

Ágnes T. Mihálykó, Healing in Christian Liturgy in Late Antique Egypt: Sources and Perspectives.

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Health and healing were of constant interest for Christian communities in late antique Egypt. Accordingly, a broad range of therapeutic rituals were on offer by the clergy, by monks, and in martyr shrines. Of all these, explores prayers and gestures performed and substances consecrated in a liturgical context as well as some related practices, with a focus on the fourth and fifth centuries, from which most relevant sources hail. Besides reconstructing the rites themselves as far as the evidence allows - including intercessions for the sick, prayers for laying on of hands, and the consecration of oil (and water and bread) and the anointing of the sick in various liturgical contexts -, also considers them as interpersonal therapeutic rituals and attempt to evaluate them through the lens of medical and anthropological placebo theories. Argues that the decline and transformation of liturgical healing rites after the fifth century may partially be explained with their modest 'placebogenic potential' compared to other rites on offer in the late antique 'market of healing'.

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