

Short Notices

Simonetta, Stefano, *Marsilio in Inghilterra: stato e chiesa nel pensiero politico inglese fra XIV e XVI secolo*, Milan, LED University Editions, 2000, paperback; pp. 190; RRP €29.45; ISBN 8879161385.

Stefano Simonetta's study complements Gregorio Piaia's magisterial *Marsilio da Padova nella Riforma e nella Controriforma* (Antenore, 1977), discussing some shared figures in the light of more recent scholarship. It is an impressive 'mosaic' (p. 12) of balance, erudition, and methodological sophistication. It comprises an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, an invaluable and finely integrated bibliography, but no index. John Wycliffe was accused of being a Marsilian, and Chapter 1 explores the possibility. Passages from Wycliffe's works, especially *De officio regis*, show that although Marsilius was not to be cited, his text was invaluable in the interests of controlling the clergy. He set a precedent for Marsilius as a Reformation resource.

Chapter 2 suggests that Edmund Dudley (*The Tree of Commonwealth*, 1509–10) and Christopher St Germain effectively prepared the ground for William Marshall's translation of *Defensor pacis*, 1535 (p. 60). If Marsilius informed Dudley's work, it may have been via Wycliffe, but the arboreal metaphors make textual relationships uncertain. Dudley's problems, however, remained largely at one with Marsilian anti-clerical imperatives. St Germain's writings evidence more direct use with jurisprudential emphasis, subordinating both the clergy and common law to sovereign authority. Simonetta weaves a discriminating path between Eltonian theories of 'state-building' for which *Defensor pacis* was construed as an informing *ideology* (see pp. 100–01), and subsequent scepticism. If Thomas Cromwell was never the architect of a state-building project, he did sponsor the systematically redactive translation of *Defensor pacis*, a weapon for Henry VIII's bishops against Rome and a buttress for the monarchy. Although discussed by others (p. 100), it invited more attention.

Chapter 3 surveys Stephen Gardiner, Thomas Starkey, Richard Hooker, and John Maxwell, but, surprisingly, not John Ponet's decidedly Marsilian *A Short Treatise of Politick Power* (1556). Gardiner's use of Marsilius was probably indirect (p. 112) and involved a possibly hypocritical attempt (p. 120) to marry England's imperial status with papal authority. It has, however, been widely accepted that Starkey was a follower of Marsilius, a consensus not helped by simplistic readings of the Paduan (p. 125). Starkey's Marsilian dependence was dismissed by Thomas Mayer, but despite Aristotelian communalities, Simonetta establishes a strong family resemblance between the two. With Hooker and Maxwell, usage patterns have changed. From being a figure too notorious to cite directly, Marsilius became evocatively emblematic: Hooker's dependence on him

may have been exaggerated, but the name symbolised the need to accentuate the uncertain differences between the English Church and Rome (pp. 160–01).

Marsilius had become representative of a related set of propositions concerning apostolic equality, priestly poverty, the Church as its believers who, in a secular capacity, are a locus of sovereignty, a source of law, or an authenticating origin of princely authority. Adherence to any one or two can provide only flimsy evidence for reliance on him, but when most are present, the pieces of a likely Marsilian mosaic fall into place. Further propositional implications, touching a justification for tyrannicide, might be developed from them (John Ponet, George Buchanan) or be feared, the name becoming a brush with which to tar. For David Owen, the Paduan was the principal source of all such (Monarchomach) ‘leud learning’ (p. 164).

Simonetta concludes that the ambivalences in Marsilius’s work, the very conditions for his varied employment, were never resolved, and he isolates both democratic and absolutist strands of exploitation (p. 170). Thomas Hobbes can be situated at their junction. Simonetta touches tantalisingly on the possibility that *Leviathan* sits crowned upon a Marsilian grave; but ‘that is another story’ (p. 167): indeed, but it is taken up in Simonetta’s *Dal Difensore della Pace al Leviatano: Marsilio da Padova nell’Inghilterra del Seicento* (Unicopli, 2000).

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