



Celibate Marriages in Late Antique and Byzantine Hagiography: The Lives of Saints Julian and Basilissa, Andronikos and Athanasia, and Galaktion and Episteme

Anne P. Alwis

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Celibate Marriages in Late Antique and Byzantine Hagiography explores the puzzling phenomenon of celibate marriage as depicted in the lives of three couples who achieved sainthood. Marriage without intercourse appears to have no purpose, especially in Christian antiquity, yet these three tales were copied for centuries. What messages were they promoting? What did it mean to be a virgin husband and a virgin wife? Including full translations, this volume sets each life in its historical context, and by examining their individual and shared themes, the book shows that the tension raised by pitting marriage against celibacy is constantly debated. It also highlights the ingenuity of Byzantine hagiographers as they attempted to reconcile this curious paradox. This book addresses a gap in late Antique and Byzantine hagiographic studies where primary sources and interpretative material are very rarely presented in the same volume. By providing a variety of contexts to the material a much more comprehensive, revealing and holistic picture of celibate marriage emerges.

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