

comments about the ways in which charters of the 940s onwards begin to recycle diplomatic formulae and Snook sees this as part of the agenda of draftsmen at that time trying to stress coherence for the new English kingdom. A book about the literary dimensions of Anglo-Saxon charters is a welcome addition and Snook makes various interesting connections with contemporary politics and royal ideologies. Perhaps inevitably, quite a lot of charters of this period fall from view, and issues of great diplomatic complexity do not always receive the full attention that they deserve. But much can be learnt from this kind of approach to Anglo-Saxon charters and hopefully this book will encourage further inquiry of a similar nature.

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The Life of Saint Basil the Younger. Critical edition and annotated translation of the Moscow version. By Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot and Stamatina McGrath. (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 45.) Pp. xi + 829 incl. frontispiece and 3 ills. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2014. £51.95. (\$70). 978 0 88402 397 5

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The Life of Saint Basil the Younger (or the New) is a probably tenth-century Byzantine *vita* that became enormously popular in Eastern Orthodox circles in the Middle Ages: twenty-two Greek manuscripts are known to survive, plus a further thirteen in demotic Greek; there are also medieval translations into Slavonic languages. Its popularity is not connected with any cult of the saint (indeed it is not clear that he was a historical figure at all), but rather the result of two visions, disclosed to and related by the author of the *vita* (who himself may be fictional), which take up nearly two-thirds of the text. It is the first vision that is particularly important, especially for popular Orthodox beliefs about the afterlife: it contains the most detailed account of so-called aerial ‘tollhouses’ (*telonia*), twenty-one in number, through which the departed soul has to pass after death. At each tollhouse, the soul is examined in respect of a series of sins, beginning with slander and ending with heartlessness and cruelty, demons accusing, angels defending. The vision concerns Theodora, a slave woman who looked after the saint, which she relates in the vision to reassure Gregory, the author, as to her fate. In her case, it is evident from the beginning that she will make it through the tollhouses, assisted not only by her acts of kindness, but by ‘spiritual gold’ provided by the saint from his abundant virtue. Once the soul has passed the tollhouses, it is introduced to the other world, passing through the gates of heaven and visiting the abodes of the saints and the patriarchs, as well as making a visit to Hades. The soul then settles in the ‘place of repose’: it is remarked that this takes place forty days after the soul has been separated from the body in death. This period of time, therefore, corresponds to the period during which services of prayer (*Trisagion*, *Pannykhida*) for the deceased take place – on the third, ninth and fortieth day – though in the *vita* it is only the fortieth day that is remarked. The notions set forth in colourful detail in the vision can be traced back to the fourth or fifth century, the treatise corresponding most closely to the account in the *Life of St Basil*

being a homily attributed to St Cyril of Alexandria, the *De exitu animi*, argued by M. Richard to be a cento formed from homilies ascribed to Cyril and his uncle Theophilus.

The *vita* is unusual in several ways: apart from the enormous space devoted to the visions, it omits any account of the early life of the saint, beginning simply when Basil, wandering in the mountains of Asia Minor, is arrested by a couple of imperial agents, on suspicion of being a spy. He is taken to Constantinople, where he is horrendously tortured, but survives because of his acquired *apatheia*. Eventually he is let alone and his sanctity soon attracts the attention of ladies of the imperial court, including the Empress Helena Lekapene. Shortly after this, he meets Gregory, who becomes his disciple, and eventually his biographer. Gregory meets too the slave woman, Theodora, whose death occasions Gregory's first vision, about the tollhouses and the afterlife. The *vita* then continues with the saint's life: episodes illustrating his clairvoyance and miracle-working powers, and events in the Queen City, valuable for social history, even if it is difficult to fit them too closely to the history of the period. Gregory then begins to wonder, from his reading of the Old Testament and the veneration of prophets such as Elijah in Byzantine devotion (including icons), whether the Jews may not be correct in their beliefs. He visits Basil, who tells him without prompting what is going through his mind and instructs him in the properly anti-Judaic character of Christian belief. In confirmation of this, Gregory has another, long vision, in which he visits the afterworld and witnesses, among other things, the Last Judgment in great detail, which leaves him in no doubt that very few are saved from the Old Covenant, and none among the Jews after the time of Christ (incidentally, those who did not know Christ and believed in 'providence' are treated gently). Following the Last Judgment, there is an elaborate account of heaven, which is clearly modelled on Byzantium: grand houses, beautiful gardens, even monasteries, and (despite Apocalypse xxi.22) a temple with a heavenly liturgy. This is the world that Jane Baun revealed to us in her wonderful book, *Tales from another Byzantium* (2007). After the recounting of the vision, the *vita* returns to the saint. The account of his death is, oddly, given at second hand: Gregory missed it as it took place during Lent, which he had spent in seclusion.

