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Forum Antike

Online



Wednesday, 11th January 2023 | 17:00 (CET)

Phil BOOTH (University of Oxford)

Eucharist, Excommunication, and Ecclesiogenesis in Byzantine Egypt

This paper revisits two episcopal archives from the western Theban region of Upper Egypt – those of the bishops Pesynthius of Koptos and Abraham of Hermonthis. These unique Coptic archives (c.600) provide a remarkable and unparalleled perspective on the preoccupations of their two protagonists, and in particular on their attempts to police the social and moral boundaries of their clergies and congregations through the application of strict sacramental discipline. Recent scholarship is minded to see within the archives the typical activities of late antique bishops. This paper instead approaches them synchronically, placing them within the context of a recent bifurcation of the ancient episcopate into competing hierarchies, and seeing in their distinctive sacramental politics a parallel to the concerns of contemporaneous co-confessionals writing in Syriac.