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Photius as a Reader of Hagiography: Selection and Criticism

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Byzantine hagiography is a rich and rewarding field of study. Still, modern scholars working in the field sometimes give voice to frustration over their inability to understand, in a more profound sense, their own object of study, let alone like it. Certain Lives of saints, or certain types of such Lives, are no doubt even more distant from modern mentality and taste than most other Byzantine works of literature—at least, from the mentality of modern Western scholars. Furthermore, modern critical tools are clearly inadequate to explain the success and abundant survival of some of these works. It may therefore be of interest to see how a scholar and literary critic among the Byzantines themselves—and one with the high stature and independent mind of Photius at that—approached this form of literature.

In his *Bibliotheca*,¹ Photius devotes eight codices to literary works that can be classified as saints' Lives: the Life of John Chrysostom (cod. 96), the Life of Gregory the Great (cod. 252), the Martyrdom of the Seven Child Saints (cod. 253), the Martyrdom of Timothy the Apostle (cod. 254), the Martyrdom of St. Demetrius (cod. 255), the Life of Sts. Metrophanes and Alexander (cod. 256), the Life of Paul the Confessor of Constantinople (cod. 257), and the Life of Athanasius the Great (cod. 258). All but one are presented by Photius as anonymous. The exception is the Life of John Chrysostom, which he says was written by George, bishop of Alexandria, admitting, however, that he possesses no external information about the author. Several codices are quite substantial: the Life of Athanasius is summarized in twenty-three (printed) pages, that of John Chrysostom in fifteen, and that of Paul the Confessor in ten.

Following Warren Treadgold in his useful tabulated dissection of the *Bibliotheca*,² we may classify some other codices as hagiography as well: the Apocryphal Acts of the Apos-

¹My quotations of the Greek text of the *Bibliotheca* follow Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. R. Henry, 8 vols. (Paris, 1959–77) and vol. 9, index by J. Schamp (Paris, 1991). My translations are adapted from those of Nigel Wilson, whenever the codices in question are contained in Photius, *The Bibliotheca: A Selection Translated with Notes*, ed. N. G. Wilson (London, 1994). I am grateful for constructive criticism of an earlier version of the article from participants in the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium of 1996, "Aesthetics and Presentation in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music," where it was first presented. I would also like to thank two anonymous readers and Christian Høgel for their comments.

²W. T. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius*, DOS 18 (Washington, D.C., 1980), 174.

bles (cod. 114),³ the various writings ascribed by Photius to Clement of Rome (codd. 112–13), John Cassian's *Conferences* (cod. 197), and John Moschus's *Pratum spirituale* (cod. 199). Even so, hagiography is not among Photius's most favored theological genres; other categories, such as apologetics, homilies, church history, and dogmatic and exegetical works, occupy a greater number of codices each. Still, some of his hagiographical reports are detailed enough—and seem independent enough—to make it worthwhile to observe Photius as a reader and critic of this kind of literature.

My emphasis throughout is on *Photius's own attitude* to hagiography proper, as implicit in his choices or explicitly stated in his criticism. This means that the notoriously difficult problems of precisely what manuscripts, or what recension of a certain text, he had before his eyes is secondary in my treatment. I do not thus attempt to probe further into the surviving hagiographical manuscripts than experts like François Halkin have already done. In some cases the results arrived at by other scholars seem convincing to me, while in other, more doubtful, cases such an ambition would have meant research of a kind and dimension beyond the scope of this article.

I also take for granted that Photius actually read the works he says he read, and did not use someone else's summary, unless he says so, or take over someone else's literary criticism mechanically. I have argued elsewhere for this approach to the *Bibliotheca*, taking Photius at his word with regard to his bibliographical information; and the recent criticism of Jacques Schamp⁴ has not persuaded me to think otherwise. Photius sometimes states that he has not been able to find a certain book and has to rely on secondary sources, or that he has read only part of a book; that he would positively mislead his readers in other cases does not make sense.

It is another matter that some of the terminology Photius uses in his bibliographical introductions is open to different interpretations—or, rather, has been interpreted differently by different scholars, though mostly, in my opinion, without good reasons. For if one cares to accustom oneself to Photius's sometimes idiosyncratic use of words like ἐκλογή and ἔκδοσις, by reading a number of his introductions and conclusions and comparing the terminology to the actual contents of the codices in question, the problem tends to evaporate. It is, however, arguable that the codices of the second part of the *Bibliotheca* (codd. 234–80)—where most of this peculiar terminology appears—have a different genesis from the earlier ones,⁵ and that this might affect the question of Photius's personal reading. Since seven of our eight hagiography codices proper belong to this second half, the issue cannot be ignored here; but such problems are not allowed any prominent place in my considerations.

Instead, I hope to be able to bring to the topic some fresh perspectives and comparative material not used previously in this context, by illustrating how a Byzantine scholar

³Photius's criticism of these Acts is analyzed by E. Junod, "Actes apocryphes et hérésie: Le jugement de Photius," in *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres: Christianisme et monde païen*, ed. F. Bovon et al., Publications de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Genève 4 (Geneva, 1981), 11–24.

⁴J. Schamp, *Photios historien des lettres: La Bibliothèque et ses notices biographiques*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège 248 (Paris, 1987), 95–99. Cf. T. Hägg, *Photios als Vermittler antiker Literatur: Untersuchungen zur Technik des Referierens und Exzerpieren in der Bibliothek*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Graeca Upsaliensia 8 (Uppsala, 1975), 131–37, and Treadgold, *Nature*, 41–48.

⁵See, in particular, Treadgold, *Nature*, 37–51. Cf. also J. Schamp, "Flavius Josèphe et Photios," *JÖB* 32.4 (1982): 185–96; his conclusions concerning cod. 238 do not admit of generalization.

of the middle Byzantine period looked at Christian narrative texts of late antiquity and the early Byzantine period. Since Photius read many works of pagan history, biography, and fiction, it appears natural to bring in his attitude to these three pagan genres for a comparison. Did he, for example, like some modern scholars, judge saints' Lives solely according to their degree of historicity, or is there any indication that he could have also read hagiographical texts for their narrative qualities or other artistic merits, as he clearly did with ancient fiction? Did he merely seek factual information on the earthly careers of specific saints, or was he also prepared to see the genre's *raison d'être* in a broader Christian perspective? In other words, could he have contemplated hagiography as intended for spiritual edification rather than satisfying the kind of intellectual curiosity so typical of Photius himself?

The first part of the article is devoted to an attempt to determine what most interested Photius himself in the saints' Lives, that is, *why* he read them. The basis for a study of his selection principles is, of course, provided by the cases in which the original text has survived and been identified, so as to permit the direct comparison between two texts. This applies to codex 96, the Life of John Chrysostom, which is my principal object of study. To bring out proportions, principles of selection, and tendencies, I use the same method as I did for the study of Photius's profane reading in my book *Photios als Vermittler antiker Literatur* (1975), thus facilitating comparisons.

