

Dorottya GÁSPÁR, Christianity in Roman Pannonia. An evaluation of Early Christian finds and sites from Hungary, BAR International Series 1010, Oxford 2002, pp. 311, figures (maps, plans, drawings, black and white photographs) 397.

As transpires from its subtitle, this book deals with the material evidence for Early Christianity of the northern portion of the Roman province of Pannonia, i. e. *Pannonia Prima* and *Pannonia Valeria*. The first version of the manuscript was completed in 1994, but was subsequently rewritten and updated, due partly to the evidence for Early Christianity in southern Pannonia, which was published approximately at that time. On account of some technical drawbacks, concerning mostly the translation from Hungarian, it took eight years for this eagerly awaited and long overdue book to appear before the public; it should now be welcomed for more than one reason.

First of all, from a viewpoint of a scholar like myself, whose field of interest is the Early Christianity of southern Pannonia, the facts about the northern portion of the province are indispensable for a better understanding of the Early Christian period also in its southern part. Only by viewing the province as a whole can we hope to grasp the reasons for obvious incongruities and apparent absurdities in the spread of Christianity and in forms of its material remains between the two parts of Pannonia. The core of the problem is in the fact that while quite a considerable number of written documents concern the territory of southern Pannonia (the majority, save its easternmost part, belonging to northern Croatia), its material remains are very scanty. This illogicality seems to be enhanced by quite the reverse situation in Northern Pannonia (Hungary), with its richer material evidence and the lack of written sources. The discrepancy between the material remains is particularly outstanding in architecture; a nearly complete lack in northern Croatia as opposed to quite an abundance in Hungary. A book like the one under review here should either help in clearing the historical background of this situation, or perhaps prove that it was based on ill-founded presumptions. Further, a considerable body of literature has been written on Early Christianity in Hungary. As far as I know, the most recent general survey dates from 1994 (E. Tóth, *Das Christentum in Pannonien bis zum 7. Jahrhundert nach den archäologischen Zeugnissen*). It was, however, not thoroughly comprehensive. Besides, according to the (justified) opinion of D. Gáspár, the earlier studies on Early Christianity in the territory of Hungary suffered from weaknesses, among others those of prejudice and bias, a deficiency that is otherwise more or less inherent to many scholars of Early Christianity. A quotation from p. 5 is quite enlightening in this respect: "Up to now the research has rolled a straw-stack as an avalanche, which has been produced in the past six decades, by the superficiality in the works, the unevenness of research, and the emotionally influenced research...I decided to revise whether all finds and sites were virtually Christian, which had been thought to be Christian before...with steadfast severity, I deprived of their Christian titles all the finds and

sites whose non-Christian character could be proved or at least their Christian character became uncertain". As opposed to the criticised attitude of bias and recklessness in presenting the subject matters of Early Christianity, D. Gáspár finds A. Mócsy's summary of 1990 (which unfortunately I have not had opportunity to see) as highly edifying and instigating in its outright detection of critical problems and the suggested directions toward their resolving. Following in his steps, she claims that the condition to fulfil the above proclaimed goals lies in the establishment of sound criteria for the exact assessment of Christian subject matters. In sum, this book was meant to provide a so far missing exhaustive and critical study of Early Christian sources and, especially, material remains, from the territory of Hungary. Moreover, it is supposed to be more than just an analysis, however thorough and highly critical, of objects and facts, but should instead result in their putting into the context of the historical circumstances and Christian viewpoints. In this review I shall seek to answer if these demanding objectives have eventually been achieved.

