are the subsequent four chapters – the core of the book – which explore, comparatively, the development of the state in particular national contexts: Uruguay, Colombia, Argentina, and, taken together, Venezuela and Paraguay. Each chapter adopts the same technique: first outlining existing historical explanations for twentieth-century state formation, then proposing how nineteenth-century wars, more than other factors, shaped outcomes in each case. The comparative approach works well and the effect of the book is to create a sharper understanding of the peculiarities of each case. Particularly persuasive is the emphasis placed on the wars of independence and the early republican experience, rather than the more commonly evoked later nineteenth-century export era, in determining twentieth-century outcomes. López-Alves is best when he analyses the different experiences of warfare and violent conflict in order to explain differences in the organization of armies, in the place of parties and ideology, in the relationship between city and countryside, and in the degree of political centralization. He is less persuasive when he is discussing his other main determinant (after warfare) of state formation: the incorporation of the rural poor. With the exception of an incipient rural social history in Argentina, sufficient historical studies simply do not exist to substantiate the author’s bold claim that the ‘collective action of the rural poor provided central engines of institution building’.

This is not an easy book. But teachers and students of nineteenth-century Latin American political history (providing they skip the first chapter) will learn a lot from its theoretical rigour, its singularity of focus, and its original and revealing comparisons between a selection of Latin American states which are rarely compared.

University of Warwick

GUY THOMSON

Medieval


The method of this book is set out on the penultimate page: (i) to examine the hagiographical and related texts pertaining to early medieval missionaries ‘so as to clarify, as far as possible, the work of individual saints’; (ii) to consider the purposes of these texts in order ‘to investigate aspects of the history of mission outside the grand standard narrative’, especially by using the writings to take us ‘closer to an understanding of what it was to be a missionary in the Early Middle Ages’. Wood clearly and judiciously summarizes the texts and relevant modern scholarship in a way likely to prove useful to students, even if the result is in fact long descriptive or narrative passages. The second aspect of the method involves trying to perceive where writers are reflecting real experience of mission. The result of such arguments is often to elicit from Wood interesting but apparently miscellaneous comments: on the position of women in Saxon and Frisian society, for example. The harvest of general conclusions appears to be a rather meagre one, and Wood himself concedes that other aspects of Christianization – the work of the missionaries – is under review. Even there, the limitation of source materials seems constricting, compared for example with the work of R. E. Sullivan. This is disappointing, because Wood’s starting point is a very interesting and important idea set out in ‘The Missionary Life’, in The
Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown, ed. J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward (Oxford, 1999), pp. 167–83. This was that the ideal of mission to pagans has to be studied as a literary construct transmitted along closely linked lines of hagiographical texts, with Bede’s Ecclesiastical History notably influential. Wood is alive to the implications of the question, ‘when, in the Early Middle Ages, hagiography – and history – concentrated on mission to the pagans, and why?’, and he does to some extent respond to it, noting for example differences in the approach to mission in texts from Bavaria as compared with those from further north. But the existence of the literary connections in the hagiography needs much more extensive demonstration than it has received either in the earlier paper or in this book, where only general resemblances between texts really enter into consideration, and no detailed justification is offered for the elaborate stemma on p. 53. In short, this is interesting material, but there is more to be done before we can really answer Wood’s question, let alone the even more important one: how far did the literary construct influence policies such as the mission strategy of the Carolingians?

