

and prayers in Latin Christianity” is good and accomplished (and goes well with Meens’s essay). Éric Palazzo’s “Performing the liturgy” is sophisticated and thought-provoking.

Part 5, “Christianity: Books and Ideas,” has six essays. The first is Alain Boureau’s scholarly “Visions of God” (although he really did need to link such visions to the mundane reality of human existence). E. Ann Matter’s “Orthodoxy and deviance” evokes a broad Christian horizon through time and space, sharply examining orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the Byzantine empire, before ending with an unexpectedly traditional (and mistaken) approach to the apparent resurgence of heresy in the Latin Christendom in the eleventh century. Guy Lobrichon’s “Making sense of the Bible” is very clever. Leslie Brubaker and Mary B. Cunningham’s “The Christian book in medieval Byzantium” is terrific, at once capturing the divinity, artfulness, and physical sensuality of texts. Julia M. H. Smith’s “Saints and their cults” is outstanding, expertly and eloquently examining how cults and their saints were capable of “endless reinvention.” Crucially, her essay emphasizes that “the attribution of sanctity remained rooted in the needs of living communities to find holiness in their midst in ways which made sense of the world” (605). More contributors should have tried to elucidate this “rooted” relationship between holiness and community in their essays. Jane Baun’s “Last Things” is a moving and intelligent essay on “death and judgment; heaven, hell, and the places in between, the Second Coming and the Last Judgment” (606).

All in all, *Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100* is a worthy volume about Christians and their various “Christianities.”

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Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe. By **James William Brodman.** Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009. xi+318 pp. \$59.95 cloth.

The discourse on religious charity in the medieval European West is obviously complex and diverse. Its history is an evolving story from personal/communal obligation to more regulated institutions for the spiritual and physical welfare of Christian society. In his book, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe*, James William Brodman surveys this broad and rich landscape in one comprehensive study, considering over seven chapters the many spiritual, religious, canonical, theological, and institutional dimensions and practices of medieval giving. The organization and function of charity is given top

priority, with great care taken to consider associated religious and secular characteristics. In all, this impressive study illustrates the variety and diffusion of caritative institutions across Latin Christendom, from the patristic to late medieval eras, as “the product of a particular setting and of the circumstances of its foundations” (283).

In defining first the “ideology of charity” (chapter 1), Brodman argues for the imperative of almsgiving in the High Middle Ages. Drawing from extant sermons, letters, conciliar *acta*, and the canon law, the twelfth century is identified here as “a watershed in Medieval Europe’s concept and practice of charity” (14). Contemporary sources like Gratian’s *Decretum* (c.1140), the writings of Thomas Aquinas (1227–1274), Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), and a handful of twelfth-century Parisian reformers (for example, Peter the Chanter), lend weight to both practical and theoretical dimensions of medieval charity from this period onward. Gaining momentum as a “movement” within the medieval Church primarily, the blossoming of religious charity had direct consequences for the medieval hospital (chapter 2), that institution first established in the early Middle Ages to care for society’s poor and vulnerable. Situating his argument within an array of municipal and regional studies on this subject, Brodman tackles the all-important question of hospital origins, the fulcrum from which his original argument follows.

As the “preeminent . . . supervisors, administrators, and practitioners of charity” (178), the clergy played a ubiquitous role in the operations, foundations, and regulations of medieval hospitals. But while episcopal oversight was the established precedent, new caritative orders also emerged in the twelfth century like the Hospitallers of St. John, the Order of Santiago, and the Teutonic Order—in addition to numerous other minor, monastic, and pilgrimage orders—whose primary concern was sheltering and caring for their communities. As Brodman outlines in chapter 3, a vast network of almshouses, hospices, and leper houses quickly emerged throughout the Levant and Europe; even “bridge brotherhoods” (121) were created as conduits for safe passage across rivers. Drawing on extant charters, privileges, and religious rules (chapter 4), the author develops a history of these brotherhoods “firmly tied to the canonical movement and the Rule of St. Augustine” (126); some, like the Order of the Holy Spirit, became known for their care of women and children (145). Others, like the Trinitarian and Mercedarian Orders, were devoted in part to ransoming Christian captives from Muslim lands (150). With the rise of such institutions, care for the needy and sick evolved into the protection of persons and property, an especially important consideration along trading and pilgrimage routes—a great concern during the Crusading era.

Counterbalancing the clergy’s role in religious charity are lay charitable practices in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (chapter 5), apparent primarily in the vitae of male and female saints, in addition to “spiritual” movements and

groups like the beguines and *Humiliati*. The social responsibility undertaken by less-organized lay confraternities and parishes across France, Spain, Italy, the Low Countries, England, and Germany reveals a great deal about religious mentalities toward mutual assistance in the medieval community: “their collective policies . . . intermingled spiritual and material interests in pursuit of security, both in this life and the next” (187). In other words, religious devotion and lay charitable practices were inseparable in the Middle Ages. Lay governance of charitable institutions, as the author suggests, was a distinguishing and novel feature of this period and one that ensured both freedom from larger ecclesiastical institutions and a more local treatment of charity.

The ties that bound medieval hospitals with the religious life are evinced even further in this book’s final two chapters. As potential competitors to mainstream religious orders (for example, mendicant Friars), Hospitaller communities came to adopt the Rule of St. Augustine for purposes of religious conformity, legitimacy, and order. In his analysis of the internal governance of such communities (chapter 6), Brodman draws out this “blending of tradition and innovation”; he argues convincingly for a measure of creativity in caritative institutions and their legislation, while simultaneously recognizing their efforts to “refashion traditional practices to entirely new uses” (244). Giving further credence to the lay character of medieval hospitals, moreover, the purely religious dimension of care forms the subject of the final chapter (chapter 8). Whether in hospitals, leprosaria, or prostitute shelters, order and discipline were being promoted continually through an identifiable “template of religious observance” (261).

Overall, this survey of “the nature, characteristics, and evolution of medieval religious charity and its various components” (267) depicts a “global character” (176) of medieval charity. Once embedded in notions of obligation, religious charity and hospitality in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries “became institutionalized” (126) and a matter of interest and concern to both secular and ecclesiastical spheres of high and late medieval society. While the fruit of such transformation is apparent from the twelfth century, this reviewer craved more direct causal explanation (especially in canonistic terms) between the Gregorian reform era of the late eleventh century and Brodman’s professed innovations in caritative institutions. But this is one critique of an otherwise engaging, informative, and well-structured narrative on the subject of medieval giving. Even when confronted with “little trace of actual voices of those who practiced charity in the Middle ages” (274), Brodman manages to open a window onto many theological, canonical, institutional, and societal transformations affecting medieval charity.

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