions, takes up seven chapters of the total of thirty-five which comprise the letter.

projected meeting on the ‘shore of Palestine’ and ending in ‘our cave [in Bethlehem]’. Paula promises that visuality will form a fundamental element of Marcella’s experience of the holy places: ‘As often as we enter [the Lord’s grave] as many times we will see the Saviour lying dead and wrapped in cloths; and lingering just there a little we see again the angel seated at his feet, and at his head the folded cloth.’⁷⁸ Paula assures her friend of the site of the Nativity in Bethlehem:

with what language and what speech can we set before you the cave of the Saviour? That stable in which the little infant cried, can best be honoured by silence, for speech is feeble in honouring it...See in this little crevice of the earth the maker of the heavens was born!⁷⁹

Paula entreats,

Will the day never be when it is possible for us to enter the Saviour’s cave, to weep in the Saviour’s tomb with our sister, to weep with our mother? ...to see Lazarus come forth in his shroud cloths, and the waters of the Jordan purified for the washing of the Lord...we will see Galilee...in the distance can be seen Cana where the water was changed into wine. We will see where the five thousand were satisfied with five loaves in the desert.⁸⁰

Paula evokes the holiness of these places through a biblical realism similar to that of Egeria: seeing the actual places is a devotional act which reinforces the truths known through biblical study. Paula, whose purpose in writing the letter is to entice Marcella to make the journey, encourages her friend to visualise what she will actually see in the holy places. But at times, she moves beyond that simple association of physical sites with biblical events and people which informs the experience of the Bordeaux Pilgrim or Egeria; Paula assures Marcella that they will ‘see the Saviour lying dead’, they will ‘see Lazarus come forth’.

The mode of visuality promised by Paula to Marcella is again evoked by Jerome in his account of the journey he and Paula had made together around the holy places. The greater part of this account of Paula’s pilgrimage consists of a long itinerary of ‘such places as are named in the sacred books’ each of which Jerome tags with biblical references and quotations. Inserted into this exegesis of place (which says more of Jerome’s knowledge of the Bible than of Paula’s pilgrimage or her holiness), are brief moments in which he reflects on her personal journey

78. Jerome, *Epist.* 46.5.

79. Jerome, *Epist.* 46.11.

80. Jerome, *Epist.* 46.13.

and the exceptional visuality she experienced. Her initial departure from Rome had been driven by her desire 'to see Jerusalem and the holy places'.⁸¹ He mentions that she saw such places as the column of the Flagellation, the room of the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the city of Jericho. However, he also recounts that in two places her visuality attained an exceptional state which surpassed simple biblical realism. The first was in the Calvary chapel where 'before the Cross she threw herself down in adoration as though she saw the Lord hanging there'.⁸² The second was in Bethlehem when,

entering the cave of the Saviour, after seeing the inn made sacred by the Virgin, and the stable where the ox knew its owner and the ass the crib of its Lord...she swore in my hearing that she saw with the eyes of faith the infant Lord in swaddling cloths crying in the manger, [she saw] the Magi adoring, the star shining from above, the virgin mother suckling solicitously...[she saw] the little slaughtered ones, the raging Herod, Joseph and Mary fleeing into Egypt.⁸³

As with Egeria, Paula's visits to the holy places broke down the temporal boundaries between her own time and that of the biblical events. However, at times Paula's 'eyes of faith' separate her visuality from that encouraged by Cyril of Jerusalem and experienced by other pilgrims. She sees in ways that Augustine was beginning to evaluate around the time of her death.⁸⁴ Like other pilgrims, Paula experiences a visuality founded in the history of the faith and the geographical identification of place with historical event. Like other pilgrims, she has trained her spiritual eyes through knowledge of the Scriptures, and has focused the longing necessary to produce the visual ray of her eyes of faith. The spiritual vision of pilgrims such as Egeria and the Bordeaux Pilgrim enables the representation of the holy in thought. However, unlike other pilgrims who see places as witnesses of biblical events, and the truths which invest physical place with holiness, Paula sees ordinary events and the Saviour himself. She achieves that momentary 'glance' which Augustine would reserve to the souls in Heaven and to those very

81. Jerome, *Epist.* 108.7.

82. Jerome, *Epist.* 108.9.

83. Jerome, *Epist.* 108.10.

84. It is not impossible that Paula was aware of Augustine's work as he and Jerome corresponded, though nothing has survived to indicate that Augustine had shared his ideas with the Bethlehem community.

few souls sufficiently cultivated in knowledge and longing.⁸⁵ Other pilgrims prepare their knowledge and longing, and see the physical places, believing in the events which have sanctified them. Paula's spiritual eyes achieve the passionate attention which the two-way process of spiritual seeing (that is, the visual ray of longing and divine illumination) enables.

The visualities related in these accounts were not intended as purely representational; the texts were also written to enable the visibility of their audiences. The pilgrims endeavoured, through the only medium available to them (the written word), to convey what they had seen; that is, they rendered the holy visible through verbal description. Their descriptions might only aid audiences if the latter had also prepared their spiritual eyes, if they had knowledge of the Scriptures and the desire to see. The visualities made possible by these pilgrims through seeing the holy places were part of a reciprocal dialogue between seers and their audiences.

Conclusion

The visualities encompassed in the accounts of the pilgrimages of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, Egeria and Paula spring from complex spiritual, historical and textual processes. These visualities flourished during the years which witnessed the mapping of the Christian holy land and the invention of Christian pilgrimage. They came about because the places that witnessed the key events of Christian history were, thereby, evidence of its truths. Perceiving historical places as evidence rendered the historical events continuously 'present' and helped pilgrims visualise their truths. In order to see the truths, the spiritual eyes of pilgrims needed to be prepared. Usually this was achieved through reading the Bible and other exegetical works, and this knowledge enabled a faith which was enhanced through the desire to see its historical places. The visibility of pilgrims was aided at the holy places through the physical symbolism of architecture and decoration, and through the performance of memorial and mimetic rituals and liturgy (the latter also helping to suspend temporal distance). The visualities achieved by individual pilgrims can only be assessed where individual accounts are available, and the accounts of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, Egeria and Paula are invaluable in this regard. Egeria's visibility is historical; she has trained her spiritual eyes through knowledge and desire, and believes that the places

85. Teske, 'St Augustine and the Vision of God', p. 287.

she sees are the sites of actual, scriptural events. She traces the maps and signs of Christianity as evidence of its spiritual realities. This helps her, and, in turn, her sisters, the better to visualise events in their physical settings. The visuality of the Bordeaux Pilgrim is also historical, though it lacks some of the knowledge, and the exposure to liturgical and architectural embellishment, which would inform Egeria's experience fifty years later. Paula's visuality likewise springs from knowledge and desire but is elevated to an altogether different plane through the attainment of divine illumination; she achieves a mystical, momentary glance of the Divine. The visualities of Egeria and Paula have resonances with the teachings of Cyril and Augustine. We have no way of knowing how extensively these ways of seeing permeated pilgrim consciousness in the fourth and early fifth centuries but it seems most likely that Cyril touched a great many lives in his forty-five year episcopate, and the thousands of monks who peopled the holy places and deserts of Palestine had ample opportunity to encourage visitors to see what Egeria saw. One of the values of the surviving texts is that they enable us to locate pilgrim ways of seeing within culturally specific visualities of this formative period of Christianity.