This is a magnificent edition of the *vita*, based on a sixteenth-century manuscript now in Moscow, which represents the fullest version of the *vita* (some manuscripts contain no more than the account of the tollhouses), with note taken of significant variants in a manuscript now in Paris and another from the Athonite monastery of Iviron, both thirteenth-century. The introduction is brief and informative; the translation is excellent, with valuable comments on difficult or unusual Greek words and obscure passages. Biblical and patristic references are noted, but the influence of the Byzantine liturgy in the accounts of heaven seems largely overlooked. 'Blessed in the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' has a reference to Mark xi.10; more important is the fact that this is the opening exclamation of the Divine Liturgy (p. 427); elsewhere it is not noted that the phrase, 'Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged and many-eyed' is a quotation from the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (p. 678), partly maybe because the translation assigns the adjectives to the nouns, as Gregory himself does on other occasions (for example, pp. 427, 429). The place allotted to St John the Baptist,

immediately after the Mother of God, seems to me to reflect the anaphora of the Byzantine rite. These are, however, scarcely even blemishes in a painstakingly careful edition.

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Charters of Chertsey Abbey. (Anglo-Saxon Charters, 19.) Edited by S. E. Kelly. Pp. xxi + 194. Oxford: Oxford University Press (for the British Academy), 2015. £45. 978 0 19 726556 7

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The minster at Chertsey was founded by Eorcenwald, later bishop of London, in about 670. It came close to destruction at the time of the Danish invasions in the late ninth century, when, according to the house's own memory, preserved in a thirteenth-century cartulary and printed here (pp. 177–9), ninety monks (or more) were slain and the church and monastic buildings were razed. The community was refounded, as a regular Benedictine monastery, in 964. It was worth around £200 in 1086: in Knowles's 'league table' in his volume on the monastic order it is in fifteenth place, struggling to stay in the First Division. This volume, a short but none the less very welcome addition to the British Academy *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series, is the story of the monks' struggle. It prints just sixteen charters, the majority of them royal diplomas, with the other texts including four vernacular writs of Edward the Confessor. Of this total only four are accepted as authentic as they stand. As the texts are dissected and discussed, with the editor's customary skill, what is at first sight a surprising evaluation is offered: 'the Chertsey forger or forgers had access to a significant quantity of pre-Conquest documentation' (p. 40). So what happened to this early archive? The answer suggested to that question might seem no less surprising. The loss of material was most likely due not to the ravaging Danes but to the monks themselves, and behind them the demands of a royal chancery that had no time for the niceties of diplomatic. The forgers' title-deeds were, it is suggested, grants of individual properties made to individual laymen; these would not be accepted as evidence of title, and so from them the monks concocted wholesale confirmations in favour of the monastery. This is a satisfying volume. As the series editor, Nicholas Brooks, who sadly did not live to see the volume published, stated in his foreword, it 'provides a splendid foundation for local scholars to develop their understanding of Surrey History' (p. v).

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EDMUND KING

Contested treasure. Jews and authority in the crown of Aragon. By Thomas W. Barton. (Iberian Encounter and Exchange, 475–1755, 1.) Pp. xix + 292 incl. 3 maps. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015. \$69.95. 978 0 271 06472 7

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This book tackles the vexed problem of the relationship between medieval Jews and the lords under whose jurisdiction they lived. In medieval Germany the