Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers. By **Michael J. Hollerich**. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. xi + 316 pp. $95.00 cloth.

Michael Hollerich's *Making Christian History* examines the influence of the first *Ecclesiastical History* and the reception of its author, Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339). Building on previous scholarship, Hollerich asserts that Eusebius invented a new historical genre, though not without earlier influences and antecedents. He notes that the *Ecclesiastical History* was written in the mold of national histories, conceiving of Christians as a new nation or people, but differed from classical histories in eschewing invented speeches in favor of long quotations from documents, and in introducing a chronology based around imperial reigns and episcopal tenures (32–40). For Eusebius, the Church's orthodoxy did not change but remained consistent from the beginning. As a result, rather than focusing on military and political affairs as most ancient histories do, Eusebius's history finds its primary drama in the struggle against doctrinal error introduced by heretics. Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* "dominated interpretations of early Christianity in both Eastern and Western Christianity" (47) and was much imitated, thanks to its rapid translation from the original Greek into Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and possibly Coptic.

Despite his focus on the *Ecclesiastical History*, Hollerich inevitably gives almost as much attention to Eusebius's *Chronicle*. In his *Chronicle*, Eusebius organized historical data upon which he would draw for his *Ecclesiastical History*, and the two projects together constitute what Hollerich calls Eusebius's "historical diptych" (22). "The first universal synchronism of world history ever written," Eusebius's *Chronicle* provided a timeline of world history from the life of Abraham divided among "long tables or 'canons' of national dynasties set in parallel columns" (23). Hollerich argues that Eusebius's *Chronicle* established a distinctly Christian way of looking at world history: Eusebius organized his chronology around nations/empires, and the *Chronicle* culminated in the triumph of Christianity within the Roman Empire. It was translated into Syriac (now lost) and is preserved in Latin and Armenian translations. As Hollerich shows, its reception was bound up with the *Ecclesiastical History*—many later imitators merged universal chronicles and church histories in inventive ways.

After introducing Eusebius and his corpus in chapter 1, Hollerich documents how Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Chronicle* shaped how later generations thought and wrote about church history. Chapter 2 addresses the *Ecclesiastical History*'s manuscript tradition, its Latin translator and continuator Rufinus, and its late antique Greek continuators (Socrates, Sozomen, etc.). Chapter 3 follows Eusebius's works among Syriac, Armenian, and Coptic authors, who had to confront new realities: the rise of Islam challenged Eusebius's triumphalist narrative, and Eusebius's historical model had to be adapted to an eastern church that had fragmented along doctrinal and linguistic lines. Growing divisions also affected the medieval Latin West, the topic of chapter 4, where smaller, national churches became the focus of church historians; Hollerich explores several examples, starting with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Chapter 5 focuses on Byzantium, where Eusebius's *Chronicle* remained influential, but church history as a genre went into abeyance until the fourteenth century. Chapter 6 follows the rediscovery of the Greek original of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640722002220 Published online by Cambridge University Press

History in early modern Western Europe, when Eusebius's works were plumbed for historical insights and used for Reformation and Counter Reformation polemics. Chapter 7 discusses how shifts in modern ideals, secular and Christian, and the post-modern turn in scholarship have brought new perspectives on Eusebius.

According to Hollerich, the dissemination of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (and *Chronicle*) not only spread his method of writing about and conceptualizing history, but also elements of what Hollerich calls Eusebius's "theo-political vision" (10–22): namely, a view of the Bible as a prophetic guide to the present, a deep respect for Origen, a claim of Christian continuity from the ancient Hebrews (and polemical creation of a distinct, aberrant category of "Jews"—Hebrew descendants who, by some defect, failed to embrace Christianity), and the possibility that rulers might play an important role in the Church and even become sacred figures. The last element is more clearly articulated in Eusebius's later, less popular writings (*Life of Constantine* and *Tricennial Oration*); however, Hollerich emphasizes it because, while Eusebius could bring his *Ecclesiastical History* to a satisfying close with the triumph of Constantine, his continuators and imitators would have to reconcile more complex political circumstances in which Christian rulers introduced doctrinal division, fought one another, and were sometimes conquered by non-Christians. Hollerich shows that Eusebius's "theo-political vision" has also evoked discomfort: his affection for Origen (and his association with the Arian heresy) often made medieval and early modern readers uneasy toward Eusebius, while modern readers (including Hollerich) have recoiled at his treatment of the Jews and his reverence for political Christianity.

