A LONG HISTORY OF TIME

W. ADLER, P. TUFFIN: *The Chronology of George Synkellos. A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation. Translated with an Introduction and Notes*. Pp. lxxxviii + 638. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Cased, £90. ISBN: 0-19-924190-2.

In the first decade of the ninth century George Syncellus embarked on a major project, a history of the world from the Creation, through Christ's Incarnation (Annus Mundi 5501) and Resurrection (5534), to the present. This project had a major chronographic aim, to demonstrate that the first three events, the pivots for the divine progress of mankind, all occurred on 25 March. He did not live to complete the work, but handed over materials to the monk Theophanes to continue the compilation from the accession of Diocletian (A.D. 284). As a chronographer, George drew heavily on the works of his predecessors, in particular Julius Africanus, for whose lost work George is the most important witness, and Eusebius, who is the subject of sustained attack for doctrinal errors as well as chronological lapses in the *Chronici Canones*. Gelzer, in what was previously the most important study of Syncellus (*Sextus Iulius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie,* 1880–98), regarded George as essentially derivative, whereas A. & T., in a detailed sixty-page introduction, argue for a more active researcher and calculator. George ranged much more widely than Eusebius, and probably also the lost Alexandrian chronographers, Pannodorus and Annianus: to our benefit he preserved significant material from the Babylonian Berossus, the Egyptian Manetho, and Diodorus Siculus, as well as shorter extracts from Porphyry and Dexippus, among others. A. & T., however, go too far in suggesting knowledge of Agathias simply on the basis of a similar king list (p. lxii); George's list displays some distinct errors; for example, in the placing of Hormizd IV before Khusro I, it had to extend beyond that of Agathias, and Agathias does not seem to have been among the texts which George delivered to Theophanes. The positive assessment of George's computational abilities (pp. xlviii–lii) needs to be set beside his defects as an arranger of material; for example, in the last pages of the *Chronography* there is a doublet for the death of Aurelian (AM 5764 and 5765), information on the bishops of Alexandria and Jerusalem provided in 5748 is repeated in 5764, in 5775 there is no mention of earlier notices of Babylas' death (5737, 5744; no reference in A. & T.'s notes), and the proceedings against Paul of Samosata, which clearly belonged under Aurelian, are inserted in 5776, eleven years after Aurelian's death. Among George's predecessors, Malalas deserved more than one sentence (p. lvi), and the *Chronicon Paschale*'s project might have been noted, even if it did not influence George (neither of these texts is included in the Index of Subjects, though numerous parallels with them are listed in the very useful Index of Textual Citations).

The combined work of George and Theophanes has been described as the greatest achievement of Byzantine historical scholarship, and George has been accorded the major credit for this by Mango (e.g. in the companion translation: C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* [Oxford, 1997]), on the grounds that George provided a complete set of materials which Theophanes only had to stitch together. A. & T. present this thesis positively (pp. lxxxi–iii), but without complete endorsement. This underestimates the input of Theophanes, and hence exaggerates George's contribution. I have pointed to the subtlety with which Theophanes could blend two separate narratives (*BMGS* [1982/3],1–20), and to the significance of his editorial interventions to highlight issues of orthodoxy (*Dialogus* [1999], 105). George was a

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rather different writer. A substantial part of his work is direct quotation of previous texts, whereas this is rare in Theophanes. Theophanes was meticulous in recording every year with its titulature of rulers and metropolitans, even when he had no events to report under it, whereas there are many gaps in George (e.g. only sixteen years are recorded between AM 5700 and 5776). The difference in attitude towards Eusebius is also striking. For George, he was totally objectionable, a devotee of Origen and an adherent of Arius, as well as chronologically misguided. In Theophanes, although one error is noted (AM 5827) and his doctrinal instability admitted (AM 5829), the latter criticism is qualified since Eusebius has just been praised for attacking opponents of Christ's divinity and his rejection of Arian views is upheld by reference to Socrates. Most significantly, in AM 5818, Eusebius' defence of the Nicene creed is recorded as well as the testimony attributed to Athanasius that he accepted the term 'consubstantial'; Athanasius more than outweighs Theodoret, who is cited as a link between Eusebius and Arians.

A limited survey of the translation (focused on non-Eusebian passages) suggests that this is pretty accurate. There are inevitably niggles: φονικώτερος 'murderous' (436.8, Mosshammer) is distinguished from φονικώτατος 'bloodthirsty' (437.14), as is γνώμῃ 'instance' (443.8) from γνώμην 'will' (465.24) in similar contexts; βασιλεύει (437.15) is, misleadingly, translated as (succeeded to) 'the principate', in contrast to 'was emperor' for ἐβασίλευεν (436.7), and 'principate' is also used for ἀρχὴν (474.3) as opposed to the more common 'rule', 'power', or 'empire' (467.14, 312.24, 465.23). For σπουδαῖος (436.15) 'commitment/enthusiasm' is preferable to 'considerate', and provides a better explanation of the subsequent military revolt; for τυραννήσας (437.20) 'set himself up as usurper' is better than 'as tyrant'; ἱεροῖς (445.15–16) is omitted; 'betrayal' for προδοσίαν (466.12) represents what happened better than 'surrender', as does 'captured' for χειρωσάμενος (470.5) rather than 'vanquished'; 'Portus by Rome' is more accurate than 'in Rome' for κατὰ (438.7). Such things are a reminder that, as ever, the text should not be forgotten, even though this very impressive volume will be the version of George consulted by most people in the first instance.

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MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS?

S. HODKINSON: *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta*. Pp. xiii + 498, maps, ills. London/Swansea: Duckworth/Classical Press of Wales, 2000. Cased, £48. ISBN: 0-7156-4030-7.

The Spartans were not equal. They had no pool of state-registered farms, assigned to individuals for life. They were not banned from buying and selling. They were not forbidden to possess gold and silver coinage (except in the early fourth century B.C.).

At the outset of his book, Stephen Hodkinson traces the extraordinary hold exerted over the modern imagination by the fraudulent portrayal of Spartans as self-denying, egalitarian, even communistic. A few earlier sceptics, such as Voltaire, perceived the inequalities. Almost no one, however, least of all professional historians, has doubted that there was a Lykourgan land division, Grote being an honourable exception. Since Nazism and communism both held up Sparta as a paragon, the belief in Spartan equality remained unshaken in the twentieth century.

Chapter 2 shows how this idealization developed. Herodotos clearly refers to rich

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