

the famous abbot's sanctity. Alwis's chapter will be of interest to those unfamiliar with narratology and provides a model for those who would like to consider how these methods might illuminate Byzantine hagiography, particularly for texts with complicated histories and a multiplicity of textual forms. Indeed, these insights are applicable to textual families beyond the hagiographies examined, for example histories and chronicles originating in the late antique period.

Perhaps the most pronounced contribution of the volume as a whole, however, is its resistance to making definitive pronouncements about either individual hagiographic texts or hagiography as a genre. Regarding the former, the editors allowed ample space for overlap between contributions, insofar as several texts receive multiple treatments (for example, the *Vita Antoni* or Jerome's *Vita Pauli*), with individual contributors placing them in conversation with different texts or applying varied methodological questions. While such divergence is often the result of an edited volume, sometimes resulting in unevenness and disjointedness, here it is an important reminder of the breadth and flexibility of hagiographic discourses. This approach enables the volume to lean into multiplicity and the dialogue between author and reader, highlighting the ways in which late antique discourse about sainthood was not a practice that evolved in a linear fashion, but was itself the product of dialogue, experimentation and even playfulness with prior models. The allowance for such a diversity also effectively challenges the still prevalent tendency to treat hagiography as a defined genre. In addition to the expected biographical *vitae* of saints, the reader encounters dialogues, letters and *florilegia*, as well as (perhaps) unexpected reliance on satire, irony and metaphor. Consequently, the volume encourages us to think about hagiography as a mode of discourse that crosses generic boundaries and depends on play and experimentation. And while the editors acknowledge some significant gaps in the volume's coverage—in particular, the absence of literature in Georgian, Syriac, Armenian and Arabic—it provides numerous models for the study of those texts and for analysing conversations across linguistic *corpora*.

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Between ideals and reality. Charity and the letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza. By Hyung Guen Choi. (Early Christian Studies, 21.) Pp. xiv + 237 incl. 2 tables. Sydney: SCD Press, 2020. \$45 (paper). 978 1 925730 17 3
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This is a highly competent, workmanlike comparison of 'episcopal almsgiving and alms by monks and laity in the city of Gaza' during the sixth century CE which investigates how the perception held by the two holy men, Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, 'of their interlocutors (bishops, monks and the laity) affected their spiritual direction towards those interlocutors' (p. 5). Chapter i sets the topic in the context of previous research, in particular a Korean article by Wonmoh Suh: 'A study of "poverty discourses" in the sixth-century Gaza', *Korea Journal of Christian Studies* lxxxii (2012), 203–30. Where Suh looked at the pastoral care offered by Barsanuphius and John for the different sorts of people who enquired about how to give alms, Choi revisits this topic to ask '[w]hat reasons lay behind their spiritual advice regarding charity'. One conclusion to be defended is that these monks

‘emphasised a donor-centred charity that sought to care for their interlocutors and protect them from any internal or external dangers which could happen to benefactors’ (p. 12). Choi then briefly introduces the collection of letters which constitute the study’s primary sources together with their manuscript history (pp. 28–9). Chapters ii and iii present the broad backdrop to the story. The first describes Gaza as a ‘gateway’ in late antiquity for traders and pilgrims, but also as an intellectual centre for study of rhetoric and philosophy with a school linked to burgeoning local monasteries and churches (pp. 30–4). Chapter iii focuses in on Gazan monasticism as it is revealed through the letters, and sets out what little can be derived from them concerning Barsanuphius and John of Gaza along with their disciples and intermediaries with the outside world, Abba Seridos and Dorotheus of Gaza respectively. Choi relates the mutual respect between the monks and the bishops who consulted them, the former regarding the latter as in some sense spiritual sons over whom they had a certain spiritual authority, but also accepting of the bishops’ authority in governing the churches. He notes the wide range of different topics on which the laity sought advice from the holy men (pp. 90–1). Discussion of the editing and compilation of the letters leads Choi to conclude that Dorotheus of Gaza, ‘as one of the elite monks in the coenobium of Seridos and someone who outlived both Seridos and John’, is most likely to have been the editor and compiler who also provided ‘vital contextual information’ for many letters (p. 96). Chapter iv further narrows the focus to the theme of gift-giving in the letters. It appears that the Gazan ascetics placed ‘more emphasis on giving gifts to the poor through agents such as monasteries or churches rather than giving them directly’. This protected donors from being tempted to worldly pride or vanity (p. 110). Chapters v and vi discuss two related forms of almsgiving: the entertainment of strangers and the care provided for the sick. Hospitality was not to be offered indiscriminately to all alike, but prudentially ‘differentiated according to the condition and status of those on the receiving end. By this distinction they sought to protect both benefactors and beneficiaries’ (p. 142). Choi describes how the letters offer a wealth of fascinating glimpses into how the sick were regarded and treated, the disputed role of bathing, food and medicine. Chapter vii offers a very brief reprise of the conclusions reached in the preceding chapters. The principal weakness of the book is its lack of close reading of the letters. We are left to rely on Choi’s summary descriptions. None the less, this book can be warmly recommended to students who wish to gain a good overview of its topic.

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I vescovi della Dalmazia al Concilio di Hieria del 754. Appunti sulla geografia storica dell’Adriatico meridionale bizantino nell’VIII secolo. By Ivan Basić. (Consociatio Croatica studiorum Byzantinorum. Dissertationes et Monographiae, 2.) Pp. 159 incl. 8 figs and 2 tables. Split–Zagreb: Sveuciliste u Splitu – Filozofski fakultet/Hrvatsko drustvo za bizantske studije, 2020. ISBN 978 953 352 057 5 *JEH* (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046921000762

This book sets out to resolve a problem related to the church council held at the palace of Hieria just outside Constantinople in 754, which established iconoclasm