

De Très Savants Pasteurs. Conceptions et pratiques de l'autorité des évêques dans la société byzantine des XIe–XIIIe siècles. By Jack Roskilly. (Byzantina Sorbonensia, 32.) Pp. 407 incl. 4 figs and 2 tables. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2022. €38 (paper). 979 10 351 0793
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At first glance, Middle Byzantine prelates look unpromising subjects for a rounded historical study. The lists of episcopal sees, editions of seals and fairly full records of synodal proceedings may suffice for investigating the Church as an institution and its interrelationship with the imperial 'Establishment'. But these materials are weighted towards the Constantinopolitan patriarchate. The writings of learned high-fliers like the metropolitans John Mauropous of Euchaita and Eustathios of Thessalonica and of Archbishop Theophylact of Ohrid do not really offset this bias. Indeed, the letters of Theophylact voicing disgust about his rustic and 'barbarous' flock and pining for the civilised life of the capital tend to reinforce the bias. Small wonder, then, that hardly any scholars have set about investigating prelates as a social grouping or attempted general treatment of the suffragans, who tend to be marginal figures in the *Lives* of holy men and seldom inspired hagiographies of their own. Jack Roskilly has undertaken this investigation for the eleventh and twelfth centuries, avowedly following on from Benjamin Moulet's study of the earlier Middle Byzantine episcopate. Trawling through all available evidence has yielded a prosopographical register some fifty pages long, its entries often containing more information than one might have expected. Roskilly highlights the main pathways towards episcopal office. Foremost are those of bishops belonging to Constantinopolitan elite families *de second rang*, often having relatives in the civil administration. In the same premier league of importance and quantity are bishops hailing from well-to-do provincial families – rich enough to send their sons off for a sound education in the capital, but not occupying the topmost tier of a region's families. In terms of numbers, there are fewer prelates belonging to families capable of dominating a local see. The same goes for those prelates with a rural background, coming from families describable as 'coq du village' (p. 35 n. 50). What emerges most strongly is that the Church continued to function as an institution, for all the upheavals and displacements Byzantium underwent in the later eleventh century. A bishop could not directly nominate his successor, while appointments to metropolitanates were overseen by the authorities in the capital. The one *sine qua non* for an aspiring clergyman was a period of education in Constantinople, preferably – at least in the twelfth century – under St Sophia's auspices. Roskilly shows that the profusion of literary works in atticising Greek says something about the competitive nature of church appointments. He also shows how and why eloquence – 'rhetoric' – became the distinguishing mark of intellectual authority and could bring sociopolitical influence. Unappealing as they appear to the modern reader, the copious orations, verses and flowery letters of bishops (and would-be bishops) offer windows into the political culture of late eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium. While perhaps revealing its intellectual constraints, they also betoken elite networks spanning the length and breadth of the empire. The protestations of 'friendship' (*philia*) in their letters were not wholly empty, or self-serving tropes: they stood as reminders of all their writers, hearers and readers had in common, that higher learning to which a

Constantinopolitan education held the key; religious correctness and apostolic zeal for preaching were part of the package, too. Roskelly emphasises the role of Alexios I Komnenos in bringing about this cultural turn. This book has much else to say about the balance struck between empire-wide political stability, standards of scholarship and pastoral concerns in twelfth-century Byzantium. It should also be instructive to the non-specialist, offering means of contrasting Byzantine prelates with their counterparts' role in maintaining the socio-political fabric in the West.

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A diabolical voice. Heresy and the reception of the Latin Mirror of simple souls in late medieval Europe. By Justine L. Trombley. (Medieval Societies, Religions, and Cultures.) Pp. 218 incl. 4 figs and 4 tables. Ithaca, NY–London: Cornell University Press, 2023. \$56.95. 978 1501769610.

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The mirror of simple souls, written in Old French around 1300 by a beguine named Marguerite Porete, was a mystical dialogue concerning the soul's union with God. Although it was extremely daring and, depending on one's point of view, perhaps heretical, its literary quality and depth of imagination were admired by many contemporary readers. Consequently it was translated into Latin, Middle English and Italian by individuals who did not know that its author had been put to death in Paris because of the *Mirror's* 'errors.'

The late-medieval reception went in opposite directions. (Trombley's title, *A diabolical voice*, misleadingly refers to only one of them.) An example of the *Mirror's* continued popularity in the fifteenth century is that thirty-six copies of the Latin translation were available to be brought to the Council of Basel. But these copies were brought there to be burned. Whereas an illuminated initial in a fifteenth-century Latin copy displays a monk gazing at the words of the *Mirror* appreciatively, a critic branded the work as 'worthless, deceptive, and dangerous'. Obloquy went still further. Another critic fulminated that: 'Those who say such things should be confounded and ashamed. May death come upon them, and may they descend living into hell. . . their eyes should be dug out and their tongues extracted with a savage hook.' Although nothing was known of the author, other than the mistaken presumption that 'he' was male, hostile readers would have been gratified to learn that 'he' was burned to death for heresy in Paris in 1310.

Justine Trombley is not concerned with Marguerite's career or trial. (For that readers should turn to the basic account written by her dissertation supervisor, Sean Field: *The beguine, the angel, and the inquisitor: the trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart*, Notre Dame, IN 2012.) Instead, *A diabolical voice* treats the reception of the *Mirror* in fifteenth-century Italy. Positive reception is indicated by the existence of many copies located in or near Venice. But Bernardino of Siena and John of Capestrano vilified the work. Trombley offers three substantial chapters that responses to the *Mirror* found in three hitherto neglected Italian