

The annual Ecclesiastical History Society is awarded for an author's first monograph in the field of ecclesiastical history. Publishers submitted a wonderful range of volumes covering many aspects of ecclesiastical history broadly defined. The book prize committee comprising Samuel Brewitt-Taylor, Christopher Langley, Conor O'Brien, Géraldine Vaughan and Rosamond McKitterick. Even at that stage selecting the short list was a difficult task but we nevertheless happily agreed back in Spring 2020 on a shortlist of six books to go to the final stage of consideration for the Ecclesiastical history Society's book prize for 2019. I should like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow-committee members for all their work, discussion of the books after we had read them, excellent critical judgement and coping with considerable complications of books needing to be posted to various addresses in France and Italy as well as England . Our shortlist was as follows:

Gareth Atkins, *Converting Britannia. Evangelicals and Public Life, 1770-1840* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019)

Matthew C. Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals: Baptist Identity in the English Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 2019)

Liesbeth Corens, *Confessional Mobility and English Catholics in Counter Reformation Europe* (Oxford: OUP, 2019)

James Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and empire: constructing church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical history* (Cambridge: CUP, 2019)

Sean Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus* (Cambridge: CUP, 2019)

Reuben A. Loffman, *Church, State and Colonialism in Southeastern Congo, 1890-1962* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)

This was a remarkable group of books. We all enjoyed reading them immensely and were very impressed with the scholarship, original contributions to knowledge and important new perspectives in all these books. We learnt much and profited greatly from reading their work and recommend them warmly to you all. Needless to say the high quality of all six books made our task all the more difficult, but we did reach a decision and I am pleased to announce that the winner of the Ecclesiastical History Society's Prize for an author's first book in the field of ecclesiastical history for 2019 is

Sean Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus* (Cambridge, CUP. 2019)

Sean Griffin's book *The liturgical past in Byzantium and early Rus* is a fascinating and excellently-written study of the evolution of Christian historiography in early Rus. The use of liturgy as history, while owing much to previous scholarship, is innovative and terrifically thoughtful. What could be a potentially daunting array of source material is handled by the author in such a way as to guide the reader gently and authoritatively, clearly tracing the connections between liturgy and history writing. Griffin studies the so-called Russian or Kievan Primary Chronicle, a text in Old Slavonic which recounts the history of the Eastern Slavs and their early rulers in Kiev from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, usually dated to the early twelfth century, but surviving in later medieval manuscripts. It is full of particular stories about the early princes such as Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, as well as the account of their conversion to Christianity by missionaries from

Byzantium. The core of Griffin's argument is the association between Rus liturgy and history writing in which he invokes the notions of the 'liturgical past' and liturgical rites as a 'public technology for creating and controlling cultural memory'. He is persuasive in his discussion of the Byzantine/Rus liturgy as a means of storing the past, constructing meaning, propagating and exploring the Christianisation of the Rus, often for political purposes, and the case he makes for the liturgy being an 'information technology' accessible to all levels of society. He charts the process by which the Slavonic liturgy turned the history of a dynasty into the sacred history of saints and exposes the liturgical component underpinning the myth of Christian origins for the land of the Rus'. The reflections on the social and liturgical experience of monks in Kievan Rus – how their repetition of liturgical elements served to forge new historical horizons – was often moving. Griffin's explanation of the liturgical day experienced by early Rus historians, and its effects on their categories of thought, was particularly powerful, and there are some very clever lexical arguments. He navigates his way through nearly three centuries of clearly rebarbative scholarship very professionally and courteously, and sustains his argument convincingly throughout the book. The book is clearly an important contribution to early medieval Russian and Byzantine studies in particular, but also on the relationship between medieval historiographical, biblical and liturgical texts.

Griffin's book did the most of all the short listed books we read to extend beyond its own research topic to say something wider to the discipline. Griffin makes an energetic, even passionate, case for the vital importance of the liturgy as a source for studying premodern Christian societies. From the outset, moreover, Griffin shows how the history promulgated in the *Rus Primary Chronicle* continues to pervade Russian history today. Overall, his book has important things to say about history writing, the interpretation of events, and about lived religion. In our opinion is an exceptional first monograph and we congratulate him on behalf of the EHS most warmly.