

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

manuscripts. (She excels in locating new sources.) In the first she employs consummate technical skills to treat a mutilated copy of the *Mirror* in the Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS Laud Latin 46. One might have wondered what could have been gained from this manuscript, because someone who found the *Mirror* dangerous excised seven pages that comprised nearly the entire work. But the determined Trombley found that ‘there is more to the *Mirror* here than previously thought’. The opening lines went unscathed because they followed a writing that the owner wished to retain. Additionally, some marginalia can be discerned on stubs from the excised pages, and a previously unnoticed binding error resulted in finding a page that had at its top the last part of the evaluation of the *Mirror* by the Parisian theologian Godfrey of Fontaines and the concluding sentence of the *Mirror* itself. Close attention to detail reaps its rewards.

Trombley then pioneers in addressing critiques of the *Mirror* in MS Vat. Lat. 4953, and University Library, Padova, 1647. The first contains a list of ‘errors’ and theological refutations; the second opposes expressions in the *Mirror* from the point of view of canon law. (This is substantially new material, well exploited.) Trombley might have done well to have mentioned John Baconthorpe’s contemporary denigration of the *Mirror* as ‘a little book against the clergy’, and she errs in writing ‘William Auvergne’ instead of ‘William of Auvergne’. But she is capable of some nice phrases such as ‘Bernardino, the rock-star Franciscan preacher of his time’, or estimations such as ‘Marguerite should be included just as readily alongside figures like Peter John Olivi as she can alongside Joan of Arc.’ As Jacques Delarun notes in a jacket blurb, ‘this exceptional book does much more than illuminate the reception of the *Mirror of simple souls*; it goes back to its doctrinal content and illuminates the text itself’. This is one of the most original and searching accounts of the reception of *The mirror of simple souls* that has been written.

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*The visitation of Hereford diocese in 1397*. Edited by Ian Forrest and Christopher Whittick. Pp. xlv + 271. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press/Canterbury and York Society, 2021. £35. 978 0 907239 84 0  
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The editors of this survey justifiably describe it as both ‘an unrivalled source for the investigation of social and religious life’ (pp. xxxiii) and (p. xli) ‘arguably the most detailed and interesting record of visitation proceedings to survive from late medieval England’. Preserved by beneficent neglect in the archives of Hereford Cathedral, it was first published (albeit incomplete) in the earlier days (1929–30) of the *English Historical Review*. Like so many such plums, still gathering dust in the *Review*’s back catalogue, it richly deserves renewed scrutiny. As Christopher Whittick explains in his opening remarks, this particular plum is also the victim of a fifty-year saga of unfulfilled best intentions, beginning with Paul’s Hair’s monograph *Before the bawdy court* (London 1972), and only now brought to satisfactory completion. Far more extensive than Bishop Hooper’s 1551 enquiry into the Gloucestershire clergy, and more specifically focused than Eude Rigaud’s mid thirteenth-century Rouen visitation book, the nearly 1,400 individual responses here recorded from upwards of 250 parishes and vills inform us, firstly, of what could