

THE VIRGIN MARY IN BYZANTIUM, c. 400–1000

The Virgin Mary assumed a position of central importance in Byzantium. This book examines her portrayal in liturgical texts during approximately the first six centuries of Byzantine history. Focusing on three main literary genres that celebrated this holy figure, it highlights the ways in which writers adapted their messages for different audiences. Mary is portrayed variously as defender of the imperial city, Constantinople, virginal Mother of God and ascetic disciple of Christ. Preachers, hymnographers and hagiographers used rhetoric to enhance Mary's powerful status in Eastern Christian society, depicting her as virgin and mother, warrior and ascetic, human and all-holy figure. Their paradoxical statements were based on the fundamental mystery that Mary embodied: she was the mother of Christ, the Word of God, who provided him with the human nature that he assumed in his incarnation. Dr Cunningham's authoritative study makes a major contribution to the history of Christianity. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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Hymns, Homilies and Hagiography

MARY B. CUNNINGHAM



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*To Professor Dame Averil Cameron who inspired my work in
this field*

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A Note on Capitalisation, Spelling and Recent Publications

I apologise that this book displays the usual inconsistencies that afflict most publications in Byzantine Studies, owing to the difficulty of reconciling clarity with changing trends in presentation. I have decided to follow traditional spellings or versions of names that are well known to modern readers, such as John Chrysostom or John of Damascus. However, I have adopted the hellenised version of less common names, such as Nikephoros or Proklos. In general, the latter follow the rules for spelling that are set out in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (*ODB*). I capitalise the names of Marian feasts (such as the ‘Annunciation’ and the ‘Dormition’), but not the events or legends that inspired them. My object, above all, is to present a book that is understandable and attractive to modern readers. Fashions will no doubt change, but I hope that my choices in presentation will endure at least as long as the content remains useful. A more serious, but also unavoidable, problem has been my inability to incorporate some recently published texts, such as the new edition of the *Book of Ceremonies* by Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (ed. G. Dagron, B. Flusin and D. Feissel, Paris, 2020, in 5 vols.). Owing to the slow process of preparing a work for publication, it is impossible to keep up with all of the latest developments in the field. Nevertheless, it will remain for future scholars to advance and refine some of the ideas that I present in this book.