

Daia's persecutory measures arose out of interactions between that emperor, his city-based subjects and his peers, which recalls (or anticipates) Noel Lenski's analysis of Constantinian policy in his *Constantine and the cities: imperial authority and civic politics* (Philadelphia 2015).

The standard of English is, with some exceptions, generally good, with the occasional odd turn of phrase that one would expect in papers written in a second language (as is the case in all but two cases). There are however some consistent editorial problems, including the seemingly random occurrence of superscript numerals in some of the bibliographic entries. Overall, the papers in this volume will be of interest to scholars concerned with the specific issues that its contributors address in early fourth-century religious and political history, particularly those concerned with Roman legal practice. Taken as the sum of its parts, however, it is unlikely to revolutionise our understanding of intolerance in the early fourth century.

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*Ethiopian Christianity. History, theology, practice.* By Philip F. Esler. Pp. xvi + 310 incl. 42 figs and 2 tables. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019. \$39.95. 978 1 4813 0674 4  
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Christianity has flourished in the mountains of Ethiopia throughout its history. There are indications of a Christian presence from New Testament times; a bishop was consecrated in about 335; a Christian kingdom persisted in an area dominated by Islam until the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974; then there have been new Churches emerging in the period since then. Yet this Church developed a life, worship and culture largely isolated from and indifferent to the rest of the Christian world. Its position led to a culture shaped by its position between Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and south and east Asia. The resulting mix has fascinated and surprised visitors, but has also been unfamiliar and difficult to understand. So this book, with its broad description of the history and practice of Christianity in Ethiopia will be a guide which will be valued by those who encounter and are fascinated by the kind of faith that they find.

The first part of the book is a historical survey. It begins by assessing when and how Christianity arrived in Ethiopia. There is a full account of this earliest stage, with evidence from literary sources, coins and inscriptions to argue the date when the first bishop, Frumentius, was consecrated and the identity of the kings of the period. After that there is a more sketchy account of the sweep of history up to the present day. This traces the growth of a Christian culture, its close involvement with the king and court, its – usually harmonious – relationship with Islam and slow adjustment to the modern world.

Then there are three chapters which describe the practice and culture of the Church, and discuss some of the aspects of its life. First, there is a survey of the literary tradition of the Church. This starts with the Garima Gospels, now recognised

as the oldest surviving Gospel manuscripts, and then refers to the various theological works which were written by, or translated by, Ethiopians. There is less attention given to oral traditions. This is unfortunate because the *andamta* tradition of biblical reflection, passed on through generations brought together a wide spectrum of material from Syriac and other eastern sources, in a form unique to Ethiopia.

Then, second, there is a description of artistic and musical life. Ethiopian church painting developed as styles from outside the country influenced local craftsmen to produce a distinctive and unmistakable art form. The architectural design of churches, which from the fifteenth century usually had a circular form with a central sanctuary, and then the music, which is traditionally traced back to St Yared in the sixth century, are also described.

The third chapter in this section is entitled 'Theology'. Theology, here, is liturgy, and the various forms of worship are described. Liturgy is governed by a calendar of feasts and fasts, is celebrated in a space which is set aside as holy, and has retained many features from Judaism. The identification of theology with worship which is made here recognises that the liturgical rhythms govern the way of life of the Ethiopian village. The front cover shows a woman in prayer before a church, a photograph which the author says was an inspiration for him to explore her fervent faith.

The drawback of this identification of liturgy and theology is that the book overlooks the rich theological tradition of the Ethiopian Church. The author rightly points to the one-nature Christology of the Church, which he refers to as *miaphysite* rather than the more derogatory *monophysite*, although without explaining that the former is preferred because it is a numerical term, while *monophysite* has implications of singleness and aloneness. He says that the Church did not accept the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, which is true but inadequate. The Ethiopians were not present at this council which, as a result, did not enter into their awareness until Jesuit missionaries arrived bringing their clear and rigorous statement of the teaching of the two natures of Christ. This sparked off a debate which lasted from the arrival of missionaries in 1604 and continued after their expulsion as three distinct Christological schools developed. These became entangled with regional rivalries and the conflict ended only with a clear statement of a one-nature understanding of Christ agreed at the Council of Borru Meda in 1878. This decided in favour of the school supported by the emperor and was enshrined with the addition of the word *Tawehedo*, or united, to the title of the Church. None of this is covered here and the work on Christology of Ethiopian and other theologians is not referred to in the bibliography. The account of the reign of the emperor Johannes IV makes no mention of his achievement in ending the long controversy at Borru Meda.

Any treatment of the life of the Ethiopian Church has to interpret the uncompromising difference between Ethiopian and western culture, and also the awkward encounters between them. Modern research, carried out especially at the Hiob Ludolf Institute in Hamburg, has explored this. This has resulted in a reassessment of many of the sources and texts. So, to give just one example, the book refers to the mission carried out by the monastic saints, known as the Nine Saints, in the sixth century. These are here described as Syrian *monophysite* refugees fleeing the persecution of imperial Chalcedonians. This is a view widely

repeated, but since the main sources for these events are the *Lives* of the Nine Saints written around a thousand years later, without other evidence to support them, scholars have questioned the historical reliability of the sources and some have questioned whether these saints ever existed. As to the suggestion of their being monophysite refugees, there are several reasons why monks might have travelled to Ethiopia as well as flight from doctrinal opponents.

It is worrying to find a number of errors which suggests a lack of care in editing as well as a number of factual errors. For example, in the two pages describing the reign of the Emperor Tewodros II (pp. 80–2), the emperor's birth name of Kassa is given as Wassá; Begemder, which is the region to the east of Lake Tana is given as Begember; and Sir Robert Napier who led the military expedition which resulted in the death of the emperor is incorrectly named as Sir John Napier. This list could be added to.

The author gives us a valuable survey of the Christianity of this region of Africa. It helps the enquirer enter into the world of the Ethiopian Christian. Once in, there is much more to discover, both of the scholarly research which has helped the understanding of the faith and the rich traditions which have built the Church. It is a useful introduction but once introduced the reader should quickly move on to explore the life of this branch of Christianity more fully.

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*The image of God in the theology of Gregory of Nazianzus.* By Gabrielle Thomas. Pp. xiv + 196. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. £75. 978 1 108 48219 6  
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The functional title of this book belies the excellence of its contents. Gabrielle Thomas writes that she has sought to offer ‘a new reading of Gregory Nazianzen’s vision of the “divine, yet vulnerable” human *eikon*, *vis à vis* the *imago Dei*’ (p. 154). She does, and provides non-specialists in Nazianzen with an engaging assessment of his theology of the image of God. They may find its dynamism an antidote to today’s more static arguments. However, Thomas’s greatest success is in identifying and recovering the tension between the human *eikon* and the devil in Gregory’s thought. In re-establishing that, for Gregory, talking about the *eikon* almost necessarily means speaking of the Satanic ruler of the world, Thomas has restored a sort of phantom limb of Gregory’s image theology. One is even led to wonder whether this connection is operative, unexamined, elsewhere.

After a brief introduction that sets out the shape of the book, Thomas provides a programmatic summary of the influences on Gregory’s *eikon* theology in chapter i. Chapter ii, which argues that the human *eikon* is the image of Christ, gets to the real meat of the subject and begins the pattern that subsequent chapters will follow. Thomas claims to take as her structure Gregory’s own from the *Poemata Arcana*, moving from God to the human person. This is broadly true, but it reveals the force of Thomas’s book that each chapter ends with a discussion of the struggle between the human *eikon* and the devil. Only chapter iii is excepted,