In the second part, the emphasis is on Photius as a literary critic, with special reference to his reading of hagiography, that is, *how* he read and judged the Lives of saints. Emil Orth's listing and discussion of Photius's critical vocabulary⁶ as well as George Kustas's study of Photius's literary criticism⁷ provide some of the background here.

THE SELECTION

A study of Photius's principles of selection must begin with the books themselves, before we turn to the actual comparison of texts. One may take for granted that Photius had huge quantities of hagiographical texts to choose among; the menologia and other collections of saints' Lives compiled in the ninth through the eleventh century witness to the abundance of texts of this genre available in Constantinople. Many of these, of course, were contemporary compositions, and such works were obviously not on Photius's agenda for the *Bibliotheca*: the most recent hagiographical book he discusses is the Life of Gregory the Great (cod. 252), perhaps belonging to the middle of the eighth century;⁸

⁶E. Orth, *Photiana*, Rhetorische Forschungen 1 (Leipzig, 1928), and idem, *Die Stilkritik des Photios*, Rhetorische Forschungen 2 (Leipzig, 1929); cf. the warning in P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin* (Paris, 1971), 195 n. 56: "doit être consulté avec prudence."

⁷G. L. Kustas, "The Literary Criticism of Photius: A Christian Definition of Style," *Hellenika* (Thessalonike) 17 (1962): 132–69; cf. also idem, "History and Theology in Photius," *GOTR* 10 (1964): 37–74.

⁸The identity of the text Photius had before him is disputed. F. Halkin, "La date de composition de la 'Bibliothèque' de Photius remise en question," *AB* 81 (1963): 414–17, argued that Photius used a short (surviving) Greek Life (*BHG* 721) which, according to H. Delehayé, "S. Grégoire le Grand dans l'hagiographie grecque," *AB* 23 (1904): 452, built on the huge Latin *Vita S. Gregorii* (*BHL* 3641), written in the 870s by Johannes Diaconus (Hymmonides); on this text, see W. Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, vol. 3, *Karolingische Biographie, 750–920 n. Chr.*, Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters 10 (Stuttgart, 1991), 372–87. This would place the composition of the *Bibliotheca* some decades later than is usually thought, and Halkin's argument has been accordingly scrutinized and

all the others are from the seventh century or earlier. But even if he thus restricted himself to texts already possessing some historical patina, he no doubt had plenty to choose from.

From this abundance, Photius included in the *Bibliotheca* just eight hagiographical works proper. One fact is immediately conspicuous: the emphasis—with regard to the number of works chosen as well as the comprehensiveness of their treatment—clearly lies on politically important figures of church history. There are substantial codices devoted to two well-known bishops of Constantinople, John Chrysostom and Paul the Confessor, and to the famous bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius the Great; in addition, a shorter codex concerns the life of a pope, Gregory the Great. Two more obscure early bishops of Constantinople, Metrophanes and Alexander, are treated in one large codex. On the other hand, the legendary lives of early popular saints play a rather modest role in Photius's selection: only six pages altogether are spent on the Martyrdoms of Timothy the Apostle, St. Demetrius of Thessalonike, and the Seven Child Saints of Ephesus.

These crude figures give us a first indication of what kind of hagiographical texts Photius mainly wanted to communicate to the readers of the *Bibliotheca*—primarily perhaps to his brother Tarasius as the formal addressee of the whole work, but at the same time also to the wider circle of intellectually curious contemporaries whose instruction and enjoyment he certainly had in mind when he undertook the arduous task of composing it. What he wanted to bring to their attention was evidently not, in the first place, legends of the most celebrated early martyrs and saints. We may presume that most such Lives were already excluded by being easily available, in one version or other, in other places; after all, the most important general criterion for *detailed* treatment in the *Bibliotheca* appears to have been the difficulty of acquiring the book in question. But there must also have been rare books surviving on saints of a less public career than the famous bishops whom Photius favored, which means that his emphasis on politically important figures remains significant. This interest is no doubt directly connected with his own ideal of the kind of role that a church leader should play in society: the future patriarch of Constantinople reveals his political instinct.⁹

To what extent does this first impression agree with Photius's actual choice of material from the books he read? In investigating his criteria of selection, one may start with his treatment of George of Alexandria's *On Chrysostom* (cod. 96, *BHG* 873, *CPG* 7979) and by quoting Photius's own recommendation to other readers at the end of this codex (83b19–21): ὁ δὲ συγγραφεὺς οὗτος οὐκ ὀλίγα φαίνεται παριστορῶν· ἀλλ' οὐδὲν κωλύει τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας ἐκλεγομένους τὰ χρήσιμα τὰ λοιπὰ παρορῶν. In Nigel Wilson's translation, "This writer is obviously much given to inaccuracy; but there is nothing to prevent readers from selecting what is valuable and overlooking the remainder" (p. 120). It is questionable whether παριστορῶν here really means "given to inaccuracy"; I return to that below. Now, what Photius expects his readers to look for is "what is valuable," or "useful" (τὰ

rejected by several scholars; see B. Hemmerdinger, "Le 'codex' 252 de la Bibliothèque de Photius," *BZ* 58 (1965): 1–2; Lemerle, *Humanisme*, 190 n. 48; Treadgold, *Nature*, 30–31; Schamp, *Historien des lettres*, 70–75. Treadgold (*Nature*, 30–31) instead suggests the date of 741–752 for the Greek Life that Photius read.

⁹One of the anonymous readers of the article has emphasized this point (cf., e.g., the prominence given to the bishop's conflicts with the imperial power in the Lives of John, Paul, and Athanasius, and partly in the Life of Metrophanes and Alexander as well) and rightly pointed out that such nonliterary factors deserve closer scrutiny than has been possible in the present study.

χρήσιμα). We may presume that he has chosen for his summary precisely that—what is *useful* in his own eyes—when boiling down a text of some 325 pages to fifteen.¹⁰ What, then, has he “selected,” and (no less interesting) what has he “overlooked,” in this Life?

