

Barbara E. Crawford: *The Churches Dedicated to St. Clement in Medieval England. A Hagio-geography of the Seafarer's Saint in 11th Century North Europe*. St. Petersburg: Axioma, 2008 237 pp. 33 maps and plans. ISBN 978-5-901410-67-7 (ib.)

REVIEWED BY MARGARET CORMACK

This volume represents the culmination of a decade of investigation of the cult of St. Clement in Scandinavia and England. Perusing it will be valuable not only for those interested in medieval Scandinavian, English, and Viking history, but for any who may wonder why one should bother to study the cult of saints in the first place. Crawford's work demonstrates the variety of political, economic, and environmental meanings the dedication of a church to a particular saint could convey. In the case of St. Clement, who died by drowning, the legend of his martyrdom gave him clear maritime associations, and he has often been thought of as an appropriate patron saint for sailors and merchants. In 1968 Erik Cinthio argued that the distribution of churches dedicated to St. Clement in Scandinavian towns reflects "power political" relations, possibly related to the dynasty of Cnut ("The Churches of St. Clemens in Scandinavia," *Archaeologia Lundensia* III, 103–116). Crawford carried the investigation further in a number of articles devoted to Clement churches in Scandinavia and elsewhere. These are summarized in the introduction. I will note in regard to these earlier articles that I am not convinced by the argument, applied primarily to Norway, that the *missionary* activity of St. Clement made him an appropriate patron for early Christian rulers, such as Vladimir of Kiev and Olaf Tryggvason. If a Rus' connection is to be considered, the presence of the relics at Kiev, and the association of both Norwegian Olafs with Rus' (although Novgorod rather than Kiev) could be an adequate explanation for their interest in him. However, as Crawford herself points out, both kings also had connections with western lands where Clement's cult would also have been known: Olaf Tryggvason was confirmed by an Anglo-Saxon king, while St. Olaf spent time in Rouen, a city which also boasted a church of St. Clement. In the case of Denmark, Crawford concurs with Cinthio that Clement was probably "adopted as a powerful helper for the Danish royal dynasty" (p. 8) while pointing out that he was honored in rural churches as well.

The present volume turns to the British Isles. Since there are very few churches dedicated to St. Clement in Celtic-speaking areas (the one Irish example is found in

the Scandinavian town of Dublin), the main focus is on England, where there is a striking concentration of churches dedicated to St. Clement in the Danelaw. What was the reason for his popularity as a patron saint in this area, and who was responsible for it? To anticipate Crawford's conclusion, there is no single answer. She raises numerous possibilities worthy of consideration, and in the process delves deep into the history of the churches and towns she examines. The difficulty in deciding among the possible theories is that we rarely know when, or by whom, a church was dedicated; the geographical distribution can suggest theories, but does not allow us to choose among them.

In England there are very different distributions of churches south and north of the Thames. In the southeast, Clement churches are found in London and in important ports, locations significant for military defence – similar to the coastal distribution in Denmark. The distribution pattern is significant, but does it indicate a Danish preference for the saint, or his invocation by Ælþelred, attempting to defend his shores against the Danes? Did the Danes themselves adopt St. Clement before, during or after the reign of Cnut?

By far the largest number of churches dedicated to Clement are found north of the Thames – in particular in the Danelaw, where, however, they are not invariably associated with centers of power. St. Clement's association with water might be adequate explanation for dedication of churches to him at waterfronts or in marshy areas prone to flooding, where it was hoped he would save others from sharing his fate. Crawford sees no reason to connect the Clement churches in this area with either the first or the second Viking Age. In contrast, there are only three churches dedicated to St. Clement in Wessex, none of them on the coast; nor was he associated with royal estates in that area.

No study of a maritime saint, nor one that deals with England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, can ignore the other side of the English channel. Crawford gives St. Clement dedications in Normandy the same careful scrutiny as those in England, and points out some possible connections. As she comments, "The whole 11th c. was one in which contacts by sea spread knowledge and interest in the cult among seafaring communities and naval retinues (whether Anglo-Saxon, Norman, or Danish)" (pp. 199–200).

Her rejection of neat patterns will be frustrating to some: Crawford refuses to fall into the easy trap of identifying all churches dedicated to St. Clement with Danes, Anglo-Saxons, Normans, merchants, or kings. In Lincolnshire alone (the area where the dedications are most frequent) there are churches that may date from the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Scandinavian period, and another that appears to be post-Norman.

In Lincoln itself, neither of the two churches dedicated to the saint is associated with the areas where Danish commercial activity has been identified by archaeologists.

Crawford is to be praised for her meticulous examination of the contexts in which the church dedications are found, exploring not only their topographical features (association with water is easily visible from the survey maps) but also providing detailed maps of the settlements themselves insofar as they can be reconstructed from archaeological and historical sources. The maps alone would justify purchase of this volume; they are accompanied by careful combing of historical and archaeological records of the political, commercial, and ecclesiastical connections that might have resulted in the choice of Clement as a patron saint. Scholars of the history of any of the locations treated in it will benefit hugely from the detailed analysis to be found in this excellent volume.

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