

Eastern Christianity: A Reader. Edited by J. Edward Walters. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021. xvi + 423 pp. \$55.00 cloth.

It is refreshing to find a reader that covers new ground. There are several useful introductions to Eastern Christianity—I tend to reach for to the *Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity* (2007) and the *Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (1999)—but this is the first time that the general reader can sample the rich literatures of these worlds in a single English language volume. It should be said at the outset, however, that the coverage of such volumes is not identical. Some, like the editors of the Blackwell volumes, conceive of Eastern Christianity to include everything east of the Latin West, while others, like the editor of the volume under review, use this to designate what used to be called the “Oriental Churches,” or Christianity east and south of Byzantium. This means that one will find in this volume texts translated from Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Syriac.


Most of the texts presented in the volume are from late antiquity, except for the Arabic and Ethiopic texts. The introductions are less uniform, with some extending to the present (Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic), and some only covering late antiquity (Georgian, Coptic), or the early period of the literature (Arabic). The texts present the kind of vibrant diversity that one finds in the literatures themselves, ranging from poetry to biblical commentary, and from hagiography to history. Each text has its own concise introduction and bibliography, and each offers a distinctive window on the literature and worlds of Eastern Christianity.

Eastern Christianity: A Reader will be enjoyed by everyone who cares about, or teaches the history of Christianity, especially those most familiar with western Christianity. It broadens the vision of the Christian movement, especially in the late antique and early medieval period. It belongs in the library of every theological college, divinity school, and university. It will be especially valuable to undergraduates, opening to them at an early stage in their education the breadth of the Christian tradition, with the salutary effect of decentering Europe and North America in the history of Christianity.

One important insight that emerges from the section introductions is how interconnected these eastern Christian worlds were. Examples of language and cultural contact abound, especially, but not solely, in the translated works that form an important part of the literatures in each language treated in this volume. The eastward and southward spread of Christianity was not simply the spread of the gospel message but also of the theological and scientific knowledge that Christianity had accrued to that point. This literary injection inevitably influenced the course of the original literatures produced by each of the language communities covered in this splendid reader.

I only really have two criticisms of the volume. The first, which is entirely unfair, is that I would have liked to have had more—longer introductions and a great variety of texts. This just means, however, that the book did its job in whetting my appetite. The generous bibliographies very much help satisfy the desire for more of the history and literature introduced by the reader. This brings me to my second, minor criticism. I would have preferred if all the main bibliographies appended to the section introductions were divided into subsections, following the lead of John Lamoreaux

for the Arabic section (279–283). This would certainly have increased the utility of these valuable bibliographies.


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Latin Anonymous Sermons from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle (AD 300-800): Classification, Transmission, Dating.

By **Matthieu Pignot**, ed. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. 288 pp. \$95.00 cloth.

This volume contains nine papers, all but one of which were first presented at a 2019 conference on late antique anonymous sermons at the University of Namur. These papers delve at length into the language, sources, and manuscript transmission of particular sermons or homiliaries; roughly half include an edition of a previously unpublished Latin source. The philological acumen that went into this volume is astounding. My favorite essay is Raúl Villegas Marín’s study of the so-called “Eusebius Gallicanus” homiliary: a series of sixty-seven sermons, largely arranged according to the liturgical year, which Marín demonstrates were produced in the diocese of Riez around the year 540 under the influence of Caesarius of Arles (although many sermons in the homiliary are at least a half century older).

Yet, despite the high-quality research, I am unsure whom this volume is for. That is, what type of scholar will want to own the whole collection, rather than scan a relevant essay or two out of a library copy? The problem is that, as Matthieu Pignot’s introduction admits, “Latin anonymous sermon” is not a genre. Some of these texts were anonymous even in Late Antiquity. Others lost their author’s name during transmission. Still others were deliberately pseudonymous. Some originated in Latin; others are translations from an eastern language. Their audience could be lay congregants, monks celebrating the office, or perhaps just private readers. The only thing these sermons share in common is that modern scholars relegated them all to obscurity, exiling them to the *dubii* or *spurii* sections at the end of most editions. Ironically, the goal of research on anonymous sermons is to make such research obsolete—to integrate each text instead into scholarship on, for example, asceticism, or Christianization, or the Fall of Rome, where these sermons will help far more.

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