The book comprises the following chapters: *I. Acknowledgements, II. Introduction, III. The System and Method, IV. History of Research, V. Topography – Finds and Sites* and *VI. Historical Evaluation*. Bibliography deserves special mention, as with its more than 900 titles it best illustrates the vastness of material comprised and an impressive erudition with which it has been handled. Chapter V, the most extensive of all, encompasses 62 entries arranged in alphabetical order. The entries on finds comprise such elements as location, provenance, literature, description and commentary, while those on sites, occasionally quite extensive, are additionally provided with research history, historical evaluation and summary, containing as a rule also commentaries on particular issues, structures or finds. Of the introductory chapters (I-IV), III and IV cover the exposition of the scope, objectives and methods, while in chapter II one very important issue of the archaeology of late Roman and Early Christian Pannonia is addressed, namely that of the distinction between the Classical and the Migration Period. By including all of the 5th century and even part of the 6th in the Roman Period, the authoress took the right course which enables the Christian material evidence to be more successfully evaluated against the background of late antiquity. To my opinion, to split the period between the 3rd and 6th centuries into two distinct horizons (Roman, up to the 4th century, and Barbarian, comprising 5th and 6th centuries) was a sad mistake of Pannonian archaeological scholarship, and one that most crippled exactly the Early Christian discipline by leaving it in a state of limbo. The Christianity of the Romans might have had some doctrinal and material manifestations different from that of the Barbarians, but generally it remains the same religion developed on the basis of Roman civilisation.

The finds and sites in chapter V (*Topography*) are divided into groups I (Christian and Jewish) and II (once considered as Christian but actually non-Christian). Such clas-

sification would in itself be clear-cut, but for one slightly confusing detail. Group II namely comprises also doubtful and/or uncertain sites and finds, becoming as a whole ambiguous in terms of the differentiation between Christian and non-Christian subject matters. The problem does not exist on the level of individual entries, as the authoress discusses her choices in detail and with sound arguments, leaving enough place for the reader to side with or against her suggestions and classifications. However, lost is the opportunity to visualise at once the ratio between the Christian, non-Christian and probably/possibly Christian finds. Unlike perhaps other disciplines, for Early Christian archaeology the category of potential finds is extremely informative. Considered the problematic criteria for determining Christian subject matters, it would not be realistic to expect everyone to agree on each and every Gáspár's classification, in spite of her detailed and thoughtful argumentation. I myself have a few doubts, but will bring here only some selected examples. For instance, a ring (28.II.a) with a chi-rho should in my opinion, irrespective of its otherwise doubtful datation into the 3rd century on the basis of shape, be considered Christian. The same is true for such formulae as *SEMPER GAUDEATIS IN NOMINE DEI* (11.II.a) or *VIV(as) INNOCENTI CVM TVIS IN DEO* (12.II.b). On the other hand, finds like fragments of pottery vessels (57.I.c, 57.I.d) or a bronze lamp (12.I.k) with no Christian marks or scenes on them would require a stronger contextual proof than currently available to be considered as Christian. It, therefore, looks at first glance as if the authoress was with some objects even more severe than she had promised to be, and with others too "mild". Nevertheless, being acquainted with her work and erudition from before, I am even inclined to give her credit for feeling the right answers by intuition, even when the circumstances look neutral or even contrary.

As much as one would like to know the exact, or at least as near as possible, number of Early Christian structures and artefacts in Hungary, the determination of the evidence in this respect is in itself still not the most important part of the book. What really matters is that all standpoints are discussed at length, and that the catalogue of finds and sites is produced very thoroughly, conscientiously and with the strong feeling for professional integrity. Obviously an immense effort has been invested in this work, and some of the entries, particularly those including large towns or sites with prominent architecture (e. g. Budapest/*Aquincum*, Kapospula-Alsóheténypuszta, Kékkút, Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, Kővágószőlős, Pécs, Pilismarót-Kishegy/*Castra ad Herculem*, Ságvár, Szombathely/*Savaria*, Tác, Tokod etc.) could figure as case studies befitting for individual articles in journals. Throughout, considerable attention is rightly paid to architecture. This is only understandable in the light of the fact that all previous surveys of Early Christianity in the territory of Hungary had been burdened with debatable assessments of various buildings as Christian cult places. Before commenting on the authoress' results in trying to resolve these controversies, I would first like to point out that her considerations, analyses and

