



**Alan MacQuarrie, ed., *Legends of Scottish Saints: Readings, Hymns and Prayers for the Commemorations of Scottish Saints in the Aberdeen Breviary* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), pp. 520. £50.**

The Aberdeen Breviary, published in Edinburgh in 1510, has two main claims to fame. It is Scotland's first printed book and it is the most important collection of information on the lives and legends of the Scottish saints. Drawn up by Bishop William Elphinstone of Aberdeen at the prompting of King James IV, it sought to provide a full-scale national hagiography and was part of a wider attempt to give the late medieval Catholic church a more Scottish flavour, and thereby make it less vulnerable to accusations of Romanism and foreign domination. Somewhat surprisingly given its importance in Scottish ecclesiastical history, there has been no new edition of the Breviary since the so-called 'facsimile' volume published in 1854 without translation, notes, index or scholarly apparatus of any kind. It was a wise move to put the edition of this new edition into the hands of Alan MacQuarrie, honorary research fellow in Scottish history at the University of Glasgow and almost certainly the leading living authority on the Saints of Scotland. He has been assisted in his labours by Rachel Butter, Simon Taylor and Gilbert Markus who bring their own specialist knowledge of the cult of saints and Scottish place names to the project.

Their handsomely produced volume presents the prayers and readings to be read out during the office on each Saint's feast day at Matins, in some cases interspersed with hymns, antiphons and responsories. The original Latin text is printed on the left-hand pages and an English translation on the right. While the Breviary is laid out in chronological order of Saints' days beginning with those of winter and spring and concluding with those of summer and autumn, the extensive scholarly notes on the text deal with each saint alphabetically, from Adomnan, ninth abbot of Iona and described as 'perhaps the best documented personage of the early Irish and Scottish church', to Winnin, the saint who gives his name to Kilwinning in Ayrshire and who may have originally been a sixth century cleric known as Uinniau who wrote an influential penitential and taught Columba.

The notes, which run to over 100 pages, provide useful potted biographies of the saints commemorated in the Breviary, or rather in many cases helpful speculations about the legends or confusions that lie behind their cults. It is often the case that the same saint appears under different names – for example the place-names Kilmaha, Kilmaho, Kentigern’s Bog and Mungo’s Well all apparently refer to a single individual. Uinniau is a good example of a saint who appears in various guises – as well as Winning, he is quite possibly also celebrated in the cults of Finden, Finnian and Inan.

Not surprisingly, the saint who receives most attention in the Breviary is also the only one not to have a provenance from within the British Isles. Andrew, well established as the nation’s patron saint by the early fourteenth century, is commemorated twice, first on 9 May which is the feast of the translation of his relics, and secondly on 30 November, the day associated with his martyrdom. An elaborate office for St Andrew’s Day, which runs to fifteen pages, and presumed to be that used in St Andrew’s Cathedral, is, in fact, the only feast included in the breviary which contains nothing of specifically Scottish interest, making no mention of St Andrews in Fife, nor of the apostle’s cult in Scotland. The foundation legend of St Andrews is, however, given in the office for St Rule (30 March), in the office for the translation of Andrew, and in a series of lessons describing the coming of relics to Scotland which are bound into the Glamis Castle copy of the Aberdeen Breviary and printed here as an appendix.

Columba, as one might expect, comes a close second with Blane, Ninian, Magnus and Kentigern as runners-up. In the case of these saints, the prayers and readings are embellished with a number of antiphons and hymns. The Matin prose lessons for Columba’s day seem largely to draw on material from Adomnan’s Life but the three hymns commemorating the Iona saint, and intended to be sung at Vespers, Matins and Lauds are more difficult to source, although they show clear affinities with material in the mid-twelfth century Irish life of Colmcille and in the early fourteenth century Inchcolm Antiphoner.

The superb standard of editing and the high quality production make this edition of the Aberdeen Breviary a very welcome addition to the resources available to anyone wishing to learn more about the fascinating and often complex background to the cults of the Scottish

saints in the Middle Ages. While the price probably puts it beyond the range of many individual purchasers, local libraries should be lobbied and encouraged to add this to their collections as an extremely valuable work of reference.

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**Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 56; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. vxi + 297. £93.00***

In *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* Stökl offers a historical examination of the phenomenon of prophecy as it is reflected in three corpora of ancient texts – the Old Babylonian Mari archives, the Neo-Assyrian royal archives, and the Old Testament. A separate section is dedicated to each of these collections. The final chapter compares Old Babylonian, Neo-Assyrian and biblical prophecy under eight subheadings: prophetic groups, cultic prophecy, music and prophecy, intercession, female prophets, transmitting prophecy, deities of prophecy, and being sent. Whilst from a historical point of view this is a valuable investigation into an important religious institution of ancient Near Eastern societies at large, for a theologian its main benefit comes from the light it throws on biblical traditions.

To begin with, it is instructive to note that prophecy was not an exclusively Israelite phenomenon, but something the people of Israel and Judah shared in common with their neighbours. Stökl understands prophecy as a subcategory of divination which, broadly speaking, is the activity of receiving messages from the divine sphere. The prophet is an intuitive diviner, to be distinguished from the technical diviner (like augur, haruspex, etc.), ‘who receives a divine message, the words of which are understandable without further analysis with a special skill (such as reading livers)’ and transmits the message to a third party (p. 10).