

zum 8. Deutschen Syrologie-Symposium in Salzburg 2014, ed. Dietmar W. Winkler, Vienna: Lit, 2016, 89–108), which is not cited in this volume's bibliography.

It should be noted that Palmer's translation was also published independently in 2020, as volume 61 in the same series (*The Life of the Syrian Saint Barsauma: Eulogy of a Hero of the Resistance to the Council of Chalcedon*), with the same annotations but a different introduction by Palmer himself. Here he presents his own codicologically informed theory of the text's redaction—rather different from Menze's cautious proposal in the volume reviewed here (9–10). Presumably a laudable desire to make the translation available as an inexpensive paperback lies behind this decision, but it is unfortunate and somewhat confusing that neither volume contains any reference to the other (except in the series' title lists included in their respective frontmatter).

These criticisms, however, should not be taken as diminishing the value of the volume's contribution as a whole, but rather as a rebuke to the institutional structures of academia that continue to prioritize quantity over quality in published research. The editors and contributors have together made a long-neglected text, of great interest to students of late antiquity, church history, and Jewish-Christian relations, available to a broad scholarly audience; they have done excellent work placing the *Life of Barsauma* in its *Sitz im Leben* and dispelling some of the false impressions created by past scholarship based on partial access to the text. They are to be commended for their efforts.

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### *Venantius Fortunatus and Gallic Christianity: Theology in the Writings of an Italian Émigré in Merovingian Gaul.*

By Benjamin Wheaton. Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 29. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. x + 293 pp. \$131 cloth.

Born in the Veneto region of northern Italy sometime in the 530s, Venantius Fortunatus emigrated to Gaul around 565 and died toward the end of the century in Poitiers, where he served as bishop. He is best remembered as a poet who excelled in elegiac and panegyric verse, as a hagiographer, and as the friend of prominent Christians whom he praised and venerated through his art. Among these were Rade Gund, former queen and founder of the Convent of the Holy Cross in Poitiers, and Gregory of Tours, the bishop, hagiographer, and, most famously, the historian of the Franks. Like Gregory, Fortunatus is less well known, or regarded, as a theologian. Benjamin Wheaton's book successfully aims to demonstrate that this Italian émigré to Frankish Gaul had theological ambitions, at least insofar as fulfilling his pastoral responsibilities to his congregation and clergy, and that posterity appreciated his efforts (for example, 74–88). Moreover, he had a theological identity of his own, marked to some extent by both his native north Italian and adopted Gallic milieus. Wheaton manages to recover elements of this identity by closely reading a small number of Fortunatus' prose and verse works in conjunction with other texts that either

influenced, differed from, or helped to contextualize the work of his main author. This is not untrodden territory, and Wheaton engages frequently with prior editors, commentators, and other scholars who have addressed the poet's religious thought and influences. He does not hesitate to explicate and sometimes quibble over fine points, and non-specialist readers are likely to skim as he comments his way sequentially through each of his main texts. Wheaton, though, helpfully signposts his main points and intersperses summaries of historical and doctrinal events where appropriate. Moreover, he writes well. Based on his University of Toronto dissertation, the book provides an informative model for graduate students interested in early medieval theology and the reception of late antique literature. Its patient exegesis of texts written in various genres helps to fortify the case, pursued recently by Lisa Bailey, among others cited in the up-to-date bibliography, that early medieval Gallic Christianity was vibrant and diverse. As to our understanding of Fortunatus, it is a narrower study than Hope Williard's *Friendship in the Merovingian Kingdoms: Venantius Fortunatus and His Contemporaries* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022), but Wheaton builds a convincing case that Fortunatus was deeply influenced by his early education and alliances in northern Italy. Decades later, as an elder bishop, firmly ensconced in the social and ecclesiastical world of Merovingian Gaul, his writing still bore the marks of this influence.

*Venantius Fortunatus and Gallic Christianity* begins with a brief introduction (1–10) explaining how the two sermons that comprise the focus of the first four chapters figured in the *Carmina*, which collected most of Fortunatus' surviving work. The first two chapters examine the sources and originality of Fortunatus' *Expositio symboli* (*Carmina* 11.1). After briefly explaining the various versions of the Symbol, or Creed, circulating in Italy and Gaul up to Carolingian reform, Chapter 1 investigates groups of "symbol sermons," which preceded and, in some cases, may have influenced that of Fortunatus. His main source was the popular *Expositio symboli* by Rufinus of Aquileia. Chapter 2 closely compares Rufinus' and Fortunatus' symbol sermons, proceeding article by article through the creed and highlighting divergences and where Fortunatus may have drawn on alternative sources. The most telling innovation is an excursus on the cross that suggests a personal touch: Wheaton proposes possible influences, including the relic of the True Cross residing in Poitiers thanks to Radegund and extolled by Fortunatus in his poems. Overall, Wheaton shows convincingly that Fortunatus relied on but was not constrained by Rufinus' sermon, especially where Rufinus aimed his arguments against pagans and heretics. The Gallic sermon was decidedly non-polemical and aimed instead at edifying a Christian audience.