conclusions concerning architecture are based on painstaking revisions and re-constructions of both the buildings' plans and functions, based solely on the already published documentation. Although it is certain that exactly this procedure could by itself have generated new errors, it nevertheless transpires that by perceptive, shrewd and scrutinising observation Gáspár managed to detect many of the excavators' blunders and misinterpretations. Her attention in this respect was caught above all by the site of Pécs, with its wealth of (previously unanimously considered as Christian) architecture comprising mostly grave vaults. Curiously, and unexpectedly for all but those with the excellent knowledge of the archaeology of late Roman Hungary, the city's equation with *Sopianae* is questioned, and it seems not without reason. Although it is possible that the author's re-constructions of architecture are themselves not accurate in every detail (only re-excavations could bring final proofs in any direction), hers is the merit of pointing out to the fact that some of the excavations in the past were undertaken in the anticipated belief that the architecture in question was Christian. It was then interpreted accordingly, this being true also for some sites other than Pécs. The latter was otherwise often readily compared with Salona in Dalmatia, particularly in terms of their memorial structures. Gáspár's contribution on Pécs in this book brings to mind another similarity. In spite of the fact that the majority of the excavations were rescue, and not systematic, they served as a basis for far-reaching conclusions and re-constructions of the town's Christian topography and the function of its grave architecture. In a similar manner the Danish architect Ejnar Dyggve (otherwise very deserving for the archaeology of Dalmatia), after having made several scattered and superfluous soundings in Salona, devised a topography which in spite of its obvious deficiencies was used and built upon for many years without checking its accuracy. Gáspár's critical discussions about controversial points of Pécs' Christian buildings are severe and uncompromising; and at the same time thought-provoking, although not provocative in any bad sense of this word. Although it is hard to estimate their complete accuracy from the perspective of a reviewer, they are certainly seductive and more often than not seem to make their point. Irrespective of bravely discarding a considerable part of the architecture of Pécs as Christian, some of the author's reinterpretations and corrections of previous opinions concerning both architecture and artistic renderings are ingenious (e. g. a conduit instead of aqueduct, Artemis instead of the good Shepard, Venus instead of Eve, the deceased instead of the Virgin Mary, etc.). Most important of all, this rethinking of the Early Christian heritage of Pécs has clearly shown all the need for re-excavations.

Chapter VI on the historical evaluation comprises several sub-titles: *Christian communities in Pannonia*, *Jewish communities*, *Bishops*, *Edifices of temples and churches* and *Events of history*. Throughout, the facts and controversies of Early Christianity in Pannonia are discussed simultaneously with general issues; the range of enquiry is impressive. The

stress is on the presenting of a new picture of the Early Christian horizon in the territory of Hungary and on pinpointing and resolving many of its controversies. What does, then, the picture of Early Christianity in northern Pannonia look like in the light of this critical revision? What I mean here is above all the mere number of finds and sites. Quite a few buildings, considered previously to be either secure or conjectured Christian churches or grave structures, are now rejected as such. Eight of them are found in Pécs, two each in *Aquincum*, Keszthely-Fenékpuszta and Tác, and one each in Dunaújváros, Kővágószőlős, Ságvár, Sárísáp, Sümeg, Szentkirályszabadja-Romkút and Ugod-Dióspuszta. The majority, although not all of them, were proclaimed as Christian on account of apse. With some of the previously recognised Christian buildings retained, and others newly added to the list, the total number of Early Christian structures amounts to 18 or so churches or chapels. They are found at *Aquincum*, Kapospula-Alsóheténypuszta, Kékkút, Keszthely-Fenékpuszta, Pécs, Pilismarót-Kishegy, Sümeg, Szentendre, possibly Tokod. It seems, therefore, that the number of buildings has been augmented rather than diminished, in spite of the rigorous criteria applied in the classification. The discrepancy related to southern Pannonia accordingly remains: with the exception of Sirmium (outside Croatia), the Croatian portion of southern Pannonia has only one Early Christian church (Varaždinske Toplice/*Aquae Iasae*), and that adapted in an earlier bath architecture. Any other explanation (but the lack of research in northern Croatia) for this situation would be illogical and out of line with the general course of historical events in Pannonia. The more so as the number of small finds are not disparate at all. In sum, this book does not help to resolve the controversy of the disproportion in sources and archaeological material between the two portions of Pannonia. Anyway, this behoves Croatian rather than Hungarian archaeological scholarship to accomplish, and it will never be carried out effectively before archaeological excavations on a larger scale are undertaken.

