

***The Life of Bishoi: The Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic Life.*** Edited by Tim Vivian and Maged S. A. Mikhail. Cairo: AUC Press, 2022. xvii + 371 pp. \$54.72 hardcover.

*The Life of Bishoi* presents to western readers and scholars the first English translation of the life of a well beloved and popular eastern saint. Saint Bishoi of Scetis (d. ca. 417) is a famous monastic who was one of the four main monastic founders of the monasteries of Scetis, those of Macarius the Great, John the Little, Bishoi, and Maximus and Domitius.

The book provides a translation of the life of Bishoi from Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Ge'ez (Ethiopic) manuscripts. The bibliography informs us that the editors consulted twenty-seven referenced manuscripts, seven texts and editions of the *Life of Bishoi*, and five editions containing portions and summaries of the *Life* based on Arabic manuscripts.

Tim Vivian and Maged S. A. Mikhail are the book's editors. Mikhail provides an erudite introduction to the whole volume, in which he discusses Bishoi's identity and the textual history of the *Life of Bishoi*. Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis provide a translation of the Greek *Life* followed by the Greek text. Robert Kitchen provides an introduction and translation of the Ge'ez *Life of Bishoi*. Rowan Greer, Robert Kitchen, and Maged Mikhail translate the Syriac text and provide an introduction. Finally, Maged Mikhail provides an introduction, a translation, and an Appendix to the Arabic *Life*.

This definitive volume of the *Life of Bishoi* sheds light, not only on the life of an important saint and monastic leader, but is also valuable for the study of monasticism and hagiography, as well as the history of Christianity in Egypt. The editors added titles to various sections of the *Life*, thus providing the reader a tool to compare each section's theme through the various languages. This study is valuable for exploring the transmission of texts through various languages and cultures, and across denominational differences.

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***Corinth in Late Antiquity: A Greek, Roman and Christian City.*** By Amelia R. Brown. Library of Classical Studies 17. London: I.B. Tauris, 2018. xiv + 341 pp., 10 pp. of plates. \$125.00 hardcover.

*Corinth in Late Antiquity* provides a comprehensive discussion of all buildings known from the city, its suburbs, and the broader Corinthia during Late Antiquity. Brown traces their development over time and situates her work within ongoing debates centered on urban change in Late Antiquity. She notes that we still lack sufficient synthetic studies of individual cities at this time and argues that a study focused on Corinth is warranted and feasible due to the city's importance in antiquity and the abundant evidence on hand. Indeed, Brown makes able use of literary, epigraphic,

and archaeological evidence throughout the book. Brown sees a major turning point in the fifth century, when the landscape of the city was altered quite significantly and older modes of civic governance gave way to new, more centralized forms. Brown presents this material in eight thematic chapters and two appendices. The book also contains extensive footnotes and a full bibliography.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the Corinthian landscape (topography, geology, climate, resources). The remainder of the chapter introduces local, imperial, and Christian elites known from the literary and epigraphic evidence. Brown stresses the growing importance of the ecclesiastical leadership from the early fifth century onward. Her use of the epigraphic material in this chapter is especially rewarding and should put to rest any lingering notions that Corinth was not the capital of Achaëa. Brown provides a succinct overview of public spaces associated with civic authorities in chapter two. She maintains that the Forum was “always a central urban space to display the exercise of government” (38) throughout Late Antiquity, while noting that important changes were introduced from the late fifth century onward.

The following chapter addresses civic infrastructure (shops, roads, harbors, fountains, baths) in the city, and Brown stresses the continuity of maintenance in this area. She includes a thorough discussion of the history of the Peirene Fountain in Late Antiquity here, noting that it “remained the central, monumental and public source of fresh water at the Forum into the sixth century” (59). She also notes that a culture of water remained pervasive in late Roman Corinth and continued to structure the priorities of the elites who resided there.

