REVIEWS

Sophia Menache, *Clement V* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1998) xiv +351 pp.

In *Clement V*, Sophia Menache tries to rehabilitate the reputation of Pope Clement V (r. 1305–1314), the first of a string of fourteenth century popes who governed the church from southern France instead of Rome. The assessment that historians have traditionally given Clement dismisses him as a weak pope, unable to stand up to King Philip IV of France, who used church offices for the advancement of his family and who dragged the church into the "Babylonian Captivity." Drawing on a staggering bibliography of primary and secondary sources, Menache argues that Clement was actually a modernizing pope who guided the church through the crucial period of the infancy of European nation-states and succeeded in protecting ecclesiastical prerogatives at a point when bargaining with kings and clergy was becoming increasingly painful. In this way her work does not break any new ground in the historiography of the fourteenth century, but instead follows the work of Yves Renouard and Guillaume Mollat, who have argued that the Avignon papacy, far from being a period of corruption and decline for the church that heralded the Protestant Reformation, was in reality a positive and necessary stage in the modernization of the Roman Church.

Clement was elevated to the papal See at a difficult time for the papacy. His predecessor, Boniface VIII, had come out on the losing end of a contest for power against Philip IV of France, during which Philip had sent his henchmen to Italy to arrest him for heresy. The aging pope was brutalized by Philip's men and soon died as a result of the harsh treatment he received, thereby leaving the conflict unresolved and the outrage committed against the papacy unanswered. Apart from this affront to his office, Clement also had to contend with the growing tension between England and France (which erupted into the Hundred Years War not long after his death), a number of doctrinal controversies in the church, and a need for reform within the religious orders. In addition to the problems he inherited, Clement was also confronted with several crises that arose during his papacy, especially the arrest of the Templar Knights in 1307 by Philip IV of France. Clement's response to the issues that faced him while he was pope earned him the condemnation of contemporaries and historians alike.

Menache defends Clement by arguing that his primary goal as pope was to launch another crusade to rescue the Holy Land, and in the interest of this goal he often had to support the ambitions of the monarchies who would actually lead the crusade. At times this meant supporting the princes against the clergy and nobles in their kingdoms. As pope, Clement "collaborated" with the kings of France and England and "the emerging national state" in order to gain their cooperation for his own objectives. This collaboration was not a result of coercion on the part of the monarchs, but was tied to Clement's own priorities and the necessity of strengthening royal power as a prerequisite to a crusade. Menache frequently refers to Clement's dealings with the kings of England and France as being "quid pro quo," with Clement granting concessions in exchange for their (often token) support for the crusade. Again, Menache's argu-

ment is not new in this respect, and it has already been advanced by Mollat, Renouard, Norman Housley and others.

The first portion of Menache's book answers the many criticisms that contemporaries and historians have made of Clement V. The most common complaints against Clement V are that he never went to Rome, that he favored France over England, that he sold out the interests of the church under pressure from monarchs, and that he showed undue favoritism to his own relatives in church appointments. Menache answers the first charge by arguing that the absence of the papacy from Rome was not unprecedented in the Middle Ages and that Clement's duties as pope and his failing health required him to remain in southern France after his election. Much of his energy was spent maintaining the fragile peace between France and England, and southern France was a location that allowed easy communication between both. Furthermore, Clement was not actually in the kingdom of France, but in a region that was under the jurisdiction of the king of Naples, who was a papal vassal. Thus Clement's decision to remain in southern France allowed him more independence than many contemporaries and historians have claimed.

Menache answers the charge that Clement used his office to advance members of his family by claiming that he was not the first pope to do so. It was quite normal for political and ecclesiastical offices to pass through kinship and patronage networks in medieval Europe; thus, nepotism was an easy accusation to make against any unpopular public figure. Menache also notes that Clement's choice of family members for certain offices such as papal legate helped to ensure that church officials were not involved in local politics.

As to claims that Clement favored France over England, Menache notes that Clement's family—the de Got family of Gascony—were vassals of the English crown and that Clement himself owed much of his advancement within the church to the patronage of the English monarchy. Indeed, it was partly because Clement had ties with both England and France that he was elected to the papacy. Clement remained on good terms with the English monarchy throughout his pontificate and was supportive of the kings of England when they were challenged by their nobles and even the clergy. As with France, Clement's policy was to foster a strong monarchy in England which would help lead a crusade to the Holy Land.

The next section of Menache's book analyzes papal relations with Italy, France, and England. Here her work becomes somewhat redundant as she restates many of the points she has previously made. She stresses that Clement was often faced with limited options when a crisis arose, but that he was usually able to control the damage through diplomacy and legal maneuvering. For example, with the trial of the Templars, he was faced with a *fait accompli* in that Philip IV had already arrested the knights and elicited confessions from them before Clement had time to react. The best he was able to do was sabotage Philip's plans to benefit from the Templars' wealth by creating delays in the trial process and by ordering investigations of the Templars in other kingdoms, thereby taking the initiative out of Philip's hands and reducing his influence in the overall proceedings.

The final portion of this book examines the Council of Vienne and the resulting *Clementinae* or resolutions adopted by the Council. Here Menache

certainly could have made a significant contribution, yet this section is unfortunately one of her shortest. The purpose of this Council, which Menache considers to be Clement's crowning achievement, was to address the need for religious reform and to safeguard the remnants of ecclesiastical privilege from the encroachment of the growing nation-state. The emerging modern state was becoming more and more of a force for the church to reckon with; and rather than embroil the church in a futile conflict with these national states, Clement constantly chose the path of compromise, a path that Menache claims was the only one for the papacy at this time. This did not allow him to be as unyielding as some of his esteemed predecessors, but the papacy had fallen from the apex of its power long before Clement's election. Clement shaped papal policy so that the church would cooperate with the state, thus helping pave the way to the modern era.

Menache concludes by admitting that Clement V was not an exemplary pope, but that he was a reflection of his age with "above average" political and legal skills. Overall, his concessions to the kings of France and England gained their cooperation; and although he did not achieve all that he set out to accomplish, he managed to stall hostilities between France and England for the duration of his papacy and to protect the interests of the church under difficult circumstances.

Menache's book is supported by an impressive bibliography and she shows a strong familiarity with her materials. Yet in spite of the apparent thoroughness of her research this book has a number of shortcomings. Despite the title of the book, it does not work as an autobiography. One is not left with a deeper insight into Clement V as a person largely because he gets lost in Menache's recounting of the political events of his papacy. Nor does her book function as a political history because she does not reflect on his legacy or on his contribution to the history of the papacy or of Western Europe. She ably describes the policies Clement formed in his dealings with the rising nation-states, but she does not take it a step further to describe the mark he left in medieval history.

A significant flaw in Menache's argument is that she does not elaborate on Clement's desire for a crusade. According to her argument this desire was the principle motive behind most of his policy decisions, but she offers little evidence that the Crusades were a genuine priority for him. Did he sincerely believe that he could launch another campaign to the Holy Land, or was he merely paying lip-service to the crusading ideal as Menache claims he was prone to do on other occasions? Her failure to look more deeply into the personal characteristics of her subject leaves these questions unanswered.

In *Clement V* Sophia Menache set out to revise Clement's reputation, and this she has convincingly accomplished. The focus of her book is too narrow, however, and in defending Clement she loses sight of the significance of his papacy. This book does not shed any new light on the late medieval papacy, on the religious climate of Europe in the early fourteenth century, nor on Clement himself. It successfully argues that Clement V deserves a better reputation than that assigned him by history, but this has already been done and Menache's book does not accomplish much beyond that.

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