University of Durham

DAVID ROLLASON


The traditional view of the development of early medieval liturgy, summarized by Cyrille Vogel in his Medieval Liturgy. An Introduction to the Sources (first published 1966, revised and translated 1986), and more recently by Éric Palazzo in Histoire des livres liturgiques: Le Moyen âge, des origins au XIe siècle (1993), portrays eighth- and ninth-century Francia as crucial to the promotion of the Roman rite within the Latin church. The first Carolingian king, Pippin III, sought to replace the Gallican with Roman chant, and thus, according to Vogel, to Romanize the entire liturgy; his son Charlemagne imported the Gregorian Sacramentary into Francia; his grandson Louis the Pious’s reforms revised this Hadrianum and promoted its use within the Frankish church. The Carolingian rulers thus deliberately promoted the use of a unitary, Roman rite throughout their kingdoms. This picture has changed considerably in the thirty-five years since Vogel originally published his Medieval Liturgy; the work of Jean Deshusses and Rosamond McKitterick, amongst others, has revealed that the development of the liturgy in Carolingian Francia was not as uniform or coherent as the conventional account suggests. Dr Hen provides in this book a helpful and concise summary of this revisionist school for early medieval scholars. Beginning in Merovingian Gaul, he shows how diverse liturgical practice was, and how kings and queens by seeking divine protection for themselves and their kingdom through their churches helped promote the composition of liturgical books and innovations in the liturgy such as prayers pro rege. Pippin III did not consciously set out to Romanize the Frankish liturgy but rather allowed the gradual adaptation of Roman rites begun under the Merovingians to continue, through the eighth-century Gelasian sacramentary and Roman ordines, and, like his predecessors, promoted the practice of prayers for himself and his family. Hen follows McKitterick in arguing that Charlemagne’s legislation

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promoted correct practice rather than liturgical uniformity or a Romanized Frankish rite, and Michael McCormick in showing how he used prayer as ‘a political machinery of royal propaganda’ (p. 93). Scholars under Louis the Pious continued the work of his famous father’s reign in promoting correct rule within the Church rather than uniformity. Following Janet Nelson, Hen shows how elaborate liturgical rituals such as those for coronation developed with political insecurity, in the latter part of Louis the Pious’s reign and that of Charles the Bald. The problem Hen faces is that, as he himself acknowledges, it is impossible to connect any of these rulers with specific books. Hen’s solution is to argue that ‘a ruler who created a political and cultural climate favourable to the arts might well be called a patron, even when no specific object or literary piece can be associated with him or her’ (p. 17). Thus, he moves beyond the genealogical tendencies of textual history which have dogged liturgical studies since Jean Mabillon’s *De liturgia gallica libri tres* (1685) and instead puts these developments in their historical context. His work also reveals a gap in liturgical studies: like him, most scholars have concentrated on western Francia. But it was eastern Francia that was the scene for the compilation of one of the most seminal liturgical works in the tenth century, the Romano-German pontifical. Notwithstanding Niels Rasmussen’s recently published work on the early pontificals, it is late ninth- and tenth-century eastern Francia which urgently requires the renewed attention of scholars. Hen’s work shows just how much can be done with the liturgical evidence for Gaul and, it is to be hoped, will encourage others to go down new paths.

*University of Exeter*

SARAH HAMILTON

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In the study of medieval penitential practice established views are currently being challenged and well-known texts analysed with an open mind. Mayke de Jong and Mary Mansfield have, for example, questioned the existence of a clear-cut distinction between private and public penance for the Carolingian period and the thirteenth century. The period of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, which have now been studied by Sarah Hamilton, seems to follow this pattern. Regarding the evidence with a fresh eye, the author comes to the conclusion that, as far as our evidence provides glimpses of penitential practice, no clear distinctions between public and private forms of penance seem to have existed. She also shows that in some cases monastic and non-monastic forms of penance were much more alike than is normally allowed for, while secular rituals of humiliation and reconciliation, such as the saddle-bearing ritual known as *harmiscara*, also showed close parallels with penitential practice, from which it seems to derive parts not only of its vocabulary but also of its authority. Penitential practice seems to be much richer and more varied than historians have assumed.

For this innovating study Hamilton analysed several kinds of evidence, ranging from the normative canon law collections with a strong penitential make-up such as the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms or the episcopal handbook of Regino of Prüm, to legislation issued by councils and bishops, monastic rules and commentaries, and narrative sources highlighting the political nature of several forms of penance. The main argument, however, rests on a careful analysis.
of source material that is often neglected by historians, i.e. liturgical ordines. In two substantial chapters Hamilton not only examines the contents of the penitential parts of the Romano-German pontifical, the tenth-century sacramentaries from Fulda, and the rite known as the ‘north-central rite’, but in analysing this material she, laudably, also discusses the various ways in which these texts have been read and used, by looking at the peculiarities of certain manuscripts.