Chapter 4 discusses public spaces of assembly and entertainment (theater, odeion, amphitheater, circus, gymnasium, and Isthmia). Brown emphasizes continuity in maintenance and use for these structures through the later fourth century, but most were pillaged for materials for the construction of fortification walls beginning in the fifth century. She is certainly correct to note that this represented “a profound change in the civic landscape of Corinth, as well as in the public culture of urban life” (72). The next chapter focuses on the fate of Corinth’s abundant public sculpture. Brown sees a similar pattern here: continuity in display and use until the late fourth century, then a significant rupture in practice beginning in the fifth, when a majority of the city’s sculpture was destroyed or discarded. Brown argues that this iconoclastic activity was “intentional and organized” (112) and undertaken for a variety of reasons.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the Christianization of the Corinthian landscape. She notes that temples in the center were not converted into churches—in contrast to the situation in Athens, and those along the western edge of the forum were stripped to their foundations. Brown also presents the evidence for the presence of a Jewish synagogue north of the Forum and argues in favor of a location for Corinth’s cathedral church somewhere just east or south of the Forum. In the following chapter, she extends her analysis to Corinth’s suburban spaces and the broader Corinthia, where a majority of the city’s known early Christian basilicas were constructed (for example, Kodratos, Skoutela, Lechaion, and Kraneion). Brown notes here that it is plausible that the grand Lechaion basilica may have served as the seat of the Archbishop of Corinth in the sixth century.

Chapter 8 details the construction of fortification walls around the city itself and across the Isthmus. These walls were built of reused materials. The sanctuary of Poseidon was thoroughly pillaged for materials to construct the Hexamilion, while materials from the Forum and Theater (sculpture, epigraphy, and architecture) were used to construct the poorly understood late Roman wall around the city itself.

Brown notes that it is likely that the walls of Acrocorinth were repaired as well, though limited archaeological work to date makes it difficult to say so with certainty. Two appendices follow: the first details the epigraphic and literary evidence available for the study of Corinth, while the second provides an overview of archaeological work carried out since the late nineteenth century.

This book will be essential reading for anyone interested in late Roman Corinth, late antique Greece, or late ancient urbanism. While Brown should be commended for assembling and synthesizing the material presented here, her approach is limiting in certain respects. The (successful) effort to be comprehensive means that insufficient space is devoted to fleshing out arguments among scholars (past and present) concerning the buildings under discussion. While Brown makes every effort to present these arguments, she does so rather quickly and tersely. Some readers—those perhaps less familiar with the history of Corinth and its monuments than the present reviewer—may get overwhelmed by this dense presentation of the material. Some may also disagree with Brown’s lament on the demise of the civic culture of the ancient city. Her statement that “Christian civic events were more limiting to creativity and human expression” (163) in relation to those offered previously seems misplaced. Still, *Corinth in Late Antiquity* is an impressive accomplishment and a welcome addition to the scholarship on the history of the city.

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***How the Church Fathers Read the Bible: A Short Introduction.* By Gerald Bray. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022. 194 pp. \$24.99 hardcover; \$16.99 digital.**

Historians are well-acquainted with the difficulties inherent in summarizing the relevant complexities and nuances of any period of time in the space of a few hundred pages. And yet we are also familiar with the need for such introductory summaries for those interacting with an era for the first time. The strengths and weaknesses of Gerald Bray’s most recent offering flow from this ever-present tension between precision and accessibility.

The subtitle, form, and style of this book reveal the intended audience: students and other newcomers to the hermeneutics of the church fathers. Several other hints throughout the text, such as comparing Tertullian’s view of baptism to that of “modern Baptists” (165) and the presuppositions behind Bray’s valuations of patristic interpretations (for example, “we must . . . find a more solid scriptural basis on which to ground our teaching” [103]), show that this book is more specifically written for students from evangelical traditions. It is thus more akin to Christopher Hall’s *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998) than Frances Young’s *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

The book consists of six chapters, a general index, and a scripture index. There are no unnecessary distractions for the novice: no introduction, no bibliography, and an