

introduction to the patriarchate of Constantinople, and thus fills a historiographical gap in Byzantine studies. Moreover, it provides Byzantinists and all who desire to explore and understand the intricate history of this institution with high-quality overviews of various aspects of the patriarchate's history, consistent bibliographical lists which follow each chapter, and a statement of the state of research which, moreover, indicates new avenues of research, which will enrich future understanding of this enduring institution.

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OCTAVIAN-ADRIAN NEGOIȚĂ

A companion to Byzantine iconoclasm. By Mike Humphreys. (Companions to the Christian Tradition, 99.) Pp. xviii + 630 incl. 73 colour and black-and-white ills. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2021. €249. 978 90 04 33990 3; 1871 6377
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It is obviously impossible to do justice to a tome of over 600 pages in a short review, especially as this project took a few years to coalesce into a book. The book is one in a series of *Companions to the Christian Tradition* which reassesses previous studies on Byzantine iconoclasm with the aim of adding something new to the debate. I will use its introduction, authored by the editor Mike Humphreys (pp. 1–106), to highlight the foci of this useful book.

Although its importance in the history of Byzantium has been downplayed by major revisionist studies in the 1990s–2000s, Byzantine iconoclasm was indeed a major and disruptive controversy in the history of Byzantium and the medieval West because it challenged an established relation between image, text and belief. Indeed, recent and emerging studies, including this *Companion*, adopt a post-revisionist approach. They reject the view that iconoclasm was entirely a fabrication of eighth- and ninth-century iconophile authors, who systematically interpolated earlier sources in order to portray Byzantine emperors as iconoclasts and thus heretical – to oversimplify the matter.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Church Fathers had not engaged in lengthy expositions on the role of sacred images (pp. 51–2), the recourse to sacred images as objects mediating between earth and heaven was not a novelty in Christianity. Humphreys does question the view of a ‘rise of the icon’ in the late seventh century, agreeing instead with other scholars on the pervasiveness of images in Christian religious practices since at least the fifth–sixth centuries (pp. 53–4) – one might object that this was the case even earlier. Indeed, a growing attention toward sacred images is recorded in late sixth-century Latin sources and in late seventh-century Greek sources. However, during the iconoclastic controversy, ‘for the first time in Christian history’, art became ‘a central topic of importance’ (p. 2), and images became the object of extensive and heated debate. Their intrinsic nature was more precisely defined, as was their role in cult and devotional practices and their relation with their divine archetypes. Their limitations, too, were noted.

A (supposedly) increased importance of sacred images occurring in eastern religious practices during the late seventh and early eighth centuries, along with other factors which still remain elusive, such as the eventual influence of Islam and Judaism, may have spurred the Byzantine emperors to harness, rather than suppress, a common practice. In maintaining that the earliest attestations of

Byzantine iconoclasm must be dated back to the mid-720s, as the most recent examinations of extant evidence suggest, Humphreys rejects the view that iconoclasm only began under Constantine V (741–75). Hence, he supports the importance of iconoclasm as an historical phenomenon which had a lasting impact on Byzantine and western Christianity up to today, since images are still widely implicated in the public cult and private devotion within many Christian communities.

The *Companion* has five parts and twelve chapters authored by recognised experts, who examine a range of issues including the role of images before iconoclasm; the sources about the controversy; and recent source criticism. Also covered are the historical developments of iconoclasm; its theology between the eighth and the ninth centuries, including the relation between images and relics; and the development of an iconoclastic attitude in Islam, including the effects of Byzantine iconoclasm in the West. The chapters are long and detailed, and cater for ‘both newcomers and specialists’ (p. vii). They respond to the editor’s intention to offer ‘some idea of [the historical] context in which the debate took place’, which he himself obligingly does in his introduction (pp. 15–42), after usefully outlining the history of studies on Byzantine iconoclasm (pp. 3–15). The authors generally strive to offer a balanced approach to the scholarly debate on the many aspects of iconoclasm by, for example, supporting the view that the scarcity of material culture from this period was not the result of destruction on a wide scale but possibly because it was a period not so rich in material culture when compared to late antiquity.

