

the range of understanding about this important virtue in early Christian life, and the methods by which scholars seek to uncover an understanding of the past.

Müller's introductory essay (1–28) provides both a historiographical analysis of scholarship on the topic and an effective summary of potential research; it serves as a welcoming foyer to a volume that offers evidence of academia's continued and creative engagement with the important relationship between theology, economic activity, and ethical behaviors within a religious administration. The contents traverse the range of the field, with additional attention to the historiography of *caritas* and *diakoniegeschichtes-schreibung* (Schneider, 109–131), exegetical and comparative analysis of the vocabulary (Koet, 29–45; Leppin, 47–65), theological anthropology (Volp, 67–92), eastern Christian/Byzantine attitudes and practices regarding charity (Caner, 93–107; Heimlicher, 133–141; Lemhaus, 143–150), and the role charity plays in hagiography (Seeliger, 151–158). Taken together, the volume is ecumenical in its content, with distinctions in the understanding and interpretation of charity (*caritas*, *diaconia*, or *philanthropia*) fully represented in the various essays.

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***Invitation to Syriac Christianity: An Anthology.* Edited by Michael Philip Penn, Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, Christine Shepardson, and Charles M. Stang. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022. xviii + 431 pp. \$150.00 cloth; \$39.95 paper; \$49.95 e-book.**

*Invitation to Syriac Christianity: An Anthology* fills a conspicuous gap in Syriac studies. It offers an introductory sourcebook on the Syriac Christian traditions, bringing together accessible English translations of a variety of key texts that will be of interest to teachers, students, and general readers alike. For a field that has long been cognizant of its importance to early Christian, late antique, and Middle Eastern studies but has had trouble demonstrating that importance to non-specialists, a volume like the present one was much needed. The editors should be commended for the care taken in producing it.

The book organizes its translated excerpts into four areas: foundations; practices; texts and textual transmission; and interreligious encounters. This prudent editorial choice allows the reader to follow the evolution of the premodern Syriac traditions thematically rather than through a series of individual theologians, which might have been a simpler but less elegant organizing principle.

Otherwise, the picture of Syriac Christianity and its study that *Invitation* provides is a fairly traditional one. The focus is religious thought, literature, and practice rather than social history, and the volume includes no texts later than the fourteenth century, the putative onset of Syriac literary decline according to an old but persistent western scholarly view. The editors' choice of thematic focus is certainly fair enough. Almost all Syriac literature is religious in some sense; its western academic study has been weighted toward biblical studies and theology; and the title invites the reader to Syriac Christianity, not to other dimensions of Syriac Christians' historical experiences.

The result is a very coherent anthology on late antique and medieval religiosity, one enriched by the contacts with other religions and Silk Road civilizations illustrated in the book's fourth section.

Given that the introduction underlines the continued vitality of the Syriac Christian traditions into modernity, I would have liked to see the sourcebook itself reflect that perspective. Early modern interactions with the papacy and modern Neo-Aramaic poetry no doubt would have fascinated the book's intended audience, and their inclusion would have been an important contribution to pushing Syriac studies out of the staid "rise and decline" framework. But readers will yet be fascinated by the multitude of rich texts that have been included in this essential volume.

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***Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond.* By Reyhan Durmaz. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022. xi + 261 pp. \$95.00 hardcover.**

The first published book from Reyhan Durmaz, assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania, examines the transmission of stories about Christian saints and biblical characters into the early Muslim community, placing both Christians and Muslims in the wider context of late antique storytelling. From the beginning, Durmaz is clear about the three scholarly conversations to which *Stories between Christianity and Islam* contributes: "performative hagiography, early Islam as a late antique religion, and narrative transmission in the context of Christian-Muslim relations" (1).

Overlapping with these three scholarly conversations, Durmaz uses her introduction to introduce three themes that will run throughout the book. First, she discusses the practice of "narrating stories" by coining the term *hagiodiegesis*, a concept connected to hagiography but emphasizing orality and performance. Naturally, there are complicating factors in studying hagiodiegesis, because "this oral and embodied practice in antiquity can only be rendered visible through written texts" (4), but Durmaz emphasizes the importance of understanding the processes that brought saints' stories to a wide audience. She examines the phenomenon of "narrative literacy" and notes that it destabilizes "social boundaries like literate and illiterate, and by extension, learned and simple believers" (4). Here she is nuancing the recent work of Jack Tannous (*The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers*, 2018) by examining the different forms of literacy that could exist beyond the theological elite of late antique society.

Second, Durmaz discusses the scholarly practice of "sorting stories" into categories such as "biblical," "nonbiblical," "Arabian," "qur'anic," and so on. She argues that in the late antique context, those with narrative literacy would not necessarily have placed