

contractual obligations. In this sense, the new system of taxation may not have weakened, but strengthened the bargaining power of peasants *vis-à-vis* their superiors: 'mutual responsibility for taxation is likely to have created an incentive for all parties to involve themselves to some degree in reciprocal relationships' (203–6 and 213–16, quoted at 216). Although G. employs different forms of evidence and a different methodology, he reaches remarkably similar conclusions to D. Peasants appear not as hapless victims of historical change, but as independent actors who were able to manipulate the institutions of the Roman state to their own benefit.

These books are important. By highlighting the opportunities provided for the inhabitants of the countryside by the fiscal, political and religious transformations of the fourth century, D. and G. offer a powerful challenge to traditional views of the late antique peasantry as a class on a slippery slope to serfdom. Of course, not all aspects of their interpretation will find universal assent. In particular, the question remains open of where exactly on the social ladder D.'s and G.'s peasants should be situated. The self-assertive rural consumers whose rise is traced in D.'s work surely encompassed only a small minority of the inhabitants of the late Roman countryside. And of course, villagers who had the legal knowledge and political connections to navigate the intricacies of the Roman taxation system with such skill as G. envisages constituted an even tinier proportion of the rural population. It is not clear whether the opportunities enjoyed by these 'super-peasants' did much to improve the overall situation of the inhabitants of the late antique countryside. On the contrary, it is possible that the price paid for the success of a small group of wealthy agriculturalists was intensified exploitation of their less well-off peers. On this reading, the spread of luxury goods in the countryside might be read not as a symptom of a general upsurge in prosperity, but as the product of greater inequality *between* different groups of agricultural workers.

One contributing factor to such inequality has recently been highlighted by Kyle Harper. His *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (2011) makes a powerful argument that slavery was ubiquitous in the late Roman Mediterranean. Interestingly, in one of the new letters of Augustine (brilliantly discussed by D. on pp. 190–1 for the light shed by them on the use made by inhabitants of the North African countryside of the normative discourse of imperial law), the bishop's rural clients complain about the reduction of tenants to servile status and the sale of their children as slaves. Such evidence might suggest that the aggressive self-assertiveness displayed by late Roman peasants was not only motivated by the new opportunities to which some of them obtained access in Late Antiquity. It also may have been a response to the constant risk of a degradation of their status. In this sense, the evidence assembled by D. and G. may not be as incompatible with conventional views of an overall decline in the standing of the rural population as it may appear at first sight. But such hesitations should not be allowed to obscure the remarkable achievement of these two books. By assembling and reinterpreting a host of previously neglected sources on the late Roman countryside, they have given us something which so far had been the preserve of historians of other periods and places: a 'total' history of a pre-modern peasantry.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435814000987

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A. FEAR, J. FERNÁNDEZ UBIÑA and M. MARCOS (EDS), *THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP IN LATE ANTIQUITY: CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. x + 270. ISBN 9781780932170. £70.00.

Recent scholarship has done much to illuminate the transformation of the rôle and status of the late antique bishop. The present edited volume, which emerged from an international conference held in Granada in autumn 2011, provides a further contribution to this ever-expanding field. The essays presented do not quite do justice to the breadth promised by the volume's title, for there is a strong western bias and many of the papers return to well-trodden ground. Nevertheless, there is much here of value for students and scholars alike, particularly through the Spanish influence that permeates the collection. The entire volume testifies once more to the diverse currents that shaped episcopal power during Late Antiquity: from ecclesiastical controversies and asceticism to the rise of papal authority and the Germanic kingdoms of the post-Roman West.

