

prolific than the Rogers, which saw two of its members made pope, while a third refused election; twenty-three were created cardinal. Williman extends the research in this remarkable family.

Williman then presents a masterful overview of the Camera Apostolica, detailing its staffing and tax streams; the latter ranges from common services to spoils. Whereas others often assume the reader knows the intricacies of the papal Camera, Williman spells it all out clearly.

The third section, “The Ministerial Policies of Pierre de Cros,” is less successful, but that is a function of the evidence available. Gregory XI was a strong leader, who kept his eye on much that was going on in his administration. This, of course, leaves less room for a subordinate’s initiative, even someone as important as de Cros. In addition to the constant depredations, seizures, and bloodshed of the ongoing Hundred Years’ War, the pope also had to deal with brigands in his own neighborhood and the bigger ones of the Italian peninsula. The Visconti brothers drew the wrath of Gregory, who, as always, threw himself into the fray. Calling on every ally and resource available, the pope launched armed forces against Bernabo and Galeazzo Visconti and had some signal, but temporary, success. Williman accepts an account by Pietro Gazata, who claimed that Galeazzo Visconti pounced unexpectedly on a shipment of 100,000 ducats intended for papal forces and thus turned the tide of war. That may have happened, but the pope does not refer to such a theft, and the condottiere John Hawkwood, in the pay of Avignon, explained that he retired his forces from battle because of high casualties—and the burden of profitable captives.

This is a book that helps us to gain a fuller picture of the papal court, especially in the 1370s. It is a fuller picture not only because Williman has shed more light on another important member of the Avignonese Curia but also because, in his meticulous descriptions of the activities of the likes of de Cros, we sense all the more strongly the worldliness that was steadily infiltrating the attitudes of the people surrounding the pope, the worldliness that would wreak such havoc on the papacy and Europe on the death of Gregory XI.

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*Basilio Bessarione: Lo spirito greco e l'occidente.* By Giuseppe L. Coluccia. [Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, Monografie 15.] (Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki. 2009. Pp. xxx, 444. €50,00 paperback. ISBN 978-8-822-25925-7.)

Perhaps because of his eccentricity, the Hellenizing, likely pagan Platonist Gemistus Pletho (c. 1355–1452) has received plenty of attention from scholars, including works by François Masai, Christopher Montague Woodhouse,

and Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker. But it is a different situation for Gemistus's most celebrated and influential disciple: Cardinal Basilio Bessarion (c. 1402–72), who, although a strong defender of the Greek tradition and Platonic philosophy, maintained his loyalty to the Catholic Church. For many years, the only real monograph about Bessarion was the classic study *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann* by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn, 1927); Mohler also issued an edition of the cardinal's masterpiece, *In calumniatorem Platonis*, and a volume of other texts by Bessarion and his *familiars*. Lotte Labowski, Concetta Bianca, James Hankins, John Monfasani, and Brunello Lotti later wrote other important articles, followed by recent monographs by Marian Cizewski and Héctor Delbosco.

Giuseppe L. Coluccia's book is not only the first Italian monograph devoted to a key protagonist in Renaissance cultural history but also offers a remarkably complete and updated bibliography (pp. 375–424) on the life, works, and intellectual circle of the cardinal—an important instrument for future work. Coluccia—who has written a biography of Nicholas V—is not involved in the academic milieu, so his monograph is aimed at introducing Bessarion to a wider public. Written chronologically, the book describes the life of the cardinal as a sort of *Bildungsroman*. This romantic tone is probably responsible for the principal flaw of Coluccia's work: He admires Bessarion too much to recognize the ambiguities of the cardinal's life and ideas. The political meaning of *In calumniatorem Platonis*, composed not only to defend Plato's reputation but also to protect Bessarion's position within the Roman Curia, is largely neglected. The conspiracy against Pope Paul II by the Accademia Romana, which involved many of Bessarion's *familiars*, is summarized in just a few pages. In one of a series of factual errors, Coluccia mistakenly describes Callimaco Esperiente and Filippo Buonaccorsi as two different individuals (p. 231). Although he largely relies on secondary literature, almost exclusively in Italian, Coluccia nevertheless unearths some unusual aspects of Bessarion's life: developing some observations by Giovanni Pugliese Caratelli, he offers an interesting chapter on the cardinal's pastoral activity in southern Italy. Coluccia is perhaps too optimistic when he states that modern translations of Bessarion's works might bring about peace in the Middle East (p. 277).

As a whole, the book is not always precise, and there are some sections that read more like notes rather than refined paragraphs. Yet, despite the ingenuousness of style and content, Coluccia's book contains a wealth of references that is useful for those who wish to learn about Bessarion and his world.