Two kinds of source material, however, are somewhat neglected. The author promises to discuss sources from an earlier period, which were read and used in the period under discussion, that is, older texts which were copied in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the book, however, we look in vain, for example, for the penitentials attributed to Bede and Egbert, which, although composed in an earlier period, were regularly copied during the period under discussion, as fourteen manuscripts which have survived from this period show. The other group of texts which is not fully analysed consists of the group of Italian penitentials that were freshly composed in the tenth and eleventh centuries, but since a lot of work needs to be done to put these texts in their proper historical context, this omission is understandable. Nevertheless these omissions show that the author has a clear preference for liturgical texts above penitential handbooks. This preference stems from her conviction that penitential handbooks are mainly storehouses for theoretical material, at best ‘reference aids for the administration of penance by the bishop and his cathedral clergy’ (p. 44), whereas liturgy, in the eyes of the author, reflects social practice. The differences, for example, between the role of the bishop in the liturgical rite for the Maundy Thursday reconciliation of sinners from northern France, which is known as the ‘north-central rite’, and the same rite from the Romano-German pontifical are treated as reflections of the difference in social standing and actual power of the bishops in East Francia and Lotharingia. This is an interesting hypothesis, but needs further substantiation from the sources, particularly regarding the precise origin of the manuscripts containing these rites and the specific historical contexts in which they were used. In all, however, this is yet another stimulating study changing our perceptions of medieval penance.

Rob Meens

Utrecht University


This collection by twenty authors comprises twenty-two essays divided into four chronological parts: the end of the ancient world; the Carolingians; the ‘twelfth-century renaissance’; and the high medieval debate; with a fifth section on dissenting movements. Individual contributions provide useful guides to particular works, such as Jenny Swanson’s helpful consideration of the Glossa Ordinaria, to particular authors, such as Marcia Colish’s useful summary of the thought and influence of Peter Lombard, and particular movements, such as Gerhard Rottenwöhrer’s excellent outline of medieval dualist thought. Anyone reading the whole text, however, will discover a good deal of duplication: William of Ockham’s thought, for example, is covered in some detail not only in the essay devoted to the theology of Duns Scotus and William Ockham by Alexander Broadie but also in Takashi Shogimen’s consideration of academic controversies, principally over poverty, in the long fourteenth century and Matthew S.
Kempshall's study of ecclesiology and politics. Some repetition is, of course, inevitable but it is a pity that more cross-references were not included for the reader. This mosaic-like portrait of medieval theology means that it is hard to establish common themes; a short introduction for each section would redress this problem and summarize the intellectual developments of a particular period for the reader, showing the relationship between individual contributions. The collection as a whole is heavily biased towards the central and later middle ages: there are only four essays on the years before 1000 (Andrew Louth's helpful essay on 'Postpatristic Byzantine Theologians' (pp. 37–54), although classified in this section, actually covers the whole of the Byzantine period). The key to this collection lies in the last two essays, which act as a conclusion: the first, by G. R. Evans, looks at the medieval origins of Luther's theology of saving faith, the second, by Paul Rorem, reviews the influence of Augustine on medieval theology. For this is a collection dominated by two things: the concerns of the Reformation, and Augustine's legacy. Whilst all the contributors acknowledge the influence of the patristic fathers on medieval theologians, the reader of this volume will look in vain for a consideration of either Jerome (surely crucial, given the Latinity of the theology of subsequent centuries) or Ambrose (whose influence, independent of Augustine, is being increasingly acknowledged by scholars of early medieval theologians such as Bede), whilst Gregory, Boethius and Cassiodorus are lumped together in a short but useful essay by Charles Kannengiesser. Nevertheless, this volume provides a useful and necessary introduction to the theology and therefore intellectual life of the medieval period.