Some work has already been done on this topic, notably by René Henry in the notes to his translation.¹¹ By close comparison with the original text, he was able to show that Photius often read several pages of the text before writing down (or dictating) his summary, since in the summary some facts appear at an earlier place than in the original. But there are also literal borrowings inserted in the summary that cannot readily have been made from memory. Thus, the codex well fits the type that I have called “das analytische Referat”;¹² in other words, as Treadgold explains, “descriptions probably composed by referring back to the original text (or possibly to notes on it).”¹³ It seems that Photius read George of Alexandria’s work in about the same way as he read Procopius, *De Bellis* 1–2.19 (cod. 63), which was my chief example for this kind of epitome. It is interesting that the proportion between the epitome and the original text turns out to be very similar for the two authors: approximately 1 to 20 in Procopius’s case, and about 1 to 21.5 in the case of George of Alexandria.¹⁴

At this point, a short digression on Photius’s methods of reading and his composition of the various codices of the *Bibliotheca* seems appropriate. There is still much idle speculation on these matters, but also too much defeatism as to the possibility of knowing anything at all about them with certainty. However, on the basis of the surviving originals of the works that Photius read, it is possible to distinguish a few basic types of treatment, and for each of these Photius’s reading method and use of memory can be deduced with a fair degree of confidence.¹⁵ There is no mystery about Photius’s memory capacity. For the short “synthetical summaries” of books his memory serves him well, but seemingly without any exceptional qualities; he summarizes after he has finished reading, there is a topical rather than chronological ordering of the facts, and his interests decide the selection. For the longer “analytical epitomes,” such as those of Procopius and George of Alexandria, he makes notes (or dictates summaries) progressively; changes in order occur only within the two, or five or ten, pages he happens to read in each portion, and instances of literal borrowing show his immediate access to the text of his model. The “excerpts” proper, finally, are copied directly from the model, sometimes even including obvious corruptions, spelling mistakes, and so on; there is no superhuman memory at work there, but probably a secretary.

Problems remain, of course, such as the use of reading notes, the use of dictation versus copying, the role played by secretaries, and the division of work between the years of reading and the actual composition of the *Bibliotheca*. Furthermore, the three basic types of treatment are sometimes mixed; and in some of the cases where the original

¹⁰I have used the size of Henry’s (Budé) pages as the norm; the 215 pages of F. Halkin’s edition of George of Alexandria (*Douze récits sur saint Jean Chrysostome*, SubsHag 60 [Brussels, 1977]) roughly correspond to 325 pages of Henry’s edition.

¹¹Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 2:48–63, 207–11.

¹²Hägg, *Vermittler*, 184–94.

¹³Treadgold, *Nature*, 118.

¹⁴Photius: ca. 18,600 characters; George of Alexandria: ca. 402,480 characters.

¹⁵There is ample concrete demonstration of this in the notes to the translation in Henry, *Bibliothèque*, as well as in T. Hägg, “Photius at Work: Evidence from the Text of the *Bibliotheca*,” *GRBS* 14 (1973): 213–22, and idem, *Vermittler*.

work is lost it is not possible to be sure of the proper classification.¹⁶ But it is, in my opinion, inadmissible to continue speaking and writing as if nothing at all could be demonstrated about these matters, or to continue indiscriminately calling all the codices “excerpts,” “epitomes,” or “résumés,” when there are clearly defined categories, each being the result of a different genesis and displaying different characteristics.

My principal concern, however, is not Photius’s methods of reading but his principles of selection and the attitudes to the hagiographical genre that they mirror. Henry makes some general remarks on that issue with regard to codex 96, to the effect that Photius has retained only the essential biographical facts while leaving out a number of long and monotonous edifying passages as well as some absolutely useless repetitions.¹⁷ This verdict is echoed by Wilson, who goes even further by stating, “Photius’ résumé is superior to the original because it omits long moralising passages that give no information.”¹⁸ Using less subjective tools of description, we may now see what kind of material was bypassed in Photius’s summary.

Since no critical edition proper of George of Alexandria’s biography yet exists, I use for my purposes Halkin’s text of 1977,¹⁹ which is based on two manuscripts. Two other manuscripts formed the basis for the old text printed in volume 8 of Sir Henry Savile’s *Chrysostomi Opera Omnia* of 1612; Halkin’s text was not available to Henry in 1960, and unknown to Wilson in 1994. The first observation is that the flowery and verbose language characterizing great parts of George’s narrative is boiled down by Photius to a very prosaic statement of the basic facts. For instance, if George in his prologue solemnly pronounces that he will “twine together his different sources into one harmonious narrative, as if bound together in a golden chain” (chap. 1, 72.25: εἰς μίαν τινὰ εὐαρμόνιον διήγησιν συμπλέξαι, ὥσπερ ἀλύσει χρυσῆ συνδεδεμένη<ν>), Photius simply says εἰς ἓν συναθροίσασθαι (78b35), “combine in one.” When Photius himself has occasional recourse to metaphorical language, it is indicative that he uses metaphors of his own instead of the ones employed by George. Photius says, for instance, that John γίνεται αὐτὸς τύπος καὶ κανὼν τῶν μοναζόντων (79b8); the closest equivalent in George’s very detailed description of John’s exemplary life is the phrase παρέδωκεν δὲ αὐτοῖς ὄρον ἐγκρατείας καὶ προσευχῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως (chap. 6, 92.17).²⁰ There is thus no question of mirroring George’s style, of which Photius is in fact highly critical (see below, p. 57). Nor does he

¹⁶The most detailed classification, as well as a tentative attribution of each codex to a certain type, is to be found in Treadgold, *Nature*.

¹⁷Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 2:211: “Il n’a vraiment retenu que l’essentiel des faits d’ordre biographique et il a laissé de côté nombre de longs développements édifiants et monotones, de redites absolument inutiles.” Cf. *ibid.*, 209: “Photius laisse de côté, ici comme ailleurs, les longs développements édifiants de Jean et les discussions, toujours les mêmes, qu’il a avec ceux qui s’adressent à lui.”

¹⁸Wilson, *Bibliotheca*, 113.

¹⁹Halkin, *Douze récits*, 69–285. More than twenty manuscripts of the work are known (see *ibid.*, 69 n. 3; and a list in C. Baur, “Georgius Alexandrinus,” *BZ* 27 [1927]: 1–2). On the commonly accepted identification of this George, bishop of Alexandria, with the bishop whose time of office was from ca. 620 to 630, see P. R. Norton, “The *Vita S. Chrysostomi* by Georgius Alexandrinus,” *CPh* 20.1 (1925): 69–72; however, Baur, “Georgius,” 5–7, rejects the identification.

²⁰Instead of being inspired by his immediate source, Photius’s τύπος καὶ κανὼν appears to echo elements of monastic hymnography, a context to which ἐγκράτεια belongs as well (cf., e.g., H. Follieri, *Initia hymnorum ecclesiae graecae*, MR I 27, MV XI 64; and J. Schiro, *Analecta hymnica graeca e codicibus eruta Italiae inferioris*, 13 vols. [Rome, 1966–83], 8:76). I thank Christian Hannick for these references.

aspire to produce an artistic short account of his own, giving scenic life to the various episodes. It is plain factual summary all along; and when the narrative is occasionally twisted into clumsy constructions, those are of Photius's own making and not taken over from his model. When he does borrow half a phrase, which happens now and then,²¹ it is for convenience, not for mimesis.