The *Expositio orationis dominicae* (*Carmina* 10.1) is the most polemical of Fortunatus' surviving work. In it, according to Wheaton, Fortunatus went beyond most of his Gallic contemporaries in "ardently defending an austere Augustinian understanding of grace and free will" (104), "the theology of his homeland, rejecting a mainstream view of his adopted home" (161). Chapter 3 then provides an overview of the sources influencing or used directly by Fortunatus and refutes a recent challenge to the sermon's authenticity (105–110). A concise history of the origins of Pelagianism and the reactions it provoked particularly in southern Gaul comprises the first half of Chapter 4 (113–131), including examples from key texts and authors, especially Prosper of Aquitaine and Caesarius of Arles. Caesarius was an important influence on Fortunatus and a firm Augustinian. But at the Second Council of Arles in 529, he settled for a "baseline" rather than hardline, "orthodoxy on grace and free will" (128–130). Turning to the *Expositio*, Wheaton seeks to show that Fortunatus set the bar higher for himself and his

clergy. In this, he appears to have been more Augustinian than his friend, Gregory of Tours, although the comparison (157–161) relies on a single passage from *Histories of the Franks*. The contrast emphasizes Wheaton's overarching argument that Fortunatus's "view is that of the Roman church, reflecting his education in Italy" (162).

The remaining chapters turn from sermons to panegyrics and Christology. Chapter 5 begins with a summary of doctrinal developments from the Council of Chalcedon to the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 and the Three Chapters Controversy and the reactions to the latter in Rome, northern Italy, and Gaul (164–183). While many of his contemporaries were skeptical regarding, if not opposed to, the Second Council of Constantinople, Wheaton argues that Fortunatus favored unity—at least in part because of his education in Ravenna—and that he followed through with a consistent if "generic Chalcedonian theology" in his writings (183–188). The rest of the chapter focuses on the panegyric *Ad Iustinum iuniorem imperatorem et Sophiam Augustos*, thanking Justin II and Sophia on behalf of Rade Gund for sending a relic of the True Cross to Poitiers. Wheaton argues that Fortunatus may have been deliberately echoing, with a truly "light touch" (209), the 551 edict *Confessio rectae fidei* as a way of promoting reconciliation to his audience, including the imperial couple, Rade Gund and King Sigibert. Chapter 6 pursues this "vision of a united Chalcedonian Christendom" (210) in one of Fortunatus' more enigmatic poems, probably written toward the end of his life, the *In laudem sanctae Mariae* (translated here with text and sources at 243–271). In surveying the source texts, which in this case include many of Fortunatus's own works, this chapter highlights anonymous sixth-century North African sermons containing epithets for Mary otherwise found only in eastern sources. According to Wheaton, "Fortunatus was drawing on a pan-Mediterranean current of Marian veneration that had not yet reached Gaul, and was only beginning to impact Italy" (233)—yet this is more evidence of his residual Italian identity. A brief conclusion ties together the main arguments of this worthwhile study.

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### ***A Shrine to Moses: A Reappraisal of the Mount Nebo Monastic Complex Between Byzantium and Islam.* By Davide Bianchi.**

Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science Press, 2021. 240 pp. 46 color & b/w plates, 1 map. €148.00 paper.

The monastic complex of Mount Nebo has been the subject of several archaeological expeditions since the 1930s. Almost 100 years after the pioneering investigation carried out by the Franciscan Friars of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* in Jerusalem, a new age of research has begun in 2012 under the direction of Eugenio Alliata and Davide Bianchi. Bianchi joined the project as a PhD candidate and recently published a comprehensive monograph that builds on his doctoral research on the complex.

*A Shrine to Moses: A Reappraisal of the Mount Nebo Monastic Complex Between Byzantium and Islam* is divided into two parts. The first section discusses the archaeological investigations carried out in the monastic complex of Mount Nebo and is itself divided