evaluation of the thoughts and actions of the younger monk are in play, whereby he (always 'he' in this context) becomes an object of knowledge to the 'confessor' figure but his subjectivity is also refashioned in the process (p. 10).

The principal witnesses are the 'long fourth-century' Evagrius Ponticus, John Cassian and Basil of Caesarea, with John Climacus as a chronological outlier; but the choice of ensemble is eminently defensible in terms of their lasting influence on medieval monastic thought. Medical aspects of the writings of each are examined at length, in a way that builds on but surpasses existing scholarship, first under the heading of practice, then under that of expertise. Thus, we sit beside Evagrius as he works out a symptomatology of dreams; beside Cassian as he accounts for nocturnal emissions (this chapter is worth it alone for Zecher's diagnostic flow chart of such occurrences); beside Cassian again and Climacus as they anatomise passions (a comparable highlight here being Climacus' family tree of the stomach's deplorable 'daughters', such as 'buffoonery'). One striking theme, which might have been brought out even more fully, is how often the demons' perceived probing of a soul's or body's defences mirrors the diagnostic strategies of the spiritual director. In part II, Basil joins the group as authors are shown variously laying claim to expertise and authority in spiritual direction, most severely with Climacus' deployment of images of imprisonment and amputation for refractory monks.

Since this is a book for scholars of early Christianity more than for historians of late antique medicine (though they should read it too), it starts with an outline of ancient medicine. That is done with great skill and clarity. The medical background can, however, be skipped by readers avid for the spiritual because relevant sections of it are helpfully cross-referenced in the chapters on monastic authors. Throughout, Zecher shows his mastery of the primary texts of ancient medicine and philosophy and of medieval monastic spirituality. Well able to nuance or correct such eminences as Foucault and Peter Brown, he commands a substantial secondary literature, both of his subject and of appropriate models from other domains (though is the 'biopsychosocial' model much of an advance on 'holistic' medicine?). The chapters are argued and structured with exemplary clarity. Still, part I is not for those predisposed to buffoonery and, if I had been the book's editor, I might have suggested putting the less intricate part II first as a way into the subject. Overall, it is hard, none the less, to see how the book's task could have been more persuasively accomplished. All future discussion of its theme must start here.

All Souls College,
Oxford
Peregrine Horden

The power of protocol. Diplomatics and the dynamics of papal government, c.*400*–c.*1600*. By D. L. d'Avray. Pp. xii + 266 incl. 6 plates. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. £85. 978 1 009 36111 8

JEH (75) 2024; doi:10.1017/S0022046924000460

Over some three decades David d'Avray has been prolific. In many ways his work turns around a central question: how did things work? The things he has recently been most interested in are papal.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. 30 Sep 2024 at 22:22:23, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use.

The book under review proposes to answer a question posed in 2005 by the Austrian scholar Othmar Hageneder: how did the papacy govern large swathes of Christendom with a small and at that rudimentary institutional base largely centred in Rome and lacking the financial and military resources of a secular state? D'Avray insists that 'diplomatics', the technical science of studying the form of documents, holds the answer. He uses the word protocol in the sense given to it by the world of computing: 'a standardised set of rules governing the exchange of data' (p. 1). After an introduction that both poses and reflects on Hageneder's question and forecasts the book's chapters, d'Avray provides an immensely helpful summation and explanation of scholarship on papal diplomatics from the seventeenth century to the present with particular focus on recent decades. There follow three chapters dealing with the periods 400 to 1150, 1150 to 1378 and 1378 to 1600. A helpful retrospective entitled 'Some long-term continuities' caps the text. The text itself is followed by thirty-five pages of transcriptions of original documents from many sources that are referenced in the text and that illustrate specific points that d'Avray makes. The book is beautifully written and the author's style is almost conversational – he has a real gift for turning a phrase – but the material itself is dense and difficult and the reader really has to pay attention.