The summarizing thus prunes George's narrative of most of its descriptive details. Some further examples may be considered. While the description of John's mother's grief at the death of his father is elaborated by George for half a page (chap. 3, 76.29 ff), Photius simply refers to it by the plain word τοῦ πένθους (79a10). Correspondingly, the long debate on paganism and Christianity between John and Anthemius, the priest of Athena, is condensed from six pages of direct speech (pp. 80–86) into two lines (79a19–21) that state the fact and explain what qualities in John's speech made him the winner. Close to the end of the biography, George meticulously specifies what happened to each of John's friends and supporters after his final deposition from the bishop's throne, whereas Photius picks out just two names, adding that there were nearly twenty other bishops removed. This is the procedure all along.

A strict selection of the basic facts and a plain narrative style thus combine to explain Photius's brevity in those parts of the Life that he does choose to include; and that brevity, in fact, accounts for most of the shortening of the text into the above-mentioned proportion of 1 to 21.5. It would not be correct to infer from Henry's and Wilson's sweeping statements that this proportion is to any great extent the result of the wholesale omission of entire parts of the text, such as miracles or "moralising passages." Such passages do disappear, it is true, but together with other types of sermons, conversations, comments, or descriptions. In fact, up to chapter 47, i.e., for two-thirds of the biography, there is hardly a single chapter²² that is wholly omitted; the principal topic of each receives its brief attention, in the chronological order of events. From chapter 47 on, Photius is obviously beginning to lose patience: some chapters are totally omitted, the summarizing becomes more radical still, and for the final fifteen chapters George's narrative sequence is no longer respected. I see no reason to ascribe this phenomenon to any particular aversion to or disinterest in the kind of material narrated in the last third of the Life. The contents of the omitted chapters are not, in principle, different from those of the previous chapters that Photius did include in his summary. The explanation seems simple enough—a natural fatigue after reading and summarizing some two hundred pages of the author's rather prolix narrative.

Thus, the degree of compression, rather than disinterest in certain kinds of material, accounts for the so-called omissions. It is also beside the point to assert, as Henry does, that Photius omits the "repetitions" in George's account, since the kind of material that George may be said to repeat is not part of Photius's summary even the first time it appears. It is more interesting to try to define what Photius is really looking for. Among the various forms of treatment he uses, for this biography he has chosen the analytical epitome. Accordingly, it is not his intention to excerpt whole passages of particular mate-

²¹E.g., 79b28–29; chap. 11, 102.15–16. A more special case is the almost literal quotation of the first sentences of Theophilus's letter to John (82a31–34; chap. 39, 186.4–6).

²²The division into chapters is, of course, modern (Savile); but, with their very different lengths, they constitute topical units and are thus usable for our present purpose.

rial or stylistic interest, as in his excerpts proper; nor is he content with a very general résumé, as in his brief synthetical summaries; instead, he wishes to follow the course of events, from John's birth to his death, in their chronological order. Predictably, he mentions the places to which John's activities take him and the most prominent persons he meets, the various types of books he writes, the theological or political controversies within the Church that he takes part in, and so on; but with the same conscientiousness Photius records the miracles John performs, insofar as George describes them in some detail (cf. 79b19–34 and chaps. 8–9, 11–13; 80a17–25 and chaps. 18–19). It is, on the whole (at least for the first two thirds of the work), a very professional job, once the premises are accepted, and one Photius has performed with considerable loyalty to the text before him.

What, then, does Photius mean by his concluding words that George οὐκ ὀλίγα φαίνεται παριστορῶν, while nothing prevents the reader from choosing τὰ χρήσιμα for himself and overlooking the rest? Wilson's translation of παριστορῶν, "given to inaccuracy,"²³ and Henry's "à côté de la vérité" are hardly correct; this is already indicated by the implied contrast with τὰ χρήσιμα. Furthermore, in the summary itself there occurs no criticism of facts that would confirm Photius's dissatisfaction with George's factual accuracy or truthfulness (in contrast to his style). Kustas, in his article "History and Theology in Photius,"²⁴ interprets Photius's words in a somewhat different way: George of Alexandria "appears to relate much that is *contrary to history*" (my italics). "Deviation from the truth of history," Kustas explains, "prejudices the χρήσιμον."²⁵ This seems to be a far-fetched explanation, again lacking the support of any actual criticism of facts in Photius's epitome.

Since this appears to be the only place where Photius uses the verb παριστορεῖν,²⁶ we cannot get any immediate external help.²⁷ However, there may be a clue at the end of codices 256 and 258, where the simple verb ιστορέω occurs: εἰ δέ τινα παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους ιστορεῖ . . . (474a19), "If he narrates something differently from other writers . . ."; and ἐν πολλοῖς δὲ κεφαλαίοις καὶ καινότερα παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους ιστορεῖ (485b6), "In many chapters the account is novel in comparison with other writers" (Wilson, p. 243). The sense in which the verb ιστορεῖ appears here, "he narrates," seems applicable to our context (while the sense of the preposition παρά is not). The most reasonable interpretation, then, of παριστορῶν is that George, according to Photius, "narrates things that are beside the main point." And "the main point"—what is "useful" in reading a biography like this—is the factual account of the historical events of the saint's life, the way Photius distills it in his own summary. When summarizing Procopius in codex 63, he did not admit the mythographical, geographical, strategical, or anecdotal material into his summary, but

²³The Italian translation by C. Bevegni, in Fozio, *Biblioteca*, ed. N. Wilson (Milan, 1992), 227, which preceded the English edition, similarly has: "Il nostro autore risulta spesso poco affidabile."

²⁴Kustas, "History," 53.

²⁵Kustas may have been influenced by the earlier (partial) English translation of the *Bibliotheca* by J. H. Freese, *The Library of Photius* (New York, 1920), 1:187: "The writer appears to relate much that is contrary to the truth of history."

²⁶Cf. Orth, *Stilkritik*, 108.

²⁷LSJ, s.v., gives such alternatives as "inquire by the way" (corrected in the supplement of 1996 to "learn by the way") and "narrate or notice incidentally," neither of which suits our passage.

concentrated on the historical events; similarly, his epitome of John's Life is largely free from the edifying elaboration and scenic impersonation of his model.

This does not necessarily mean that Photius would not be interested in that kind of material—no less so than in geography or pagan mythology, which he does excerpt in other codices of the *Bibliotheca*, provided the material seems exotic enough. It is, of course, quite possible, although he omits to say so, that he found George's edifying contributions insignificant or unoriginal (and that this is why he chose the analytical epitome as his method in the first place). But, more importantly, Photius's procedure may tell us something fundamental about his attitude to hagiography: it is similar to his attitude to historiography, i.e., he reads hagiography to learn the basic facts of the saint's life rather than to receive edification or aesthetic pleasure.