University of Exeter

SARAH HAMILTON


This is an extremely stimulating and useful book. It examines historical works concerning the Normans as texts which help to render legitimate Norman, and in particular ducal, authority, but which also subvert such legitimacy. In the latter respect, writers in various ways, obvious and subtle, emphasized the brutality, insubordination, and in particular the treachery of the Normans. The overall treatment is helped by the inclusion of histories not only of Normandy and England, but also of southern Italy and the First Crusade. There are many perceptive close readings, and the book can be helpfully read as a commentary on particular works. Particularly profitable is Albu's examination of parallels in classical literature, notably Virgil's Aeneid and Lucan's Pharsalia. Other influences on the writers receive less attention. Albu seems somewhat unsympathetic to the monastic life, and the ways in which monastic virtues and monastic thinking may enter historical writing. William of Jumièges may deliberately 'flatten' Dudo of St Quentin's 'thrilling tale', but it is questionable whether his purpose was dullness (p. 55). The treatment of Orderic's Ecclesiastical History mentions, but does not elaborate at any length upon, the influence of Bede and his views of history. The comparison for the vision of 'Herlechin's household' is drawn with the milieu of romance rather than with religious literature. Likewise the possible influence of chansons de geste on historical thinking and writing receives little attention, whereas it is suggested (p. 228) that 'Wace was drawn to the attributes of romance.' This statement raises various questions. For example, as is noted
on the same page, Wace was writing very early in the period which produced romances. Was he attracted to ‘attributes’ of oral stories which also underlay the development of written romance? Or were some such ‘attributes’ already present in some chansons de geste? Or were the ‘attributes’ the product of intellectual, cultural, or social pressures and developments outside particular literary traditions? Finally, the themes of legitimation and subversion might have benefited from further examination. The idea that historical writing was a legitimatory discourse has become a commonplace, but is actually very hard to prove, and at least provokes the question ‘in whose eyes was authority to be made legitimate?’ Likewise subversion raises many questions, notably of audience response. Albu at times seems to equate trickery and treachery (see p. 4). Yet, as John Gillingham for instance has shown in the context of warfare, the aristocracy at least could see trickery as a virtue. To a monastic writer, actions might appear different. Rather than subverting their accounts, monastic historians may have deliberately mentioned aristocratic trickery both to provide what they saw as a true portrayal of many Normans, and to demonstrate the need for strong Norman dukes who would protect the weak, most notably the monks. Such complexities are always implicit, sometimes explicit, in Albu’s arguments. The considerable quality of this book makes one hope she will in future explore these general questions at length.

University of St Andrews

JOHN HUDSON


It is all too rare a pleasure to be able review a book with unstinting praise and to recommend it without the slightest reservation. In a brief compass, the author surveys the history of what became one of the most powerful noble houses of the kingdom of Castile, from its emergence from obscurity in the reign of Alfonso VI (1072–1109) to its effective extinction in 1352. In both its rise and fall, and throughout the two and a half centuries in between, the crucial factor in the family’s fortunes is shown to be its relationship with the monarchy. Each of the leading members of the Lara family is here considered in turn and the evidence relating to their political and economic activities is skilfully reviewed. The latter element is greatly assisted by the provision of an excellent series of maps depicting the evidence for patrimonial landholdings and tenancies; the fruit of the author’s well-grounded research. The lack of direct correlation between the family’s documentable landholdings and their fluctuating political power is a marked feature of his analysis, which reveals instead how much more the standing of the Laras depended upon their attendance at court and on continuing royal favour, at least up until 1217. On the other hand, the loss of that favour had serious and ultimately catastrophic consequences for them, as demonstrated in the careers of the last two significant members of the family. Although the book focuses on only one noble house, it also succeeds in providing a masterly sketch of the political dynamics of Castile in these centuries. Similarly, in his deft surveys of the changes in the family’s land and office holdings, Professor Doubleday gives an able synopsis of the economic history of Castile in the same period and, what is more, offers a painless (for those whose eyes glaze over when confronted by excesses of data on aristocratic estate formation and management)
introduction into the technicalities of these subjects. All in all, this book is the first detailed modern study of the Lara family, which makes an important contribution to the wider question of relations between crown and nobility in Castile in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, and at the same time helps to render more accessible the wider political and economic history of the kingdom in the same period; it is also a pleasure to read. What more could be asked of it?

