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## Book Review: Peacemaking in the Middle Ages: Principles and Practice

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Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.

Because medieval conflict and violence have been so highlighted in the past decade by scholars such as David Nirenberg, Guy Halsall, R. I. Moore, Eve Salisbury, Warren C. Brown, Piotr Górecki, Mark D. Meyerson, Daniel Thiery, Oren Falk, and Peter Sarris, to name but a few, Jenny Benham's book is a welcome addition to the conversation. The author maintains a sensitive grasp of both the primary source material and the dynamics of medieval diplomacy. The book itself though

rests uncomfortably under an overly broad title (likely the publisher's decision) and on an overly narrow focus.

In response to medievalists' lack of attention to the history of peacemaking, Benham has sought to expand on Christopher Holdsworth's article ("Peacemaking in the Twelfth Century," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 19 [1997]) by moving into the next century and into a comparative study with the Danish kingdom. The Plantagenet monarchs (Henry II, Richard I, John) shared similar diplomatic challenges with Valdemar I, Cnut VI, and Valdemar II (i.e., restoration of royal authority, conflicts with the Roman Catholic Church, and the problem of owing allegiance to a powerful neighboring monarchy), but the two kingdoms had vastly different resources. They also produced vastly different amounts of surviving documentation, and this creates problems for the promised comparative history. The book is at its best when moving within the Anglo-French world, while the reader gets little real sense of the Danish experience. Furthermore, before the period under study there is negligible evidence for even the existence of Anglo-Danish diplomatic relations. So while any effort to extend anglophone historiography beyond the Anglo-French territories should be heartily applauded, selecting the German Empire rather than Denmark would have produced a much richer comparative study—or at least the book would have had more purchase on representing *European* peacemaking practices as the title suggests.

Such strategic concerns aside, Benham handles very well the interpersonal dynamics of peacemaking between monarchs. First considering the symbolic power of neutral meeting places for peace negotiations and of gestures evoking the relative status of the two royal interlocutors, she next follows Gerd Althoff's lead with a rich study of peacemaking rituals (e.g., banquets and gift exchanges). The following chapter on gestures of submission—always a ticklish topic in peace negotiations—moves from the world of personal diplomacy into that of feudal lordship customs, and here there are some missteps. William of Scotland's 1190 act of homage before Richard I of England is misinterpreted as a recognition of William's submission to the English monarch for his kingdom, when in fact William performed before Richard I this "*homagium pro dignitate suis habendis in Anglia*" (p. 92) as a vassal for his feudal holdings in England, not for his kingdom in Scotland as an English fief. This feudal distinction was a tacit nod to William's inherited title as the Earl of Northumbria, of which Henry II had deprived him some fifteen years earlier with the Treaty of Falaise. Yet several months before this act of homage Richard had already invalidated the Treaty of Falaise in return for 10,000 silver marks from William to assist the English monarch in his planned crusade. Elsewhere King Malcolm of Scotland is misread as being asked to do homage (*homagium*) to William II of England rather than (as he was actually asked) to do justice (*rectitudinem*) for the English (not Scottish) territories Malcolm held of the English king (p. 95). We return, however, to more

solid ground in the final chapter on keeping the peace once made through oaths, hostages, and sureties. As surviving charters from the period are few and far between, much of the book is based on chronicle sources that depend on the interests of particular chroniclers, but Benham is forthright in acknowledging what can be known and what is interpretive material.

Peacemaking took place in many venues. For example, there is a missed opportunity to study in more depth Henry II's role as mediator and peacemaker between the kings of Navarre and Castile, or between the count of Flanders and the French kings. Likewise, attention to the works of John Carmi Parsons, Lois Huneycutt, and Helen Maurer on intercession and peacemaking as a key function of medieval queenship would be a valuable contribution. Finally, dispute settlements have in fact been studied much in the past decade or so at many levels of society (see, for example, monographs and edited volumes by scholars such as Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, Paul Hyams, Stephen D. White, and Peter L. Larson), and so a comparative investigation that reached beyond royal diplomacy would expand the book. None of this is offered as a criticism, but as an enthusiastic endorsement of Benham's work and its possible intersections with a broader history of medieval peacemaking. This monograph takes a circumscribed yet important step forward.

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