All this may vary, of course, according to the kind of hagiographical work that actually lay before Photius; therefore, I proceed to some other Lives of saints, which he included in the *Bibliotheca*, as a check. Photius's epitome of a Life of Athanasius (cod. 258, *BHG* 184) seems to confirm our conclusions in some important respects, while differing in others. It should be noted, however, that we do not possess as clear-cut an object of comparison in this case as in the former one. First, some have assumed that Photius read only an abridgment of the work in question, basing their argument on the phraseology at the beginning and the end of the codex: ἀνεγνώσθη ἐκ τοῦ λόγου . . . (477b21) and ὅτι ἡ συγγραφή ἐξ ἧς ἡ προκειμένη προῆλθεν ἐκλογή . . . (485b3). However, an analysis of Photius's terminology in the later codices shows that the word ἐκλογή, "selection," is used there to refer to his own written epitome, not to his model being an abridgment, exactly as the word ἔκδοσις in similar contexts refers to Photius's own "publication" of the text within the framework of the *Bibliotheca*; nor must the introductory phrase ἀνεγνώσθη ἐκ be interpreted as indicating an abridged model or a partial reading.²⁸ The second objection is more serious: while Photius's actual model was no doubt close to the extant "premetaphrastic" biography of Athanasius (*BHG* 185 = PG 25:CCXXIII–CCXLVI),²⁹ the exact relationship remains obscure. Either both had the same (lost) model, or Photius's model was a (lost) later redaction of *BHG* 185.³⁰

If we assume, however, that Photius's model was not very different from what we have

²⁸This is obvious already in the present codex if one only cares to compare the introduction with the conclusion. Henry translates them as "Lu en parti . . ." and "L'ouvrage dont est tiré le présent abrégé . . ." (pp. 18, 40); Wilson, as "Read an abridgement of a work . . ." and "The work from which the present summary derives . . ." (pp. 231, 243); both translators thus render the conclusion correctly but go astray (in different ways) in the introduction (cf. Wilson, *Bibliotheca*, 243 n. 1: "Theoretically one could also translate 'I have read part of . . .,' which adopts Henry's equally mistaken interpretation). For further demonstration of Photius's usage in this part of the *Bibliotheca*, cf. Hägg, *Vermittler*, 131–37, and Treadgold, *Nature*, 41–48. Treadgold suggests that the standard phrase ἀνεγνώσθη was added mechanically (by the secretary?) to epitomes that already had the heading ἐκ τοῦ λόγου . . . A correct translation should thus disregard the ἐκ (or imitate the anacoluthon resulting from the secretary's mechanical procedure: "Read. [A selection] from . . .").

²⁹J.-P. Migne, following the Maurist edition of Athanasius, refers to this text (PG 25:CCXXIII–CCXLVI) as "ex Metaphraste," and to *BHG* 183 (PG 25:CLXXXV–CCXI) as "incerto auctore." The reverse relationship was argued by B. Beck, "Die griechischen Lebensbeschreibungen des Athanasius auf ihr gegenseitiges Verhältnis und ihre Quellen untersucht" (diss., University of Jena, 1912), 79–80, and confirmed by A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche*, TU 51 (Berlin-Leipzig, 1937), 2:591 n. 10. I thank Christian Høgel for providing this reference.

³⁰The latter alternative is argued by Beck, "Lebensbeschreibungen," 80–81.

in *BHG* 185, the following conclusions may be drawn with regard to Photius's method. The degree of compression here is much less than in the codex devoted to the *vita* of John Chrysostom; the ratio may have been almost as little as 1 to 2.³¹ As a result, Photius's summary is more vivid and readable; there are even some small portions of dialogue directly quoted (480b20 ff and 480b40 ff). When confronting a short Life, he understandably did not feel the need to reduce the size as drastically as when reading a work of hundreds of pages; he even allowed his summary to be longer this time than in the case of the Life of John Chrysostom. But in other respects, his method remains the same. He mainly keeps to the historical facts of the narrative, at the same time remaining loyal to his author; for instance, when an anecdote is the only thing told about Athanasius's childhood and parents, this is what Photius summarizes, in quite some detail. Several letters from Constantine and others, directly quoted in the Life, are consistently replaced with a few words about their main contents, as are the sermons and discussions in the Life of John Chrysostom. The resultant epitome is thus not very different in our two cases: there are narrative and factual information throughout, and one would probably not have guessed that the two models were so different in narrative style and size.

Little new light can be thrown on Photius's method by his summary of a Life of Gregory the Great (cod. 252): according to Halkin and others,³² his model does not survive.³³ The fact that his epitome consists of only two edifying episodes from Gregory's life, rather than containing a narrative of his career, is obviously due to Photius's model's concentration on the same two episodes. All we have to judge the epitome's relation in quantity to the original is his initial statement, ἀνεγνώσθη Γρηγορίου τοῦ Διαλόγου ὁ βίος οὗ ἡ ἔκδοσις ἐκλογὴν τινα ἀναγράφει (466b26), "Read the Life of St. Gregory Dialogus, of which the [present] publication records a selection."³⁴ To all appearances, this is an epitome more similar in type to codex 258 (Athanasius) than to codex 96 (John Chrysostom): a short Life has again led to a less drastic abridgment.

It may be registered as a novel trait, however, that even a Life without much historical information could interest Photius; and, in fact, in his concluding remarks he speaks in a positive tone about Gregory's own biographical works, saying that he "included in them stories of edifying nature" (διηγήματα σωτηρίαν ἐκπαιδεύοντα) (467b3). In the epitome proper, the telling of the first anecdote is excused by the remark that the episode narrated "may be specially indicative of (ἂν μάλιστα χαρακτηρίσειε) his wonderful humanity and charity" (466b38). This is, of course, the classical motivation among biographers, known especially from Plutarch (*Alex.* 1.2–3), for concentrating on typical or "characteris-

³¹My calculations have shown ca. 31,500 characters in Photius's summary and ca. 66,000 in *BHG* 185.

³²See note 8 above. Unfortunately, Berschin, *Biographie*, 387, follows F. Halkin, "Une courte Vie latine inédite de Saint Grégoire le Grand retraduite du grec," *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* (Vatican City, 1964), 4:379–87, obviously ignorant of the fact that Halkin's hypothesis has been commonly rejected; the anonymous Greek text (published by R. Abicht and H. Schmidt, "Quellennachweise zum Codex Suprasliensis," *ASP* 18 [1896]: 152–55) does not belong to John's *Nachleben*, but possibly derives from one of his sources.

³³Treadgold, *Nature*, 30, observes that "codex 252 has no verbal parallels with Halkin's text."

