

*Narrating martyrdom* is an engaging and in some ways provocative book. Alwis forges a meeting between twentieth-century narratology and Byzantine hagiography, via a Shakespearean rendering of the Taylor Swift song 'Shake it off'. Byzantinists may be stimulated to consider fresh approaches to their primary texts, revealing their true multivalence. Scholars of literature and philosophy reading this book may be pleased to find their critical methods usefully applied to unfamiliar texts. Even if the fit is occasionally not exact, Alwis's book demonstrates the hermeneutic power of interdisciplinary approaches to Byzantine Christian literature, and highlights directions for future scholarship.

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*Rethinking reform in the Latin West. Tenth to early twelfth century.* Edited by Steven Vanderputten. Pp. xiv + 340 incl. 10 colour and black-and-white ills. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2023. €190. 978 90 04 54642 4

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This collection of essays is the culmination of a research project sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust to investigate new trends in the study of the changes that took place in the Latin West from the tenth to the early twelfth century. As such, the volume is intended to be an historiographic, rather than an historical narrative of those changes. The major point, stressed by several authors, is that recent studies have shown that local politics and economic changes slowly coalesced into a major renovation of Church and secular society. As a result, the authors reject the earlier working hypothesis that a reform of Church and society was mandated and enforced by secular and ecclesiastical rulers. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to describe such changes as a 'reform', but rather as the cumulative result of local adaption to political and economic factors. Each of the authors not only offers an overview of the scholarship in their field of interest but also suggests avenues for future study. As the editor points out in the introduction, 'none of the chapters in this volume pretends to make any kind of definitive statement about where reform scholarship currently stands, and about where it should be heading. Rather, they seek to contribute to an ongoing discussion, and to inspire readers to steer that discussion in new directions, be at conceptual, methodologically, or otherwise'.

The first chapter deals with what is usually termed the Carolingian reforms. The author emphasises that the 'reform' documents which survive from this period are more admonishments to clerics of their responsibilities than a blueprint for reform. Chapter ii undertakes the central issue of monastic reform. Close examination of the documents from this period shows a wide diversity of practices, and a surprising continuity in monastic life. The author summarises: 'the high-profile experiments of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries must be understood in light of the experience that had been accumulating for decades as a result of this (double parentheses bottom/up and top/down) impulse at monastic integration'.

The difficult and complex field of clerical reform is addressed in the third chapter, looking particularly at the development of the role of canons and of

bishops to demonstrate the continuity rather than the disjunctures in church structure during this period. As the author succinctly concludes, 'Rather our challenge lies in recognizing "what looked new but was really old".' The central issue of papal reform, addressed in the fourth chapter, describes this reform not so much as a renovation, but as an actual revolution. The point of this revolution was 'the need to rationalize the ecclesiastical organization' rather than 'to judge the behavior of clerics'. The author points out, however, that it is important to note that this revolution took place quite differently at different times and in different places. The end result, however, was 'a revolution never before experienced in the western middle ages'.

The fifth chapter addresses the social background of the ecclesiastical revolution. The author addresses three areas. First, how clergy and laity worked together to rationalise and regularise income and resources resulting in an impressive expansion of wealth and consequently of building. Second, the changes wrought during this period stressed the protection of the weak, but also of sacred times, places and persons. Finally, the author discusses the impact clerical celibacy had on the larger society. The author wisely suggests that much more nuanced studies are needed on the societal impact of reform, and collaboration between scholars of economics, of law, of gender and of history would produce such studies. The complex transformation of men's image of themselves is the subject of the sixth chapter. The author points out that there was not one understanding of masculinity during this period. Monks and clerics espoused a masculine ideal of dedication to prayer and pastoral service, while laymen were more likely to follow knightly virtues as portrayed in the courtly love literature, or to take on the defence of the Church, embodied most fully in the crusade movement.