The world of Late Antiquity offers many opportunities to explore the inter-related themes of conflict and compromise, making the choice of case studies inevitably selective. Gregory of

Nazianzus' dispute with his Egyptian rival Maximus in Constantinople is the subject of the opening paper (Torres and Teja), followed by a pair of studies that re-examine the Donatist Schism through the reign of Constantine (Fernández Ubiña) and the Conference of Carthage in A.D. 411 (Mac Gaw). Elsewhere, the emerging and contested authority of the papacy is approached through two of the more controversial early popes: Zosimus (A.D. 417-18) (Marcos) and Hormisdas (A.D. 514-23) (Evers). Much of the material in these various papers is not new, but taken together they reveal the often competing social and political as well as religious forces that bishops faced in the constantly changing late antique world.

Less familiar to some readers may be the papal decretals of Damasus and Siricius (Sardella) and *Epistula 11*\* of Consentius to Augustine (Ubric Rabaneda). Both shed valuable light on the Priscillianist debates in Gaul and Spain, where questions of ascetic principles and episcopal jurisdiction became inextricably intertwined. The writings of Augustine are again cited to illustrate the dual rôles of bishops as 'pacifiers and instigators' in Christian-pagan tensions (Kahlos), and Augustine is argued to have influenced Honorius' legislation in A.D. 409 concerning violence against African clergy (Escribano Paño). These papers further refine our understanding of the complex relationship between bishops, the law, and secular and religious violence, while on the balancing ledger of comprise and conciliation, preaching is identified as an essential episcopal tool for conflict resolution (Quiroga Puertas).

Perhaps the most valuable contributions within this volume, however, lie in the three papers which conclude the collection. 'Bishops, Imperialism and the *Barbaricum*' (Fear) is an impressively wide-ranging synthesis of Christianity and imperial policy beyond the Roman frontiers, from Persia and Armenia to Ireland and the Goths. The final two papers then appropriately turn back to Spain, tracing the relationship of Church and State in the years before the Catholic conversion of the Visigoth king Reccared (Castillo Maldonado) and following the Byzantine intervention of Justinian (Salvador Ventura). Visigothic Spain has rarely received the same attention in English-language scholarship as Francia or Ostrogothic Italy, and it is the great merit of this edited collection that it makes recent Spanish research on Late Antiquity available to a broader audience.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435814000999

R. FLOWER, *EMPERORS AND BISHOPS IN LATE ROMAN INVECTIVE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 294. ISBN 9781107031722. £60.00/US\$99.00.

Studies in late antique rhetoric, *paideia* and epideictic oratory are thriving and while imperial panegyric of this period has been assessed for its ceremonial, historical and literary value, comparatively little has been done on its close relative, invective. Richard Flower's *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* is a welcome contribution to this field. The book focuses on the invectives against Constantius II written by the bishops, Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari, and F. offers valuable insights into the nature, function and development of epideictic oratory, the rhetorical tactics of those seeking the authority of Christian orthodoxy in this critical period, and the accommodation reached between Church and State.

F. takes as his opening illustration the *Altercatio Heracliani*, and the trial of Heraclianus, Firmianus and Aurelianus in Sirmium in A.D. 366. Having described a scene familiar from martyr texts, the *altercatio* or moral argument between accused and inquisitor, F. pulls back to reveal that the inquisitor is not the villainous Roman official the reader expects, but the Christian bishop Germinius who is angered that the layman Heraclianus is a Homooisian rather than a Homooian. This manipulation of familiar narrative tropes will become a familiar pattern in texts which deal with the competing theologies in the newly legitimate Church.

In ch. 1 ('Praise and Blame in the Roman World'), F. summarizes the importance of classical *paideia* in the Empire and the rôle of rhetoric in defining *imperium*. As an intrinsic part of late antique ceremonial, imperial panegyric did more than simply remind the people of the virtues expected of a good ruler. By selective use of the vocabulary and images of kingship, panegyric could construct the ideal emperor in the minds of his subjects while invective, reversing the tropes of panegyric, could create the model of bad rulership. Yet although classical *paideia* had equipped Christian writers with these critical tools, criticism of the Empire was slow to emerge and during the persecutions writers preferred to focus on the sanctity of the martyrs rather than the vices of