³⁴Cf. *ibid.* Wilson, *Bibliotheca*, 228, in his translation ("Read selections from . . .") is misled by Henry's text, which prints the version of the manuscript M, in spite of acknowledging (Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 7:207 n. 1) that the A version is the original one (cf. Treadgold, *Nature*, 30 n. 41; Schamp, *Historien des lettres*, 70 n. 5). Schamp, *ibid.*, 70, translates correctly: "Lu de Grégoire 'le Dialogue' la *Vie* dont cet publication transcrit un choix," but then confuses the matter again in his n. 5.

tic” episodes rather than the historically well-known events in a person’s life. It would no doubt be rash simply to ascribe the remark to Photius himself, for it is quite possible that he repeats it from his source—which had, after all, made the actual choice of preferring the anecdotal to the historically important. But a repetition, too, would be indicative. One may compare this approach with Photius’s own practice in his series of excerpts from the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch in codex 245, where he in fact omits the historical matter, both biographical and political, in favor of a number of anecdotal and moralizing passages.³⁵ His interest in the short and anecdotal Life of Gregory the Great is thus not without parallels, if one widens the perspective to include ancient biographical literature as well.

I shall not go into similar detail with regard to the remaining Lives. The anonymous Πολιτεία of Metrophanes and Alexander, bishops of Constantinople (or rather Byzantium), to which Photius devotes codex 256 (*BHG* 1279), is in reality an account of church politics in the time of Constantine, with the two bishops as shadowy figures in the background.³⁶ Photius summarizes this account in considerable detail—the ratio is approximately 1 to 3—and seems quite happy with reading not an actual saint’s Life but a piece of church history. Codex 257 (*BHG* 1472), the Life of Paul the Confessor, is again an analytical epitome of what appears to be a rather similar ratio (1:2 to 1:3?), with instances of literal borrowing within a rather free summary.³⁷

Together with the Life of Athanasius (cod. 258) studied above, these two obviously form a subgroup among Photius’s analytical epitomes,³⁸ characterized by an unusually low degree of compression. This may be what Photius himself refers to at the beginning of codices 257 and 258: ἐφ’ ὁμοίᾳ συστελλόμενος ἐκδόσει (474a24), “shortened to be published in a similar form,” and τὸν ἴσον διατυπούμενος τρόπον (477b23), “fashioned in the same way.”³⁹ Similar expressions may in fact be followed back continually as far as codex 253 (except for codex 254). At the beginning of codex 253, Photius states: . . . ἐξ οὗ κεφαλαιώδης διετυπώθη χρεία (467b17), “from which a useful summary has been fashioned,” or (adapting Wilson’s paraphrase) “from which a concise narrative of the essential points [has] been prepared.”⁴⁰

This, then, would be Photius’s way of describing his procedure in these five (or six, if we regard the omission in codex 254 as accidental) hagiographical codices. Of the three

³⁵Cf. Hägg, *Vermittler*, 139–41.

³⁶The text is printed by M. Gedeon, “Μνημεῖα τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ δ’ αἰῶνος,” *Ἐκκ. Ἀλήθ.* 4 (1884): 285–91, 296–300, 306–10, 321–26; Photius’s treatment is discussed by P. Heseler, “Hagiographica III,” *BNJ* 13 (1936–37): 81–92, as well as by Henry, *Bibliothèque*, vol. 7, in his notes. On the character of *BHG* 1279, see also F. Winkelmann, “Die Bischöfe Metrophanes und Alexandros von Byzanz,” *BZ* 59 (1966): 47–71, and idem, “Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der Vita Metrophanis et Alexandri (*BHG* 1279),” in *Studia Patristica*, ed. F. L. Cross, TU 92 (Berlin, 1966), 7.1:106–14.

³⁷See Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 8:215 (and successive notes), and the unpublished edition of the original life (*BHG* 1272a) in E. D’Haene, “Vita Pauli Episcopi Constantinopolitani: Tekstuitgave en commentaar,” 2 vols. (diss., Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 1971–72), vol. 2 (the handwritten format of the Greek text makes an exact numerical comparison with Photius laborious), with comments on Photius’s version in 1:114–17, 133–34.

³⁸This was already pointed out by D’Haene, “Vita Pauli,” 1:133–34.

³⁹Wilson, *Bibliotheca*, 243 n. 2, explains, “i.e. abridged,” mistakenly attributing this quality to the work that Photius read (cf. also *ibid.*, n. 1); but it is Photius’s own version that is an abridgment, not his model.

⁴⁰Wilson, *Bibliotheca*, 230 (I substitute “has” for “had,” since again the reference is not to the model but to Photius’s version).

that have not yet been discussed, two deal with hagiographical legends of early popular saints, the Seven Child Saints (or Sleepers) of Ephesus (cod. 253)⁴¹ and St. Demetrius (cod. 255).⁴² Since these stories were widely spread and many versions survive, it is difficult to identify models and thus to say anything specific about the ratio of compression. It may be that they are so short simply because the models were short, rather than because Photius had less interest in their contents than in the historical Lives, as I suggested at the start. As low a ratio as 1:2 to 1:3 would be the logical inference from Photius's statement about using the same method; but I am not sure that one is allowed to take his statement as a very technical declaration. Rather, I have the impression that the summarizing is considerably more radical in these codices,⁴³ mirroring Photius's personal priorities. Only a thorough examination of the manuscript tradition of each of the two hagiographical legends might give us an answer.

There remains only the Martyrdom of Timothy the Apostle in codex 254. Photius starts with a short summary of the Martyrdom (27 lines) and then adds two items, the second of which is an excerpt describing the Ephesian *Katagogia* feast to Dionysius (468b35–469a2). Thanks to that excerpt, it is possible to state that Photius read a version of the Martyrdom that was fairly close to the one surviving in Greek.⁴⁴ This identification would not have been possible on account of the preceding summary only, in which Photius retells in his own words and sequence some of the contents of the Martyrdom—in other words, a typical syncretical summary of his. He is loyal to his text in that he retains (without comments) its tendency to concern St. John's doings in Ephesus more than St. Timothy's own.⁴⁵ Photius ends his summary with the words *ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τοιαῦθ' ἕτερα διηγείται τὸ μαρτύριον ἀπλουστέρῳ φράσει τοῦ ἁγίου Τιμοθέου* (468b29), "These and similar things are told in the Martyrdom of St. Timothy in a rather simple style." He has obviously got tired of recounting the whole story (all the more so since its style did not correspond to his own ideals; cf. below, p. 57 and note 59). His impatience in this case

⁴¹Cf. *BHG* 1593–99; on the many known versions (in various languages) of the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, see the monograph of P. M. Huber, *Die Wanderlegende von den Siebenschläfern: Eine literar-geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig, 1910). For further references, see Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 7:209 n. 2. According to Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 40–43, Photius's model must have been close to a couple of the extant Greek versions, but identical with none, since it contained original elements absent in these.