Chapter vii undertakes a different approach than the other chapters in its description of lay piety and devotion. The author follows the affiliation of certain noble families to monastic establishments. Financial support and protection by the laity was reciprocated by the spiritual benefits offered by clerical prayer during and after life. A shorter exposition of the role of penitentials in chapter viii demonstrates their continuous, but adaptive use by the clerics of this period. Chapter ix undertakes a thorough examination of the hagiographies written between the tenth and twelfth centuries, arguing convincingly that this writing must be understood in the larger context in which and for which it was produced. As such, it performed several functions: to honour a revered founder; to offer an example of sanctity; to entertain; to further or hinder reform; to demonstrate the erudition of the author; and almost always as a form of communication to a wider community.

Chapter x takes a closer look at the relation between liturgy and its architectural expression in monastic churches. As in other chapters, the author stresses the diversity of the period rather than a uniform reform agenda. Chapter xi offers a useful evaluation of the actual terminology used by writers traditionally understood as reformers. The authors earlier in this period spoke more often spoke of 'restoring' or 'cleansing' the Church and only slowly, the author concludes, did reform language find its way into ecclesiastical writings.

Overall, this collection of essays is very useful introduction to the historiography of ecclesiastical 'reform' in the tenth to the twelfth century. It presents clearly and

convincingly the advantage of more recent approaches to this period and, most important, offers insightful suggestions for future research. For anyone interested in the formation of the high Middle Ages, and consequently of later European history, this volume is an invaluable summary of recent scholarship.

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*Foundation documents from St Mary's Abbey, York, 1085–1137*. Edited by Richard Sharpe (with Janet Burton, Michael Gullick and Nicholas Karn). (Surtees Society, CCXXVII.) Pp. xiv + 473 incl. frontispiece, 6 tables, 3 maps and 1 plate. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press (for the Surtees Society), 2022. £50. 978 0 85444 984 9  
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At his untimely death in 2020, the late and much lamented Richard Sharpe left not only a published legacy dwarfing that of most his contemporaries, but an unpublished *Nachlass* of daunting magnitude. Thanks to David Crouch and his rescue party, some at least of this rich seam is now exposed to view. More will follow, not least from two major research projects (Gerald of Wales, and Rufus/Henry 1) for which Sharpe's admirers have secured ongoing support. Meanwhile, here we have a definitive study of the earliest materials for one of England's greatest, yet until now somewhat neglected Benedictine houses: the abbey of St Mary at York. This focus is all the more appropriate as Sharpe himself grew up and was schooled in the abbey's curtilage. As Michael Gullick explains, our principal source is a manuscript acquired by the British Library in 1914 (MS Add. 38816): a late sixteenth-century collection of scraps, preserving twelfth-century copies of three forged or heavily interpolated royal charters (of Rufus, Henry 1 and Henry 2) together with a foundation history attributed to St Mary's first abbot, and a confraternity list. For the foundation itself there seem to have been three chief movers: Abbot Stephen, originally a monk at Whitby, Count Alan of Brittany and King William 1. To these we might add the Venerable Bede, who died more than three centuries before Abbot Stephen, yet who supplied an account of northern monastic revival crucial to what occurred after 1066 not only at York, but at Whitby and Lastingham: locations *via* which the community of St Mary's migrated before coming to rest in its permanent site, north-west of York's city walls. What exactly went wrong at Whitby: internal bickering, hostile interference from lay patrons or fear of sea-borne attack? Why did Stephen's community then move from Lastingham to York: local piety, penance for the Conqueror's 'Harrying of the North' or deliberate royal usurpation of a site uncomfortably associated with the suppressed earldom of Northumbria? In what precise circumstance was the abbey's endowment acquired and augmented? All of these remain questions lacking any sure answer. Even so, in a bravura exercise in stratigraphy, Sharpe himself identifies the two hundred or so individual grants listed in the three royal charters of *inseximus*, in seventy-four cases tracing them to surviving charters, here edited from cartulary and other copies. As was his way, Sharpe's approach involves breaking down the bigger picture into a series of individual