University of Edinburgh

ROGER COLLINS


The first of these volumes was originally produced in 1972: a pioneering work setting out the names and dates of tenure of all the early heads of religious houses or, more accurately, houses of monks, regular canons and nuns. It has now been reissued in its original form, with an additional sixty pages of addenda and corrigenda and nine pages of further bibliography collected by Professor Brooke. The reissue has been timed to coincide with the publication of a sequel, taking the enterprise forward to the year 1377. Volume II covers a shorter period of time but contains more pages, partly reflecting a greater number of sources but also a more ambitious approach. It lists not only names and dates but circumstances of appointments and terminations of office when known, often in detail, so that the text provides a good deal of information about the biographies of the heads and the histories of their houses, particularly their involvement with the king, the bishop, and their local patrons. Inevitably the new volume outshines its predecessor. The latter's framework is more modest, its original text and corrigenda are not integrated (though they are cross-referenced and jointly indexed) and some of its citations relate to nineteenth-century works like the revised Monasticon and George Oliver's Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis, rather than to the original sources used in these works. The new volume is more fully engaged with unpublished archives, and the editors have made a valiant effort to come to terms with both local and national ones, sampling even such intractable records as those of the courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas. As they admit, one cannot hope to tap all the information that may exist, but merely to improve current knowledge – an objective that is achieved more than handsomely. Both volumes are admirable handbooks. Not only do they serve their primary purposes but, more widely, they identify source-materials for the history of the religious houses concerned and provide a chronology for dating documents and events in general. They also show changes in progress, like the appearance of Norman abbots after the Conquest and the reverse situation in which French priors in many of the alien priories gave way to Englishmen during the fourteenth century. It is much to be hoped that a further volume will take the story up to 1540, and that other scholars will feel moved to tackle the institutions hitherto left out: friaries, hospitals and secular colleges.

University of Exeter

NICHOLAS ORME
St Bernard expressed doubts in several of his letters as to whether his public career was entirely compatible with his Cistercian vocation. However, he invariably (and conveniently) concluded that the wider concerns of the Church, and his duty of obedience to his superiors, outweighed whatever private qualms he may have had. Nowhere could this be more important than in the fight against heresy, and in 1145 he took part in a preaching campaign against heresy in south-western France. Slightly earlier, Bernard had outlined his views on combating heretics, ‘the little foxes that spoil the vines’, in two of his sermons on the Song of Songs. Professor Kienzle takes these events as her starting point to examine the Cistercians’ role more generally in the battle against the hotbed of heresy that developed in Languedoc in the mid-twelfth century. For if the Dominicans played the major role in the eventual suppression of heterodoxy in this region, the Cistercians led the way in the earlier stages of the Church’s response; by no means surprising given that there were already twenty-four Cistercian houses in the region by 1160. The Cistercian Henry of Albano was one of the authors of the anti-heretical legislation of the Third Lateran Council, and in 1181 was the first papal legate to undertake personal command of an army directed against a heretic stronghold within Christendom. Subsequently, Abbot Arnauld Amaury of Cîteaux accompanied the Albigensian crusade as legate, and he was one of several Cistercians appointed as bishops to revive the moribund Catholic hierarchy in Languedoc. Kienzle provides, in chapters 4–5 of this study, a useful analysis of Cistercian leadership in the fight against heresy in southern France between 1178 and c.1216. However, her primary concern is rather with the theology of the Cistercian attack on heresy, as expressed in sermons and analogous literature, than with the practicalities of the struggle. Since few such sermons are now extant, their themes have to be disinterred from letters (often intended as homilies), chroniclers’ accounts and devotional literature. The only surviving set of sermons that does survive, those of Hélinand of Froidment, come right at the end of the period. There is much of interest here, not least the pervasive influence of Peter the Chanter and his circle at Paris, but the influence of such products of a ‘high clerical’ culture was probably limited in effectively combating heresy among the laity. Even the one surviving example of a Cistercian sermon ‘dumbed-down’ for the laity, c.1200, and perhaps by Arnauld Amaury, may still have been too subtle, though its stress on the Cross is significant in the light of what came later. This is thus a learned and thoughtful book, but one which at times appears to be making bricks with relatively little straw.

