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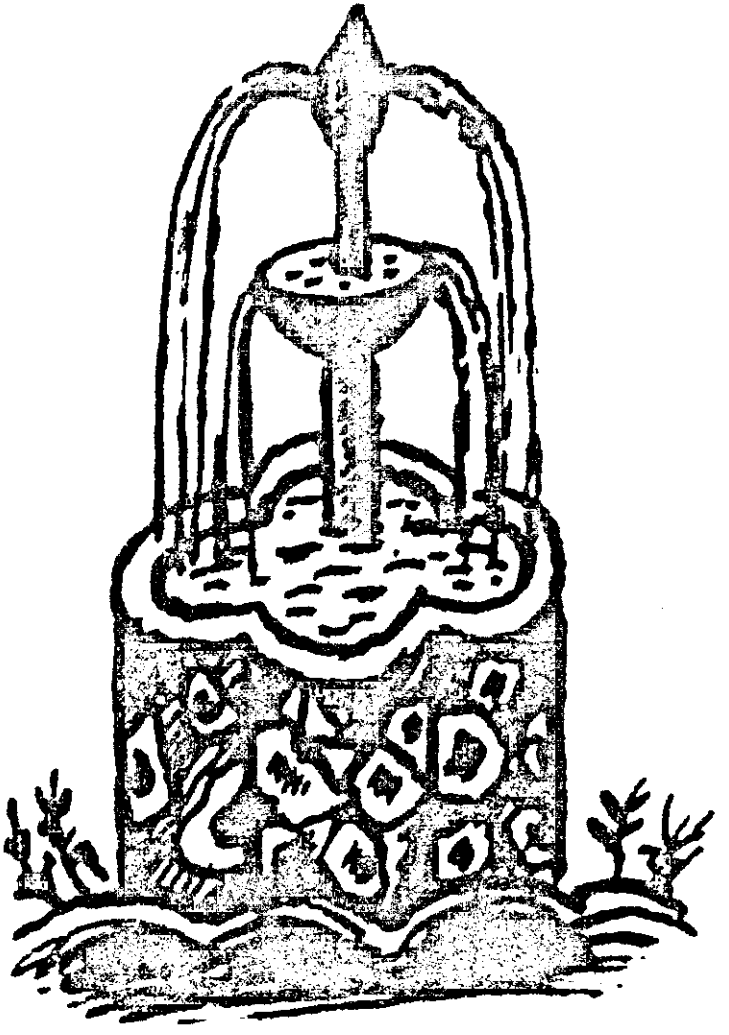

PEETERS

S. TROVATO, *Antieroe dai molti volti: Giuliano l'Apostata nel Medioevo bizantino* (*Libri e biblioteche*, 34), Udine, Forum, 2014, XII + 526 pages. ISBN 978-88-8420-778-4.

This is a study of the Byzantine tradition on Julian the Apostate. It is richly documented, if methodologically conservative. Besides discussing a wealth of material, unearthing some of it for the first time, it shows that three interrelated images of Julian circulated in Byzantium: Julian as an emperor, author and persecutor. The first two counterbalanced the generally negative perception produced by the third.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is a miscellany of three studies of specific aspects of Julian's reception: the accusation of *imitatio Iuliani*, the overriding influence of Gregory of Nazianzen on later Byzantine perceptions of Julian, and the reception of Julian as an author. The second part analyses Byzantine hagiography, discussing most of the major hagiographical texts. Noteworthy is an analysis of the *synaxarion* of Constantinople and of two *menologia*. The third part analyses Julian in Byzantine chronicles. Particularly innovative here is the analysis of the Epitome of Church histories (7th c.), noting the strong influence of Theodoret of Cyrrhus on the representation of Julian in Theodore Lector, the source of the Epitome. This leads to a more negative picture than when Theodore would have relied primarily on Socrates or Sozomen. A rich bibliography and a somewhat abortive index (of authors only) conclude the book.

The book is a major step forward for those interested in the image of Julian, offering all the Byzantine material in a single tome. As regards the level of analysis, however, TROVATO could have done much more. The general thesis is, unsurprisingly, that the image of Julian is usually negative and far removed from reality and that we see a progressive 'mythologisation' over time. The other major interest is the identification of the sources used by the various authors. Rather than lamenting the negative tendency and fantasy in Byzantine accounts, it would have been more fruitful to start out from the fact that every society has its enemies and idols, often drawn from history, and then to study how such representations develop and change in different historical contexts. Julian obviously was one of the imperial 'demons' of the Byzantine *imaginaire*. Rather than stating this fact over and over again, it would have been more rewarding to ask what particular purpose a text had with its particular representation of Julian and if we can see distinct Julians in particular periods or texts. This should, in addition, be done within the context of other positive and negative images that populated the Byzantine mind (Diocletian and Constantine being obvious candidates). In other words, what does an image of Julian mean at a given moment of Byzantine history? Similarly, it would have been more fruitful to analyse a few Lives of martyrs *in extenso* to understand them as narratives in their own right rather than conveyers of clichés. There are many instances in the book where the author offers interesting remarks and insights, which would be the starting point for such an approach. His fine analyses of Theodoret of Antioch (141-149) and of Artemius and Eusignius (199-239) are cases in point. In the third part on historiography, one would have liked to see more reflection on the role attributed to Julian in the course of history: is he just a blip, a demon of the past, or the image of a realistic threat to a Christian polity?

In sum, this is a useful work that offers unmatched access to the Byzantine reception of Julian and to previous scholarship. It brings new material to our knowledge and regularly offers fine analyses of individual texts. But the book also shows the limitations of the catalogue-like approach inherited from earlier scholarship, as it only occasionally broaches the crucial question: what does this all mean?

P. VAN NUFFELEN.