In late antiquity the papacy became a kind of helpdesk in a complex religious world. Bishops needed resolution of uncertainties and flooded Rome with inquiries. Thus a first key point in the book, albeit one that d'Avray willingly adopts from others is that papal government was demand driven; popes seldom initiated communication. Popes articulated papal, that is Petrine, ideology in the *arengae* of documents that were taken up by canonical collections and disseminated by Pseudo-Isidore. Constant repetition of lofty claims enhanced the papacy's 'office charisma'.

As late antiquity turned into the Middle Ages the *scrinium* may have grown in sophistication as a writing office and archive, but there is a lot we do not know. We do know that the formulaic parts of papal documents were taken from the *Liber diurnus* while the substantive parts were taken over from the letter addressed to the papacy. From the late eighth century letters and privileges were differentiated. Privileges were huge, written on parchment, and written in Roman curiale which made them virtually illegible. This antique script may have been used to conceal the poor Latin of many documents. Papal prestige was conveyed by how the documents looked: 'they were calculated to create awe' (p. 52). Privileges frequently exempted monasteries from the jurisdiction of local bishops. Exemption was not a carefully thought out plan of weakening episcopal control. The process primarily aimed to protect monastic landholding and exerted papal authority on the ground, so to speak. From the fifth century, d'Avray insists, popes expected their documents to have legal effect. This makes me wonder a bit about the dispatch of documents that could not be read.

In the twelfth century the business of the curia grew dramatically. Communications with secular rulers were called *litterae curiales* or *litterae de curia* and were produced by secretaries from the pope's entourage, not by chancery notaries. Popes probably had a hand in their composition and the letters were registered at the papacy's expense. The vastly expanded business of the curia

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. 30 Sep 2024 at 22:22:23, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use.

generated letters of grace and letters of justice. These letters were paid for by their recipients – d'Avray notes that this was not a system employing salaried officials – and registered if the recipient wished and paid. The scale of business and the cost of documents explains in part the bitterly satirical criticisms of the papal government. The scope of business also generated levels of subordinate officials. For instance, Innocent III turned the *scriptores* into a self-regulating and financing guild under the vice-chancellor. Officials worked from home and were paid for each piece of work. From the mid-twelfth to the late thirteenth century papal letters used the *cursus*. This was impressive in its own way but also a guard against forgery. The types of papal letters expanded greatly and the formulary of the Penitentiary reveals the range of business. One of the most interesting aspects of this book is its careful descriptions of the *Geschäftsgang* of documents – the lengthy process whereby a document arrived in Rome and eventually resulted in the dispatch of a letter. A great deal of work was accomplished without the pope or the vice-chancellor having to attend to the details. An ingenious solution to the question of how popes could govern was the hierarchy of letters. There were five basic ranks of letters and people knew which kind of letter trumped which others. Formularies were important for 'economizing thinking time' (p. 113). The judge delegate system permitted the papacy to extend its reach across Europe efficiently and without much cost. Record-keeping was fairly rudimentary and this means that only a small portion of the total epistolary production was ever registered. The 'bias of survival' leads to gross underestimate of the actual output of the papal government. So, careful attention to both the form and the substance of papal documents reveals how the papal government was able to govern in the absence of a modern Weberian bureaucracy.

The Avignon period witnessed some stability because the papacy was not itinerant as it had been through the thirteenth century. The era of the Great Schism again saw innovation in both the types of documents and the personnel who produced them. For instance, recourse was had to public notaries and archbishops and bishops could be required to disseminate documents. The inauguration of the sale of offices in the late Middle Ages was not absurd. It recruited writers such as *scriptores* and *abbreviatores* while also cementing relations with prominent Italian families.

Papal diplomatics in the early modern period have not been studied as systematically as in the medieval period. There were important changes that need further analysis. Leo XIII created the Secretariat of State under a nephew. This office handled high-level diplomatic correspondence in Italian. The creation of the Congregations generated new kind of documents produced by officials who were different from those who had been responsible for correspondence in the past.

The book's detailed description of many kinds of documents and how they were prepared is immensely valuable. D'Avray's work is both synthesis and original argumentation. I think its biggest take-away is that one way or another the system was always remarkably creative, flexible and adaptive.

University of Notre Dame, Indiana — Thomas F. X. Noble

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. 30 Sep 2024 at 22:22:23, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use.