University of Leeds

G. A. LOUD


Unlike the First and Third Crusades, the Second Crusade lacked star quality. Nobody – Latin, Greek or Muslim – emerged as a hero, a suitable subject for mythic treatment. If it is to take up a whole book the topic has to be stretched a bit, as for example in M. Gevers (ed.), The Second Crusade and the Cistercians...
This collection does the same. And its focus reflects how this crusade has been studied more for its impact on Europe than its consequences for the near east; some of the contributions here are only distantly relevant to the campaign preached in 1146 and whose forces returned home from the near east in 1149. This is fair enough when one remembers how by this time some thought the main point of crusading was to benefit the souls of western crusaders in the next world rather than help the eastern Christians in this world. But for the wish to match its companion volume on the First Crusade (J. Phillips (ed.), *The First Crusade* (1997)), a better title might have been along the lines of ‘the principle and practice of crusade in mid-century’. The two generations after the First Crusade were a period of change for both sides, Latin and Muslim, although all but one and a half of the papers here are about the Latin. In the west the concept of Christian holy war was exploited in theatres other than the Holy Land. Matthew Bennett and Nikolas Jaspert discuss Iberia. The first gives us an effective evocation of what life was like at the siege of Lisbon, the second a more general analysis of the linkages between *reconquista* and crusade. Kurt Villads Jensen deals with the impact of crusade ideology on the history of Denmark and Danish expansion in the Baltic. Three contributions (J. Phillips, R. Hiestand and T. Reuter) deal with politicking in high places. The first two focus on the papacy and Germany, and have interestingly different emphases on the relationship between Eugenius III, Conrad III and St Bernard. The third, set in the aftermath of the crusade, offers intriguing snippets on all manner of topics, not least on how wrong it can be to take Odo of Deuil’s denunciations of Greek treachery as representative of opinion among returned crusaders. S. Edgington jumps nimbly from a minute examination of some manuscripts to a general conclusion about the motivation of crusaders in the Rhineland. L. Paterson discusses the last verse of a poem by the Provençal troubador Marcabru that the crusade may shed some light on. M. Hoch discusses the impact of the crusade on the political situation in the near east, both within the kingdom of Jerusalem and between Franks and Muslims. C. Hillenbrand is the only contributor to look at things from the Muslim side. She gives us a concise life of Zangi, the first Muslim ruler to offer serious opposition to the Franks and one touched hardly at all by notions of jihad. Zangi’s career began in 1128 and he was murdered in 1146, outside the period of the Second Crusade, but his capture of Latin Edessa in 1144 has been traditionally taken as its catalyst. Hillenbrand’s contribution here complements, not just repeats, what she says about Zangi in her *Crusades, Islamic Perspectives* (1998). Likewise most chapters in this volume have something fresh to say about something, if not always about the Second Crusade.

University of Exeter

**JOHN CRITCHLEY**

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**Trial by Fire. The Hundred Years War II. By Jonathan Sumption.** Faber and Faber. 2001. xii + 680pp. £14.99.