Throughout, Hollerich advances several intriguing arguments about Eusebius's impact and introduces interesting resonances in the use of Eusebius across time and space, but the absence of an overall conclusion (or chapter conclusions) tying these many strands together for the reader feels like a missed opportunity. Hollerich acknowledges certain shortcomings—such as neglecting women church historians and Eusebius's influence on Muslim historiography (272–273)—but, surprisingly, he does not address how the absence of Eusebius affected the writing of church history in Slavonic literature. Inevitably, in such a wide-ranging study, typographical inconsistencies appear; for instance, different transliterations of the Greek συμπάθεια (67, 77); Syriac words are often transliterated inconsistently, sometimes according to Western and sometimes according to Eastern pronunciation. However, these are minor complaints about an outstanding work of scholarship. Hollerich's book will be an important resource not only for those interested in Eusebius but also for those studying church historians and chroniclers in all time periods. Moreover, thanks to its scope, it will appeal to anyone interested in comprehending grand unified narratives of Christian history.

One potentially controversial aspect is Hollerich's frank discussion of his own Catholic faith, particularly in the final chapter. However, his confessional outlook does not detract from the book's scholarly tone and serves to highlight the subject's ongoing relevance—namely, how should those within the Church continue to write its history? Hollerich rejects much in Eusebius's model but also finds in the *Ecclesiastical History* a salutary vision that, for all its blind spots, could still comprehend Christianity as a global community, a new nation "that would bring all nations into its orbit" (271). Likewise, Eusebius's *Chronicle* attempted to organize the long sweep of history in a universal frame. These emerge as models for a church that need not be

fixated on "moralism and nationalism" but which can aspire to a mission more akin to the Large Hadron Collider (x–xi), a transcendent, unifying quest to comprehend the universe and its meaning.

Christopher Bonura
Institute for Advanced Study
doi:10.1017/S0009640722002220

Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie: Eine Untersuchung früh- und mittelbyzantinschen Märtyrakten. By **Christodoulos Papavarnavas**. Millennium Studies, vol. 90. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021. xiv + 246 pp. $103.99 hardcover.

After the apostles, martyrs were the earliest Christian heroes. Under the label of *Passions* or *Acts of the Martyrs*, a vast literature developed commemorating their unflagging commitment to the faith and bolstering their cult as saints. The low value of these texts as historical documents and the formulaic character of their plot long hindered their study as works of literature in their own right. Nonetheless, the recent, albeit belated, rehabilitation of Byzantine literature as a whole, combined with the reconsideration of late antiquity as a period of cultural transformation, has given way to a more positive approach favoring a literary reading of these texts, paying due attention to the creative aspects of their narratives.

The book under review reflects this noteworthy shift in perspective, dealing as it does with the hagiography of saintly martyrs and treating in particular the theme of prison as threshold after which the martyr enters upon the final path of personal sacrifice. The basic aim of this study, which grew out of a doctoral dissertation submitted in 2018 to the University of Vienna, is to pin down and examine from different angles related passages selected from a wide range of texts dating from the early and middle Byzantine periods, i.e., the fourth to tenth centuries. It consists of four chapters that are further divided into relatively short subchapters, which facilitate reading the book and at places delve into questions of literary theory. The book is richly filled with Greek passages quoted with a German translation.

The introduction chiefly rehearses the occurrences of prison accounts in the Old and New Testaments as well as in classical, postclassical, and Byzantine literature. The introduction concludes by bringing into the discussion the anthropological concept of "liminality," in the particular ways in which it was introduced by Arnold van Gennep (*Rites de Passage*, 1909) and reaffirmed by Victor Turner (1963ff.). The second anthropological concept employed by the author is "hybrid third space," as launched by Homi K. Bhabha in the 1990s. From this perspective, the author considers prison scenes as attested in hagiographic acts of martyrdom to be a threshold of binary opposites. As a literary space, prison acquires a double meaning: it constitutes a building block of martyrdom and identifies as an independent phase of the entire process of sanctification. In other words, in such a liminal space, the martyr develops spiritual and physical strength as a Christian hero: his or her confrontation with demonic and divine powers ultimately shores up his or her identity as a saint.