
H-France Review Vol. 5 (July 2005), No. 70

William Chester Jordan, *Unceasing Strife, Unending Fear: Jacques de Thérines and the Freedom of the Church in the Age of the Last Capetian*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005. 1 Map. Notes. xiv + 163 pp. \$ 29.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-691-12120-6.

Review by Patrick Nold, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.

William Chester Jordan's *Unceasing Strife, Unending Fear: Jacques de Thérines and the Freedom of the Church in the Age of the Last Capetian* traces, through a range of scholastic, polemical and administrative sources, the life of a relatively unknown Cistercian monk against the background of "the often tragic, and always compelling, history of the early Fourteenth century" (p. xi). Jacques de Thérines manages to turn up, almost Zelig-like, in the major controversies and debates of the last decade of Philip the Fair's reign: the trial of the Knights Templar, the expulsion of the Jews from France, the "Babylonian captivity" of the popes in Avignon, the persecution of the Franciscan Spirituals, the burning of the "beguine" Marguerite Porete, and the ecclesiological debates of the Council of Vienne. By focusing on a neglected historical figure, Jordan freshly re-tells these and other familiar stories with his own distinctive emphases and interpretations, and thereby provides an original synthetic narrative of the period. Jean Dunbabin did something similar in her work on Pierre de la Palud, a Dominican slightly junior to Jacques de Thérines.^[1] Though going over the same sort of territory, the two books are in fact highly complementary—if for no other reason (though there are many reasons) than because the experiences of a friar-bishop afford a perspective on the medieval world very different from those of a monk.

And one of Jordan's achievements in this fine book is to convey a very strong sense of the personality and world view of that monk. Jacques de Thérines defined himself, above all, as a Cistercian, and it is remarkable just how much of this identity came down to a provision of canon law that exempted his religious order from the jurisdiction of bishops. Jacques saw this dispensation as distinguishing the Cistercians from, and elevating them above, other orders in the Church (much in the same way that the Franciscans viewed themselves as the most perfect religious order based on papal privileges concerning their poverty). "Exemption" was the leitmotif of Jacques's life. Indeed, his spot-light moment, when he moved from the side to the centre of the historical stage, was the official defense of his order's privilege against the threat of disestablishment: this required arguing with Giles of Rome, "an altogether interesting man and a scholar's scholar" (p. 41), before an audience of Pope Clement V and the General Council of Vienne (1311-1312); an encore performance was later necessary to sway Pope John XXII (1316-1334) from his avowed intention of revoking the Cistercians' exemption (just as he would later seek to deprive the Franciscans of their privileged status).^[2]

Jacques's earliest writings date from his time as a "professor" in theology at the University of Paris in the first decade of the fourteenth century: A single manuscript (MS Paris BN lat. 14565) preserves his public disputations from the years 1306-1307. These randomly-posed, "quodlibetal" questions were answered shortly after the initial arrest of the Knights Templar by the king's agents, and Jacques went off topic in one of his replies to preempt critics from using the scandalous claims about the Templars as ammunition against exempt religious orders in general. A year previously, Jews had been the victims, being rounded up and expelled from the kingdom; in another disputation Jacques indirectly, though nonetheless bravely, voiced doubts about the wisdom of such a royal policy that departed from traditional church teaching. Jordan is resourceful at squeezing these quodlibets for their topical content

but leaves room for further work to be done on the collection as a whole, particularly regarding Jacques's position on the more speculative theological and philosophical questions of the day.

To be a Parisian master of theology like Jacques was to have intellectual authority and for this reason he was often called upon for his professional opinion, usually in conjunction with other members of this educated elite. For example, in 1308 the masters of the university were collectively asked, but politely declined, to sanction Philip the Fair's violation of church freedom in his seizure of Templar property. Jacques also served on two smaller commissions charged with evaluating orthodoxy in certain *causes célèbres* of the inquisition: statements from the devotional writer Marguerite Porete and from a group of rebel Franciscan Spirituals were pronounced heretical by these expert panels. Jordan's assessment of this sort of committee work is well-balanced: he underscores the difficulty in isolating individual voices but nevertheless engages in some interesting speculation about the distinctive contribution of Jacques in each instance.

After his teaching stint at Paris, Jacques became abbot of his home monastery of Chaalis. This represented a transition from the world of ideas to that of action and there is a corresponding shift in the sort of primary sources surviving for his life: the skeleton for the narrative of Jacques's tenure as the abbot of Chaalis is the monastery's cartulary (MS Paris BN lat. 11003). Jordan's handling of this evidence is most impressive: he shows from a series of agreements that, upon Jacques's elevation, the abbey instituted a new policy of converting lands from direct exploitation to leasing in response to changing economic conditions on the eve of a catastrophic famine.^[3] But there is more to be gleaned from this manuscript: Jordan boldly re-dates it to the year 1318 and argues not only that the material was compiled during Jacques's abbacy but that organization of the volume itself bears his personal stamp. The chapter concludes by neatly bringing together Jacques's theorizing about Cistercian exemption with how this immunity actually worked on a practical level. As abbot of Chaalis and subsequently of Pontigny, Jacques was also involved in some splendidly provincial spats which are recounted here with *élan*: a heated debate between rival claimants to the possession of an obscure saint's relics, a stand-off with the local bishop over three words in an oath of allegiance, and a scandal over the theft and consumption of two pigs by the retinue of the philosopher-bishop Giles of Rome.

Through his narration of events great and small, Jordan evokes the mood of an age—an anxious time of “unceasing strife, unending fear” (p. 104). He effortlessly covers a lot of ground in relatively few pages and there is an attractive economy to his stimulating treatment of subjects that come with considerable historiographical baggage. His book ought to have a wide readership of students and scholars alike.

NOTES

[1] Jean Dunbabin, *A Hound of God: Pierre de la Palud and the Fourteenth-Century Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)

[2] See recently, Patrick Nold, *Pope John XXII and his Franciscan Cardinal: Bertrand de la Tour and the Apostolic Poverty Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

[3] Extensively studied in William Chester Jordan, *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)

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