In his first volume, *Trial by Battle*, Sumption examined the context and early progress of the ‘Hundred Years War’, and in this volume he continues the story from 1347 to 1369. This is a splendid and masterful narrative encompassing all the complex strands of a terrible period. As Sumption shows, this conflict was far more than a matter of a simple rivalry between ‘England’ and ‘France’. The
course of events was heavily influenced by European diplomacy, and in particular by events in Flanders and Spain, which are very clearly elucidated. The ‘black death’ and the consequent dislocations were powerful influences. It was, in part, a civil war in the French kingdom. The court in Paris struggled with war finance and royal administration almost collapsed under the strain of fighting a war in its own territory, which was being systematically destroyed. The English, whenever they seemed to be close to decisive victory, felt it slip away from them. Despite the efficiency of English taxation, the taxpayers were parsimonious. Therefore, shortage of money meant dependence on surrogates, independent captains whose depredations in the French countryside took on a life of their own. The English, their associates and allies waged an economic war against France, in the spirit of Vegetius, which all but destroyed its economy as province after province was plundered. Sumption has discovered numerous local sources which reveal this war in all its brutality, making sense of what have too often been dismissed as mere sideshows but which actually were the central experiences of the war. He brings to life such figures as Bascon de Mareuil who, as an independent commander, inflicted terrible cruelties on the French countryside. This is narrative of a very high order, because it is so firmly based on source material. Sumption has deliberately chosen to avoid delving into the arguments of historians, but he is clearly conscious of recent historical writing, such as that of John Gillingham, on the subject of war. This shows in his clear awareness of the rarity of battle and the excellent reasons for that. The analysis of the battle of Poitiers draws considerably on recent writing about the incoherence of medieval armies and the great problems of controlling them. The vital importance of logistics is brought out very well and he makes much of the strength of fortified places: even a castle as old as Bretueil successfully resisted the army of John II. Sumption’s scepticism about trebuchets is contentious, though it is shared by the present writer. Only occasionally does the author's sure touch desert him: there is little indication of recent work on the origins of the Treaty of Brétigny. Sumption’s book is an important contribution to our understanding of war in the fourteenth century, and we can look forward to the volumes yet to come.

University of Wales Swansea

JOHN FRANCE


A warning to the casual browser: this excellent book is not a study of medieval population (although it does contain, amongst many other riches, a helpful summary of work on medieval demography) but concerns how medieval people thought about population. Or perhaps one should say, how certain medieval writers thought about what we would now call ‘demographic’ questions: the comparative size of populations, the sex ratio, the birth-death ratio, and so forth. Using an astounding range of material (including canon law commentaries, works of pastoral care, theological and philosophical treatises, and translations of Aristotle) Peter Biller traces the development of ways of thinking about demography in the middle ages, and some implications of these thoughts. We are led through varied and fascinating areas: medieval ideas about marriage, procreation, contraception, virginity, the common good, perceptions of Islam,
and the social and intellectual contexts of pastoral care manuals, to mention but a few. There is, however, an overall thesis: that medieval writers did develop ways of thinking and writing about ‘demographic’ questions, and that these were partly shaped by intellectual tradition (shifted in particular directions by the strong influences of Peter the Lombard and the thirteenth-century translations of Aristotle’s *Politics*) and partly affected by the lived reality of an increasingly populous (overpopulated?) medieval Europe.

There are many strengths to this book, not least the imaginative lateral thinking required to conceive the topic in the first place. What is particularly impressive is Biller’s insistence, in his analysis of writers such as William of Auvergne and Thomas Aquinas, on balancing the influence of intellectual tradition and innovation against the catalytic effects of the material world in which they lived. In Biller’s presentation, these medieval thinkers are no ivory-tower dwellers, but men concerned not only with the pursuit of abstract thought but also the need to shape strategies of pastoral care for the burgeoning populace. This is intellectual history, but a kind of intellectual history that insists upon its social context and social influence. Thus, for example, theological discussion of the precept to ‘go forth and multiply’ is set against evidence of medieval strategies for the avoidance of offspring. What may appear to be abstract debate (‘does a precept from olden times still apply today?’) is thus connected to practical and fraught matters (the methods used to avoid procreation).

Weaknesses? This is a lengthy and diffuse work, and some areas could probably have been trimmed to make the overall thrust a little more streamlined: for example, detailed comparison of translations of the *Politics* probably belonged in a separate article, as is arguably also the case for some of the discussion of that text’s reception. And whilst inspired by the relating of thinkers to their social contexts, this reader is less persuaded by the neutral, or even ‘cosy’, relationship suggested at points between these authors and the mass of people about whom they wrote. As Biller himself notes, in his final pages, when writers begin to talk about people in abstract, demographic terms there is something ‘rather odd and cold’ (p. 419) to their discourse. Ultimately, however, this is an outstanding and original study, which approaches the high middle ages (in its reality as well as its thought worlds) from an unexpected but remarkably productive direction. Its heterogeneous interests should inspire a wide readership, including scholars of medieval medicine, population, theological thought, religious practice and canon law.