According to the survey presented in this book, Hungarian Early Christian architecture is in terms of typology characterised by the so-called house-church. It would be very important for the Early Christian archaeology of Pannonia as a whole to verify this interesting hypothesis by archaeological excavations and prove it beyond doubt. Only then would it make sense to discuss the authoress' hypothesis on the origin of this situation (oriental influence, Pannonia sticking to the original Christian viewpoint on God's church embodied in the people, etc.). At this point it strikes us as somewhat unusual that *Sirmium*, with its apsidal architecture, failed to exert influence upon northern Pannonia. Nevertheless, some of Gáspár's hypotheses concerning architecture are extremely informative and thought-provoking. One of them is certainly the questioning of the usage of horreum-like buildings and the hypothesis of their function as churches (Keszthely-Fenékpuszta, possibly Tokod). It would be worth-while to undertake a serious research of this issue in the whole of Pannonia.

Let's now return to the question of whether the authoress managed to fulfil the aims she assigned herself (see the second paragraph of this review). To my opinion, yes. First of all, she collected and systematised the vast material on a scale unprecedented in Hungarian Early Christian archaeology. Secondly, she undertook scrutinising analyses of all sites and finds, managing to set basically acceptable standards of classification and a critical assesment of their nature in terms of Christianity. Not everybody will unconditionally agree with each and every of authoress' hypotheses, determinations and conclusions, but they are not to be ignored. All her opinions are stated clearly and with a substantial argumentation, particularly when it comes to brave questioning of the widely accepted, but never verified, "facts". As already mentioned, this book is provocative in the best meaning of this word and will become a fundamental work of reference for everyone who wants to gain a detailed knowledge and understanding of the facts of Early Christianity in northern Pannonia.

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CHRISTENTUM IN PANNONIEN IM ERSTEN JAHRTAUSEND. *Internationale Tagung im Balaton Museum in Keszthely vom 6. bis 9. November 2000, Zalai Múzeum, 11, Zalaegerszeg, 2002., 300 stranica, crno-bijele fotografije, crteži i karte.*

U sklopu obilježavanja tisućobljetnice mađarske države godine 2000. Muzej Balaton u Keszthelyu i Donjoaustrijski pokrajinski muzej (Niederösterreichische Landesmuseum) u St Pöltnu upriličili su međunarodni arheološki skup pod gornjim naslovom, uz sudjelovanje 22 stručnjaka iz Austrije, Hrvatske, Irske, Mađarske i Slovenije. Rukopisi su tiskani dvije godine poslije, u godišnjaku Zalai Múzeum u Zalaegerszegu.

Rajko Bratož, *Der Bischof Victorinus und die Kirchengemeinde von Poetovio (2. Hälfte des 3. Jahrhunderts)* (7-20). Autor razmatra tekstove petovijskog biskupa i mučenika Viktorina iz 2. polovice 3. st., prvog panonskog kršćanskog pisca i jednog među rijetkima u čitavome Podunavlju. Izabrani su oni elementi Viktorinova djela iz kojih se dadu iščitati podatci o organizacijskim, te materijalnim i duhovnim vidovima života petovijske kršćanske zajednice: vrijeme uspostave i okruženje u kojem je nastala; veličina, društveni sastav te etnička i jezična pripadnost članova; liturgijski i drugi utjecaji iz različitih kršćanskih sredina, osobito sirijske i maloazijske; prežitci poganskih štovanja, osobito mitraičkog i solarnog; društveno-političko ozračje obilježeno zebnjom od progona, neimaštine i ratnih nedaća; moralne vrijednosti koje su se najviše njegovale.

Mihály Nagy, *Typological Considerations on Christian Funerary Buildings in Pannonia* (21-30, 5 slika, 4 dijagramske tablice). Autor izlaže zamršena tipološko-metrička razmatranja,