Schede e segnalazioni bibliografiche


Nel numero monografico degli «Appunti Romani» dedicato alla memoria dell’illustrissima Giannicola ha particolare interesse per l’ambito di «Medioevo Greco» i contributi di G. Pace, Le parti della tragedia nella teoria post-aristotelica (pp. 99-109); F. G. Giannachi, Un nuovo manoscritto del De metris di Giovanni Tzetzes: Schojen ms. 1660 (pp. 133-150). [E. V. M.]

Alberto Giudice, Giancarlo Rinaldi (edd.), Fonti documentarie per la storia del cristianesimo antico, Roma, Carocci, 2014 (Studi Superiori 935 – Studi religiosi), pp. 232. [ISBN 9788843072002]

Questo manuale, indirizzato in primo luogo a docenti e studenti di storia del cristianesimo, e più in generale consultabile con profitto anche da chi si applica agli studi tardo-antichistici, si fa apprezzare per il taglio multidisciplinare e l’accessibilità. Il cap. 1, forse il più interessante dal punto di vista del bizantinista, a cura di M. Capasso, fornisce una sintetica introduzione ai pa-

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piri, letterari e documentari, greci e latini; i rimanenti sei capitoli sono dedicati alla numismatica (G. Rinaldi), all’epigrafia (G. Liccardo), all’archeologia (A. Giudice), alla topografia (M. Amadio), alle arti figurative (C. Sanmori), alle risultanze archeologiche che si possono mettere in relazione con le narrazioni degli Acta martyrums (A. Carfora). La bibliografia di riferimento, unica, a fine volume, occupa le pp. 203-230. [L. S.]


There is an emerging trend in Anglophone historical studies of rediscovering the value of Greek canon law and Byzantine law as historical sources. Humphreys’ study is a part of this trend. He himself notes in the introduction that historians of Byzantium have neglected to use legal sources in recent research (this claim should perhaps be qualified to Anglophone historians).

H. sets out to study law as a vehicle of ideology during the iconoclast era (c. 680-850). The primary legal sources chosen for study (chapters 1-5) are the canons of the Council in Trullo, the Ecloga, the Appendices to the Ecloga (simply called Appendix Eclogae in the singular by the editors of the critical edition), the Nomos Mosaikos, the Nomos Rhodon Nautikos, and the Nomos Georgikos. It should be noted that the Appendix Eclogae, the Nomos Mosaikos, the Nomos Nautikos, and the Nomos Georgikos are notoriously hard to date although they are often associated with the Ecloga in the manuscript tradition. In chapter 6, H. also sets out to analyze the reaction to the previous legal material by Empress Irene, Emperor Leo V, and the Macedonians. The study ends with a general conclusion on law as a vehicle of ideology during the period in question.

H. follows the general opinion of recent scholarship that the period in question should not primarily be approached through the lens of historical theology by focusing on iconoclasm as the defining factor of the era, but should rather be approached from the perspective of its political context (i.e., the rise of Islam and the Arab conquests). Iconoclasm is from this perspective viewed as an epiphenomenon of the political situation.

H.’s major thesis is that the legal reforms (and iconoclasm) are reactions to the perceived divine punishments of the Arab conquests. H. describes the legal reforms as ideologically attempts to appease God and regain his favor for the Christian empire. A recurring minor thesis is that, in contrast to the bleak picture painted by the subsequent iconophile propaganda, one can speak of a cultural renaissance during the Isaurian rule paralleled to the contemporary cultural renaissances of the two other heirs to the Roman legacy: the Carolingian Frankish kingdom and the Abbasid Caliphate.

H. identifies three major ideological paradigms of law for the period: the example of Emperor Justinian and the Roman legacy, the New Testament, and Mosaic law together with biblical history of Israel.

The Council in Trullo is analyzed in chapter 1. H. presents the Council in Trullo as «the end not only of early canon law, but also of ancient Christianity» (p. 77). H. argues that Justinian II looked to his namesake Justinian I and sought to parallel his codification of Roman law with the codification of Byzantine canon law by the Council in Trullo. He also argues that the decrees of the council were prepared by the emperor and his advisors rather than by the bishops. The rhetoric of the decrees presents the empire as a Christian empire eschatologically placed in the history of redemption in the struggle against sin interpreted through medicinal metaphors. Justinian II is presented as modelling his legislative work through the council on Justinian I, Heraclius, and Constantine IV. For the first time pastoral metaphors traditionally applied to bishops are also applied to the emperor by the council. The rhetoric of the council also likens the emperor with Christ and Phinehas of the Old Testament. But the focus of the council is the New Testament with its rhetoric of cleansing society of pagan and Judaizing practices. H.’s interpretation is, as stated above, that the council is a reaction against the rise of Islam and the Arabian conquests. H. does not consider that the council also enacts canons that might have been intended for the churches under Muslim rule: after all, the Council in Trullo enacted a rather coherent marriage law that also had a practical relevance for the churches in the conquered territories that were deprived of the jurisdiction of the empire and its legal order. The marriage legislation of the Council in Trullo could also be interpreted as a response to the juridical deficit in the area of family law for the Christians under Muslim rule.