*Birkbeck College, London*  

**JOHN H. ARNOLD**


It is good to see use being made of the Cause Papers, a sadly under-used source, in this study of marital litigation in the fourteenth-century diocese of York. Pedersen offers a lively account of a number of cases which ended in the courts, such as the ‘Romeo and Juliet of Stonegate’, a married couple where the husband had been serially violent to the wife, and the wife sought a legal separation and ultimately an annulment, on the grounds of pre-contract. Pedersen argues that the case represents a tussle for control of the wife’s property and suggests that the issue of the legality of the marriage was simply a ploy...
to get the case heard in the church courts where the wife had a better chance of securing a remedy than through the secular courts. As such, Pedersen argues for a surprisingly sophisticated understanding of canon law by lay people, where people knew the law well enough to be able to manipulate it to their own ends, and moreover welcomed the opportunity that the ecclesiastical courts provided to settle doubts about the legitimacy of contested marriages. Pedersen focuses on the nature of canon law and lay people’s understanding of it, and his discussion of ‘marital affection’ as a legal terminology to indicate willingness to transfer property is a useful corrective to anyone tempted to see it as an unproblematic indication of a qualitative relationship. Pedersen is aware of some of the problems of reading partisan evidence which often provides starkly contradictory accounts of events in a couple’s matrimonial history, but his ‘common sense’ approach to seeking ‘a close approximation of the truth’ is a limited one in coming to terms with these evocative but slippery documents, which might be better seen as legal fictions.

There are a number of careless slips: someone of fourteen in 1357 could not have been six months old at the beginning of the plague; ‘Lord Brian Roucliff, an otherwise unknown local noble’, is actually Sir Brian, a member of the minor gentry. There is also an irritating failure to complete footnote cross-references. The final chapter, ‘Demography and the Courts’, is substantially unchanged from the author’s 1995 Continuity and Change article ‘Demography in the Archives’ and readers may find it helpful to read it alongside the methodological critique offered by P. J. P. Goldberg, ‘Fiction in the Archives’, Continuity and Change, xii (1997). University of Huddersfield

P. H. CULLUM


Among American historians of medieval Italy, Steven Epstein is principally known for his works on Genoa. In this latest book, he successfully combines archival material from that city with printed sources and studies for other areas of medieval, early modern and even modern Italy, to show how the Italian language of slavery has been critically influenced by the experience of slavery in the later middle ages. Put at it simplest, the core argument of the book identifies later medieval Italy as the time and place when the link of slavery with racism was forged – a link that was to have profound effects on later slavery in the Americas. Epstein shows that increasingly from the thirteenth century colour was used to describe slaves, that by the late thirteenth the words ‘black’ and ‘white’ had acquired (respectively) negative and positive connotations which they had previously lacked, and that, though the colour of slaves varied greatly from black, through brown, ‘olive’ and yellow, to white, by the mid-fifteenth century among slaves of similar age and sex white slaves commanded a higher price and therefore value than black slaves. Only racism, he argues, can account for this price differential. There are possible weaknesses in this thesis: art historians might criticize his evidence for the assignment of moral value to colours; and the transmission of Italian racism to the Americas perhaps needed to be more specifically demonstrated. However, there is much more to admire in this lively and engaging book. Epstein also examines and explains the pattern of Christian names given to slaves (‘names with lessons’), the appearance of slaves in medieval
and early-modern literature, Roman and medieval laws concerning slaves, and the changing language of contracts for the sale or emancipation of slaves. In all these areas, language-use and speech-acts are key to Epstein’s analysis and he attempts to use modern pragmatics (the linguistic study of contextual meaning) to illuminate his medieval documents. He studies the behaviour both of slaves, as they responded in different ways to the realities of enslavement (resistance, flight, pregnancy), and of slave-owners (the uses to which they put slaves, their fear of slaves, their defence of slavery). In a final chapter, he explores the ways in which words themselves formed part of the forces maintaining slavery, whether the words of insult (‘Slave dog!’) or the words of legal and theological discussions of problems in the relationship between slavery and property or slavery and baptism.

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