the margins of a narrative that focuses on Western and
Central Europe. In accounts of Russian history, Kievan
Rus’ figures as a conduit for Byzantine influence to the
later Muscovite and imperial Russian states that
emerged to its northeast. Christian Raffensperger chal-lenges both of these frameworks in his boldly conceived
first book.
Unlike most of his predecessors, most notably the
late Dimitri Obolensky, Raffensperger does not situate
Kievan Rus’ within the political and religious orbit of
the Byzantine Empire. Instead, he argues that the Rus’
related to the Byzantines in very much the same way as
their Western European neighbors. They sought Byz-antine recognition and Byzantine imperial brides and
appropriated its emblems of legitimate government,