

Christian Oxyrhynchus. Texts, documents and sources. Edited by Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment. Pp. xxii + 756 incl. 2 maps. Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2015. \$89.95. 978 1 60258 539 3
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Ever since the discovery of the ancient rubbish tip at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt in 1897 by Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, interest in it has been considerable. Since that time over 6,000 documentary and 3,000 literary texts have been published, greatly enhancing our knowledge of the ancient world in all sorts of ways. In this helpful and carefully presented volume, Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment bring together some of the most important texts, biblical, literary and documentary, relating to the Christian inhabitants of the city. Grenfell and Hunt's first published discovery was in fact a fragment (one of three to be found there) of the Christian *Gospel of Thomas*, later to be discovered in its complete form, in a Coptic translation, at Nag Hammadi in 1945, and it has been these fragments, which, for a variety of reasons, have attracted most interest on the part of Christian scholars. But they form but a very small percentage of the Christian material found at Oxyrhynchus and it is the great virtue of this volume that we now have much of this material, though not all of it, in one volume, where previously it lay scattered in various disparate publications.

The book divides itself into four parts. The first is devoted to Christian literary papyri, beginning with New Testament texts, which constitute our earliest Christian evidence from Oxyrhynchus and make up 42 per cent of all known New Testament papyri (53 out of 127, though the latter number, which is provided by Blumell and Wayment, is now out of date. According to Nestle Aland, we now have 131 New Testament papyri, and the last four discoveries do not come from Oxyrhynchus, and provide us with our earliest fragment of the New Testament. For the textual critic, the finds are interesting for a number of reasons, not least the fact that they witness to all four textual groups of the New Testament (Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean and Byzantine). The editors' presentation of these papyri, as with all of the material in this volume, is systematic. The reader is provided with a prospective date (some might think that giving a papyrus a date in the late second century is too precise, a point referred to by the editors, but not straightforwardly conceded), a list of the editions of the text, a bibliography, an introduction, including a physical description of the text, a transcription (though no translation) and some textual discussion.

The second part of this section is taken up with discussion of extracanonical texts, which include the already mentioned fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas*, of the *Gospel of Peter*, of the *Gospel of Mary*, sundry fragments of unnamed gospels, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the number of whose fragments are the largest, the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Peter*, the *Sophia Jesu Christi*, and the *Didache*. Under the same heading of Christian literary papyri appear another set of texts grouped under the title 'Other Christian literary texts'. These include the well-known fragment of Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses*, which probably dates from the late second/early third century, and would appear to have reached Oxyrhynchus not very long after Irenaeus wrote the work in Gaul, fragments of Aristides's *Apology* and Melito's *Peri Pascha* together with three amulets, one consisting of the first verse of Mark's Gospel, a work, interestingly, not witnessed in the collection of New

Testament papyri, and a number of anonymous works, including a possibly third-century Jewish-Christian dialogue (though, as the full and thoughtful commentary makes clear, the work could in fact be a commentary on the Psalms), an onomasticon of Hebrew names, attributed by some, possibly unconvincingly, to Origen, a homily, a fragment of biblical excerpts and a much-commented upon Christian hymn, also from the third century. Here a translation is provided.

We then move to a new section related to documentary papyri. A number of these are not written by Christians but are taken by the editors to elucidate Christian history in Oxyrhynchus in different ways. So some Decian *libelli* are published, none of which can be shown to have been submitted by Christians but provide very helpful evidence of the contents of these documents, allowing the interested reader to gain a fascinating insight into the circumstances which brought about the so-called Decian persecution of the middle of the second century and the subsequent problems that it caused the Church. Also published are papyri which contain Christian references. These consist of texts in which we find incidental reference to a Christian (as in the case of Petosarapis [no. 110], here referred to as *Cresianos*, who is the subject of a summons in which his Christian identity is explicitly referred to, but for no obvious reason), to an anonymous Christian involved in the transmission of a letter from Antioch to Oxyrhynchus, to events related to persecutions, in particular that of Diocletian, such as the inspection of a church, or an affidavit against a husband which happens to mention a bishop and a church. In many of these papyri Christian reference is determined by the use of a word like 'deacon', 'presbyter', 'monk' or 'nun'. The number of these obviously increases considerably from the middle of the fourth century onwards.