The *Companion* openly declares that it does not aim to cover all the research about this controversy (p. vii). It leaves out, for example, liturgical texts to focus instead on historical narratives, hagiography, dogmatic and theological writings. In doing so, it follows Thomas Noble’s approach in his investigation of the Carolingian West (*Images, iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, Philadelphia, PA 2009). Noble is also the author of the rich concluding chapter on the same topic. On the grounds that no Latin texts openly speak of the image controversy, this chapter intentionally excludes a discussion of the period between c.730 and 760. Yet, recent contributions from research into liturgical texts and practices as well as in material culture have demonstrated how, during those decades, the West answered the controversy through preaching, public processions and visual arts produced for, or in, the most prominent churches of Rome under the patronage of the popes (see, for example, Éamonn Ó Carragáin, ‘Interactions between liturgy and politics in Old Saint Peter’s, 670–741: John the Archcantor, Sergius I and Gregory III’, and Charles B. McClendon, ‘Old Saint Peter’s and the Iconoclastic controversy’, in Rosamond McKitterick et al. [eds], *Old Saint Peter’s, Rome*, Cambridge 2013, 177–89, 214–28, and Francesca Dell’Acqua, *Iconophilia: politics, religion, preaching, and the use of images in Rome, c.680–880*, London–New York 2020, esp. pp. 35–120).

From its extensive bibliography (pp. 571–616), the *Companion* leaves out a few recent contributions which are useful to an understanding of Byzantine iconoclasm (see, for example, Óscar Prieto Domínguez, *Literary circles in Byzantine iconoclasm: patrons, politics and saints*, Cambridge 2020). Possibly the book’s long gestation and its mammoth size made it difficult to incorporate new insights during the final stages of its preparation for publication. It none the less

remains a commendable effort and a useful instrument with which to approach the controversy over sacred images and its wider socio-political implications.

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The historians of Angevin England. By Michael Staunton. Pp. xii + 402. New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. £75. 978 0 19 876996 5

History and the written word. Documents, literary, and language in the age of the Angevins by Henry Bainton. (The Middle Ages Series.) Pp. 272 incl. 2 ill. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. £60. 978 08 122519 06

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Over the past twenty years, far more words have been devoted to the cultural and historical significance of the chroniclers of the reigns of Kings Henry II, Richard I and John than were ever written by the chroniclers themselves. The principal histories of this period written in French (Wace, Fantosme, Guernes, Benoît de Saint-Maure) are all now available in good modern editions. By contrast, and with very few exceptions (Richard of Devizes, Robert of Torigny, the Battle Chronicle and now at last Geoffrey of Vigeois), their Latin counterparts remain for the most part approachable only through Rolls Series editions, principally those by Richard Howlett (William of Newburgh) and William Stubbs (Roger of Howden, Ralph of Diss, Gervase of Canterbury and much else besides). Since most of these were published at least 140 years ago and remain untranslated we arrive at a bizarre situation in which undergraduates writing on Plantagenet history must rely on the secondary commentators, with little or no access to the texts on which these modern authorities have so sensibly and abundantly remarked. Into this already crowded field, there now enter two further commentaries, of contrasting style yet surprisingly aligned intent. Staunton's is the more conventional and comprehensive. He begins with an author-by-author survey of the principal 'English' historians writing in Latin in the period 1150 to 1217, contributing a host of individual insights (for example on Gerald of Wales's recycling of Sallust, Gervase of Canterbury's of Orosius, or Howden's of the fifth-century Peter Chrysologus on Herod, here identified with Philip Augustus of France). He then proceeds to a thematic analysis of the chroniclers' approaches to kingship, fate, rebellion (especially that of 1173–4), the crusades, the Becket dispute and the marginalised, including women and barbarians. Much of this will henceforth be required reading for anyone seeking to make sense either of detail or broader themes. As with Staunton's earlier work on the Becket *Lives*, there is a depth of insight here and a constant awareness of classical or biblical archetypes. There is also a willingness to dispute dogma: for instance, that the chroniclers were in many cases 'court' historians imbued with a common 'Plantagenet' ideology, or that they were blind to the sufferings of the victims (especially the Irish victims) of Plantagenet imperialism. Events, he argues, almost invariably trumped ideology, not least because the historians of this period were writing not, as many of their predecessors had done, of a distant past but of contemporary events, various of which were so extraordinary (Becket, the 1173 rebellion, the Third Crusade) that they demanded notice, however poorly they might reflect upon the Plantagenet kings under whose rule they unfolded. To this extent, there was a