⁴²Cf. *BHG* 496–98. Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 7:212 n. 4, notes that the two Lives of St. Demetrius printed in PG 116 have little in common with Photius's summary. The unedited Athos manuscript with the same *incipit* as in Photius, to which Henry (*ibid.*) refers (= *BHG* 496b), is in fact a transcription of Photius's summary (according to Treadgold, *Nature*, 164).

⁴³With regard to cod. 253, this is Huber's impression too: "Es scheint, dass Photius, der, wie er selbst am Anfang sagt, diese Legende gelesen und nun kurz im Auszug geben will, seine Vorlage in sehr freier Weise benützt hat . . ." (Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 41–42), i.e., it is a syncretical summary rather than an analytical epitome.

⁴⁴Edited in H. Usener, *Acta S. Timothei* (Bonn, 1877), 7–13. According to Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 7:212 n. 1, 213 n. 3 (and Usener, *Acta*, 30), the literalness of the excerpt is not marked enough to warrant that this is the very version of the Martyrdom that Photius read; in the summary itself, the verbal coincidences are few and insignificant. If Photius's model was close to Usener's version in compass, the ratio between the summary and the original would be approximately 1 to 4.5 (ca. 1,350 against ca. 6,000 characters); but such a figure has less significance in the case of a syncretical summary than when relating to an analytical epitome.

⁴⁵For the earlier discussion of this apparent disproportion in the Martyrdom and an attempt at explanation, see H. Delehaye, "Les Actes de Saint Timothée," in *Anatolian Studies Presented to W. H. Buckler* (Manchester, 1939), 77–84. Delehaye opposes Usener's (and others') high opinion of the authenticity of the sources for the Martyrdom; he finds it largely fictitious and places its composition in the 5th century.

emerges after his reading only four pages and writing less than one (of printed text); with the historical Life of John Chrysostom, the similar reaction does not happen until he has read more than two hundred pages and written ten. It is not difficult to see where his main interests lie.

THE CRITICISM

Photius is, of course, the prime object for the study of literary criticism in the middle Byzantine period. In several of the codices of the *Bibliotheca* he embarks on detailed stylistic judgments, and there are interesting passages of the same kind in his *Letters* and the *Amphilochia* as well. There seems to be a fairly general consensus that these stylistic judgments are Photius's own, in contrast to his biographical sketches, which he has mostly taken over from others.⁴⁶

For his literary criticism, Photius mainly uses the tools provided by the rhetorical tradition from antiquity, especially the terminology codified by Hermogenes in the second century A.D. But he also borrows from earlier writers, such as Demetrius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. These sources of Photius's critical vocabulary were carefully explored in the late 1920s in works by Orth and Günther Hartmann;⁴⁷ but for an inspired view of what it is that Photius is really doing with this borrowed terminology, one has to turn to an article by Kustas of 1962, with a telling subtitle, "The Literary Criticism of Photius: A Christian Definition of Style."⁴⁸ This is the kind of article in which many of the most important insights are provided in the footnotes, while the main argument is not always quite convincing. Still, on balance, I think that Kustas has managed to capture some of the spirit, if not always the letter, of Photius's critical project. His key to an understanding of Photius is the parallelism in vocabulary between ethics and literary criticism. Now, the correlation between stylistic and ethical values was of course part of the ancient critical tradition as well; but what happens if ethics change, while the terms remain the same? It is true, Kustas admits to Orth and Hartmann, that Photius's *terminology* of literary criticism mainly draws on the classical tradition, but it "is adjusted so that the adjectives descriptive of literary standards become identical with those expressing ideals of Christian behaviour."⁴⁹ Style and character are made to coincide. This is demonstrated in detail and explained as the result of Photius's effort to come to grips with the style of St. Luke, St. Paul,⁵⁰ and other Early Christian writers, which obviously does not conform to the classical norms of style. To condense a long argument into one concrete example, the χάρις, "(divine) grace," of St. Paul's words is inseparable from the χάρις, "charm," of his style. In contrast, we may add, the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which Photius treats in codex I 14, are found to be lacking, in perfect conformity with their heretic contents, the "inborn charm" (τῆς . . . ἐμφύτου χάριτος, 90b27) that characterizes the Gospels.⁵¹

⁴⁶Cf. Schamp, *Historien des lettres*, passim.

⁴⁷Orth, *Photiana*; idem, *Stilkritik*; G. Hartmann, "Photios' Literarästhetik" (diss., Rostock, 1929). Cf. also R. Henry, *Essai sur le vocabulaire technique de la rhétorique du patriarche Photius* (Liège, 1931) (non vidi), and idem, "Proclus et le vocabulaire technique de Photius," *RBPB* 13 (1934): 615–27.

⁴⁸See above, note 7.

⁴⁹I quote from Kustas's own summary of his earlier article in "History," 65 n. 88.

⁵⁰In this respect, Kustas could partly base himself on the study of B. Wyss, "Photios über den Stil des Paulus," *MusHelv* 12 (1955): 236–51.

⁵¹Cf. Junod, "Actes apocryphes," 18–19.

Thus, though using the old terms, Photius creates his own theory of style, to which Christian ethical values are central. Kustas arrives at a very positive judgment of Photius's originality and subtleness as a literary critic, in some ways more "modern" than his Byzantine successors. In a recent article, Dmitriy Afinogenov has returned to these "aspects of innovation" in Photius's literary criticism,⁵² he agrees with Kustas's high appreciation of Photius's achievement in this area⁵³ but, by widening the perspective, reaches partly different conclusions. He shows that Photius applies terms like ἔμφυτος χάρις, "inborn charm," not only to the Gospels or St. Paul but also to the style of pagan authors; the introduction of such terms as "inborn beauty" or "naturalness" was, he argues, "a conscious and purposeful modification" of Hermogenes (p. 341). They become stylistic terms, applicable to pagan and Christian authors alike. To Photius, according to Afinogenov, St. Paul and the apostles follow "universal rules of the art of persuasion, not some particular techniques invented by pagan scholars" (p. 344). On the whole, Afinogenov concludes, Photius's attitude to literature "looks much closer to the modern perception of art than anyone could imagine" (p. 345).