The final part of this chapter is devoted to letters written by Christians, the earliest of which dates from the late third century. Some of these concern themselves explicitly with Christian matters, but many are communications about mundane issues such as general greetings, enquiries after an individual's health, or the provision of wine. The latter are identified by the editors as Christian, usually through the presence of a greeting or a farewell which refers to a term like 'in the Lord', or 'in God', or 'beloved father', or by the presence of *nomina sacra*, or biblical allusion, the last of which can sometimes be quite marked, as they are, for instance, in no. 158. Interestingly, almost none of these letters use the designation Christian either for the sender or the recipient.

A final section is devoted to the relatively limited evidence for Christianity in Oxyrhynchus outside the papyrological evidence already discussed. This includes discussion of a section of the *Acta Sanctorum* on the Great Persecution of Diocletian, a number of excerpts from the *Apophthegmata patrum* and the Coptic *Life* of Apa Aphou, here translated for the first time.

This publication should be welcomed. While not comprehensive, it does provide the reader with every known Christian papyrus, or papyrus relating to Christians, from the second to the fourth century, though it omits to publish a single Septuagintal papyrus on the grounds that the Christian provenance of these papyri cannot be determined beyond reasonable doubt (a list of these papyri with the relevant Oxyrhynchus numbering is given on p. 14). After the middle of the fourth century a large number of papyri from Oxyrhynchus have some

kind of Christian aspect and so publication of all these would not be possible, at least in a practical form. The layout and presentation of the volume are clear and discussion of individual papyri is accessible and well referenced, and justification is always given for the inclusion of a papyrus as Christian, especially where ambiguity might exist. It is always helpful to have physical descriptions of the papyri as well as an attempt to explain its significance. As the editors indicate, many of their commentaries extend and supplement considerably discussion that already exists, at least within known editions of the Christian papyri. The bibliographies provided seem well chosen and English translations, which are not provided for New Testament texts, are reliable. Perhaps the introduction could have been a tad more discursive, providing the reader with a greater sense of recent discussion of this material (so, for instance, while A. M. Luijendijk's *Greetings in the Lord: early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus papyri* [Cambridge, MA 2008], is frequently referenced, not least in the discussion of the Sotas correspondence [nos 130–4], which she took to be a single dossier of documents, there could have been more engagement with some of the ideas in the book) with emphasis being placed upon the impact of the Oxyrhynchus finds upon the study of early and late antique Christianity. But that is a minor criticism of a work which will provide interested lay persons and professional scholars with a very helpful study tool.

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Christian women in the Greek papyri of Egypt to 400 CE. By Erica A. Mathieson. (Studia Antiqua Australiensis, 6.) Pp. xii + 311. Turnhout: Brepols/New South Wales: Ancient Cultures Research Centre, Macquarie University, 2014. €60 (paper). 978 2 503 55241 5
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A revised version of the author's dissertation, this book consists of an introduction, a chapter presenting the sources and eight chapters of discussion, completed by a brief conclusion. At its core are twenty-six Greek papyri from Egypt written or dictated by Christian women from before the year 400. Since, as is well known, women are dramatically underrepresented in ancient sources, these papyrus documents stand out as evidence of women voices, whether women dictated them to a scribe or penned them themselves. Mathieson's aim is to understand the religious lives of these Christian women through their own voices.

Mathieson incorporates social-scientific and anthropological research on Mediterranean society that is understanding these women as part of their larger patriarchal Mediterranean society, dominated by binary forces such as honour/shame and public/private

The main body of the book discusses topics that appear in the papyrus documents, such as biblical language, theology, prayer, marriage and family, healing, dealings with clergy and ascetics, etc. It then situates these documents within their ancient Mediterranean and/or Egyptian milieu and also within a Christian, especially New Testament, context. In these chapters, the same female characters appear so that the reader becomes intimately acquainted with them. An interesting