

translation, eminently readable with neither Latin nor Latinate terms retained. It is a shame that old-fashioned translations (i.e. Prof. Thomas) should represent the subject as remote from the law of today.

A substantial introduction illuminates the historical and generic contexts of the *Institutes*, and traces its profound influence on European legal systems. Another plus of this publication is its useful glossary and index which allows the reader to look up Latin or English terms. The Latin terms are cross-referred to the English, and the principal texts are then given under the latter.

Unfortunately, a commentary is totally missing in this book, but it is promised as a separate (forthcoming) publication by P. Birks (p. 29). *Justinian's Institutes* will be a valuable resource for legal historians and students of Byzantine and legal history as well, as for scholars and students of the classics.

Kingston, New York

CONSTANTINE N. TSIRPANLIS

Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, Wilmington, DE, Michael Glazier Inc., 1987, pp. 342.

This book is perhaps the best short introduction (in English) to the historical background and theological problematics of each of the seven Ecumenical Councils so far.

The material of the book is systematically and comprehensively arranged into seven long chapters, one chapter being devoted to each Council with helpful chronologies of persons and events and select bibliography (mostly annotated, but somewhat uncritically) for further reading, at the end of each chapter. An introductory chapter provides a brief survey of the Roman political and cultural world in which the Christian Church was born.

Certainly, Fr. Davis succeeds in stressing the ecumenical dimension of the ancient, first seven Councils of the Church, to the extent of seriously warning his fellow Roman Catholics as follows: "Perhaps in the interests of better relations with the Orthodox and Protestants, the time has come to reconsider the whole question and accept with them *only* (reviewer's emphasis) the first seven great councils as the truly ecumenical pillars of the faith" (p. 325).

However, some denominational bias is demonstrated in the author's effort "to indicate the growing authority of the Papacy within the developing structure of the Church and the difficulties that the East had with the Bishop of Rome's understanding of his authority" (pp. 10, 128). Thus, he misunderstands and does promulgate the "Petrine doctrine" of Papal primacy (pp. 128, 129). Hence he tends to disregard the "ecumenical validity" of Constantinople I (381), (pp. 121-124), as well as to underestimate Justinian's contribution to the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553) (pp. 240, 248-9).

Furthermore, Fr. Davis seems to overestimate Pope Honorius' "Monothelitic" Christology at the expense of Sophronius of Jerusalem. Hence, the author entirely ignores and systematically avoids any discussion of Honorius' condemnation by the Sixth Ecumenical Council as "Monothelite heretic" (pp. 265-268), and his bibliography on this Council is wanting. Strangely, any treatment of the Quinisext or Council in Trullo (691/2), as well as of the Photian or possibly the Eighth Ecumenical Council (879), is totally missing in this book.

In any case, these minor shortcomings do not discourage me from recommending this book as "required reading" for such courses as "History of Ecumenical Councils", "Survey of Early Church History", and "History and Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism".

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Georges de Trébizonde, *De la vérité de la foi des chrétiens: Text grec*, Tr. and notes by Adel Th. Khoury, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 1, Altenberge, CIS Verlag, 1987, pp. 245.

George of Trebizond (1395-1484), an important post-Byzantine humanist, teacher in Rome, secretary of Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455), participant in the council of Florence (1439), stimulating thinker, writer and statesman was nevertheless ignored by and unknown to English-speaking students of Byzantium as late as 1976 (John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond. A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic*, Leiden 1976; *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond*, edited by John Monfasani, Binghamton, New York 1984).

Although Monfasani had accomplished a commendable work through his *Collectanea*, he did not publish the text nor an English translation of the significant treatise of George of Trebizond *On the Truth of the Faith of Christians to the Emir when he Stormed Constantinople* written in July 1453 (in Italy).

Khoury in this book provides the Greek text as well as a French translation based on G. T. Zoras' edition (Athens 1954). Khoury, furthermore, includes a short summary of the religious issues and a textual criticism of each chapter of the treatise with abundant bibliographical annotations and a general introduction. Although Khoury's analysis of each chapter is too short, it mostly covers the main arguments and issues involved in this irenic dialogue between Christians and Moslems beginning with their fundamental agreements with respect to Trinity, Christology, and Mariology. Incidentally, this treatise of George of Trebizond may be an extremely useful and inspirational guide and source of encouragement in our contemporary Christian-Muslim Dialogue. Of course, the purpose of this treatise was to persuade the conqueror of Constantinople Mohammed II to unite not only the lost Empire, but also the divided Church, since only through this twofold unity, Religious Faith and Imperial Power, the solid and permanent Unity of Mankind can be realized.

Interestingly, George of Trebizond himself sounds overoptimistic and thoroughly convinced, throughout the treatise, that a politico-religious unity of the two Traditions (Christians and Moslems) is not difficult nor complicated, since their divisions are not based on the data of their respective faiths' sources of their beliefs, but on their ignorance, fanaticism, lack of communication, love of talk and vanity.

George even tends to believe that God allowed the capture of Constantinople by Mohammed II with a providential profit for the universe, e.g. Mohammed II as the most powerful ruler in 1453 in both the East and the West could also become the head of a united politico-religious world centered on Christ. Hence, George's frequent exhortations to Mohammed that he should embrace the Christian Faith in order to become another Constantine and even greater than Constantine!