So much for the general background. Returning to our eight hagiographical codices in the *Bibliotheca*, we are in for some disappointment. Partly, this is no doubt due to the fact that seven of the eight codices belong to the second part of the *Bibliotheca*, in which excerpts and epitomes dominate and personal comments are few.⁵⁴ Most of Photius's detailed literary criticism is in the first part, in which codex 96 is the only hagiographical codex proper. But it also, I would suggest, tells us something about Photius's attitude. He does not seem to have paid any particular attention to hagiography as an important and typically Byzantine genre. One may compare it with epistolography, a form of literature that Photius himself practiced all his life and on which he often makes interesting remarks when collections of letters are included in the *Bibliotheca*. He repeatedly refers to what he sees as "the rules of the epistolographic style"—[ὁ] ἐπιστολιμαῖος χαρακτήρ (cod. 143, 98b31) or ὁ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν χαρακτήρ (cod. 138, 98a19). From his scattered remarks, it has been observed, "it is possible to extract a definite theory of epistolography."⁵⁵

One may also compare Photius's approach to hagiography with his reference to something he calls the "ecclesiastical" style: ἀπλοῦς δὲ κατὰ τὴν φράσιν καὶ σαφὴς ἐστὶ καὶ ἐγγὺς τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ καὶ ἀπεριέργου χαρακτήρος (cod. 126, 95a22), . . . μετὰ σαφηνείας καὶ ἀπλότητος κατὰ τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν τῆς ἐρμηνείας τύπον (95a42).⁵⁶ These remarks concern Clement's letters to the Corinthians and Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, respectively, and the terminology does not seem to appear in connection with the works of church history that Photius actually treats in the *Bibliotheca*.⁵⁷ The typical or ideal "ecclesiastical" style is evidently supposed to be clear and simple.

With regard to hagiography, nothing similar exists to indicate that Photius was inter-

⁵²D. E. Afinogenov, "Patriarch Photius as Literary Theorist: Aspects of Innovation," *BSI* 56 (1995): 339–45.

⁵³Partly modifying the views of I. Ševčenko, "Levels of Style in Byzantine Prose," *JÖB* 31.1 (1981): 299. Afinogenov ("Theorist," 339 n. 2) also bases himself on a study by S. S. Averintsev, which I have not been able to consult.

⁵⁴For the characteristics of the second part and an attempt at explanation, see Treadgold, *Nature*, 37–51.

⁵⁵Kustas, "Criticism," 152; cf. also Hartmann, "Literarästhetik," 50–51.

⁵⁶Cf. Ševčenko, "Levels," 296; Afinogenov, "Theorist," 342.

⁵⁷But cf. also cod. 67 (34a1) on Sergius the Confessor's style as suited to ecclesiastical history.

ested in the rules of this genre, as he was in the theory of epistolography, or that he associated it with some particular level or ideal of style, as he did for church history. Perhaps this is only a natural reaction to the fact that hagiography confronted him in greater abundance and diversity of style and ethos than any other form of Byzantine literature: he could not see the forest for the trees. He has more interesting things to say about pagan biography as a genre, in particular Damascius's *Life of Isidore* (cod. 181),⁵⁸ than about its Christian continuation.

But his failure to create a generic theory or define a special style for hagiography does not mean that he refrains from any kind of stylistic comment on the specimens he has read. On George of Alexandria he comments: ἔστι μέντοι τὴν φράσιν ἀπλοῦς καὶ εἰς πολλὴν χυδαιότητα κατενηνεγμένος, μηδὲ τοῦτο δὴ τὸ παρὰ τοῖς γραμματικοῖς κατὰ χεῖρας, τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ῥημάτων σύνταξιν ἠκριβομένος (78b27–31); or, in Wilson's translation, "However, in his style he is simple and falls into great vulgarity, because he is not even precise in his use of nouns and verbs, which is well within reach of the educated" (p. 113). Here, then, is one of the instances where ἀπλότης, "simplicity," is *not* a virtue of style to a Byzantine mind.⁵⁹ The term for "vulgarity," χυδαιότης with the adjective χυδαῖος, is to be found five more times in the passages of literary criticism in the *Bibliotheca*, always with reference to Christian works.⁶⁰ For instance, commenting on the authenticity of a work attributed to John Chrysostom, Photius notes that it is "vulgar" in style and thus cannot be authentic (cod. 274, 510b13). Concerning Ephraem Syrus he notes that it is a wonder (θαυμαστόν) that such salvation and benefit can issue forth by means of such a vulgar style (cod. 196, 160b7)—an inversion of what he says about some Greek novels, namely, that indecent and useless contents are conveyed in an accomplished style (codd. 87, 94).

I look at two further stylistic comments in the hagiographical codices. They are rather similar in structure, and I need to quote only one of them, occurring at the end of the *Life of Metrophanes and Alexander* (cod. 256): . . . ἡ συγγραφή . . . οὔτε παντελῶς εἰς τὸ διηκριβομένον καὶ σοφὸν τῆς φράσεως καὶ τῆς διανοίας ἐκμεμόρφωται, οὔτε πρὸς τὸ χυδαῖον καὶ ἡμελημένον διαπέπτωκεν (474a15–18), or "The work . . . is neither wholly structured so as to achieve precision and skill in style and thought, nor does it surrender to vulgarity and negligence." At the end of the *Life of Athanasius* (cod. 258, 485b4–6), there is the same contrast between "negligence" and "precision," with the same terms used, and there is also a parallelism implied between style and content. This characterization of the extremes between which the work under review is said to be situated is something very typical of Photius's critical method. What is missing here, however, is some word of praise for the *aurea mediocritas*—for the natural and the mean (τὸ μέτρον) are his avowed stylistic ideal. This is no "golden" mean, we may infer, but just ordinary dull prose. Evidently, none of the hagiographical works Photius reviewed had a particular appeal to him aesthetically.

⁵⁸ Esp. 126b33–38. Cf. Kustas, "History," 57–58.

⁵⁹ Cf. also cod. 254, 468b30 (quoted above); but contrast, e.g., cod. 126, 95a22 (also quoted above). Cf., on the parallel issue of obscurity as a potential virtue, Ševčenko, "Levels," 303, and G. L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, Analekta Blatadon 17 (Thessalonike, 1973), 91–93.

⁶⁰ Codd. 89 (66b34), 107 (88a37), 196 (160b7), 256 (474a18), 274 (510b13).

CONCLUSION

Hagiography, then, is not a favored genre in the *Bibliotheca*, nor does it seem to have been a form of literature in which Photius took a special theoretical interest. In spite of his concern for ancient biography, he does not make any specific comparisons between that genre and the Lives of saints he reviews. Rather, he appears to have read those Lives of saints to which he devotes most energy and space as *historical* narratives, valuable for the information they give on the career of prominent ecclesiastical figures and on their times. Edification does not seem to be what he is seeking in hagiography, nor what he is recommending others to read it for. Still, he is remarkably loyal to the works he reviews, and it is more by his choice of works than by arbitrary epitomizing that he reveals his real preferences. His taste, by implication, seems to have been not too dissimilar from that of many modern scholars: what they deprecate in Byzantine hagiography, Photius simply omits; and his emphasis on the historical facts, almost to the repression of the edifying and aesthetic aspects, prefigures what has long been the dominant trend in modern Western scholarship.

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