

**Anthony Kaldellis. *The Christian Parthenon: Classicism and pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens*.** Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. 252 + xvi \$99.00 ISBN978-0-521-88228-6 252.

In this compelling book, Anthony Kaldellis asks us to reconsider what we thought we knew about the Parthenon in both its classical and its Byzantine forms. He also pushes readers to question what many have believed about the way in which the Byzantines interacted with the remains of the classical world around them. The Parthenon that emerges is a unique building whose Christian significance is enhanced by its connections to the classical past and by the particular cultural position of the city above which it rested. Perhaps just as interesting, however, is the Byzantine society that Kaldellis sees venerating this building. Contrary to what Cyril Mango and others have argued in the past, the Byzantine world of Kaldellis' reconstruction remained acutely aware of and eager to engage with its classical inheritance. Perhaps as early as the ninth century, Athens had become the most important of a group of Greek cities that worked to present themselves as living spaces in which the Hellenic and Christian mingled. This was a world in which inscriptions using Homeric genitive forms could appear on churches in Boeotia and antiquarians like Gregory of Kampsas roamed the countryside collecting inscribed epigrams for a project that would ultimately become the *Greek Anthology* (185). In this environment, the Parthenon stood out not only as the largest intact classical temple but also as a sort of symbol for the cultural position that Athens claimed as the center of this new 'local Hellenism.'

Kaldellis' argument develops around three major points, though there are detours in the book that are as rewarding as its main argument (as, for example, the stimulating discussion of temple conversions found on pages 31–41). The first and probably most provocative point is that the Parthenon was more important in Byzantium than it had been in antiquity. This argument, developed primarily in the introduction and first chapter, takes an innovative and entirely sensible approach. Because the evidence that Kaldellis will use for the Byzantine period consists largely of literary descriptions and reactions to the Parthenon, he assesses the monument's classical prominence using the same type of materials. He finds that 'the Parthenon itself is hardly mentioned in the literature of the classical and Hellenistic periods (11).' If it was mentioned at all, it usually appeared as part of a larger catalog of notable Athenian sites, with the building receiving less attention than the artwork it contained. In addition, he finds little evidence that it was visited as an important cultic site. The classical Parthenon then resonated neither as a site of great architectural interest nor as one of particular religious significance.

The second of Kaldellis' major points contrasts the Byzantine situation with the classical. The number of sources treating Athens in the Byzantine period are far smaller in number than those for the classical and late antique worlds. In these sources, however, the Parthenon (remade as the church of the Theotokos Atheniotissa sometime between the late fifth and seventh centuries) comes to feature ever more prominently as

both an attraction that draws people to the city and as an entity that, in some ways, comes to define the city. Kaldellis discerns the earliest moves in this direction in narrative materials connected to seventh century figures, but he is best able to document it with a rich collection of twelfth and early thirteenth century texts. The most important of these are the materials written by Michael Choniates, the bishop of Athens from 1182 until he was deposed and exiled following the Latin conquest of the city in 1205. Choniates had a rich Classical education and announced his arrival in Athens with an appropriately Atticized oration that, he was disappointed to learn, few of the Athenians could actually understand. Nevertheless, he came to love his adopted home. His writings give fullest expression to the interplay between Christian piety and Hellenic tradition that Kaldellis sees as shaping Byzantine reactions to the Parthenon. His Parthenon was a living connection to the Hellenic past as well as a structure that, Choniates claimed, stood at the edge of heaven. This makes Choniates, in Kaldellis' words, 'the first known worshipper of the Parthenon' (148). And yet the appeal of the building for Choniates and others like him came from its ability to bring together the classical past and the Christian present, two elements to which Choniates was deeply attached.

The third major point builds upon Choniates' reaction to Athens and its metropolitan church. Kaldellis sees in this a corrective to the common view of Byzantines as ignorant of or disinterested in the classical past. Indeed, he argues that Choniates' reaction to Athens and its glories is far from unique. In Choniates' *Inaugural Address at Athens*, Kaldellis finds reference to a tour of the city's sights that the new bishop took upon arrival in the city (178ff). On this tour, Choniates was shown the oddly-shaped victory monument of Lysicrates—and told that it was Demosthenes' Lantern by his guides. In an ingenuous bit of argumentation, Kaldellis demonstrates that this is the first recorded instance of the monument being misnamed. The misnaming, though, indicates that the Athenians had come up with an itinerary for visitors that explained the remains of every ancient monument in Athens in resonant classical terms. They evidently anticipated a regular audience of visitors who came to Athens and hoped to experience the classical past jutting out from the ground of the city around them.

Kaldellis' important study, of course, appears at a time when the appropriate modes of presenting and understanding the Parthenon have caused a great deal of recent contention. It is probably too much to suggest that a scholarly monograph (even one as accessibly written as this) can help to resolve so fraught a question, but Kaldellis' arguments do push us in an important, new direction. The Parthenon mattered to Byzantines (as it matters to us now) because of its ability to represent tangibly otherwise intangible personal conceptions of how the classical blends with the contemporary. Its significance rests, then, not in what it meant to people in antiquity but in how it symbolically represents a viewers' manner of engaging with the Golden Age of Athens. This means that the Byzantine Parthenon, the Catholic Parthenon, the Muslim Parthenon, and the Humanist Parthenon are all monuments with their own distinctive cultural history. As Kaldellis has shown, each of these Parthenons have histories worthy of study and commemoration.

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