

Bruno Lemesle, Le gouvernement des évêques. La charge pastorale au milieu du Moyen Âge, Rennes (Presses universitaires de Rennes) 2015, 248 p. (Histoire), ISBN 978-2-7535-4267-9, EUR 18,00.

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John S. Ott, Portland, OR

If, as Gregory the Great proclaimed in his »Liber pastoralis« (1.1), »the governance of souls is the art of arts« (*ars est artium regimen animarum*), the influential pope considered it equally axiomatic that pastors who failed to govern with their flocks' best interests at heart condemned them to perdition (1.2). What made pastoral governance akin to an art-form was the prelate's perennial need to balance care and compassion with zealous rigor, to correct and, when needed, repress certain behaviors. In Bruno Lemesle's new monograph, »Le gouvernement des évêques«, »governance« embraces a double referent: it motions on one hand to juridical norms relating to bishops' administration of their dioceses from the mid-twelfth century through the early thirteenth, and on the other, to papal »management« of the bishops themselves, particularly the pontiffs' enunciations – and denunciations – of episcopal intransigence and malfeasance. In calling attention to the language and juridical concepts of episcopal administration, »Le gouvernement des évêques« offers an important point of departure for future studies on papal-episcopal relations in the Middle Ages, and will be welcomed by scholars interested in the definition, evolution, and application of legal norms concerning official episcopal conduct

The study's point of departure is the mid-twelfth century, when papal oversight of episcopal administration intensified along with papal criticism of episcopal laxity and misconduct. As Lemesle makes clear, however (p. 23–24), an actual spike in bad episcopal behavior did not stimulate the growth in papal denunciations, but rather the reverse: popes from Eugenius III onward increasingly devoted themselves to the correction of diocesan clergy, to whom layfolk and lower clergy looked (occasionally in vain) as examples of model conduct, and legal pronouncements against episcopal excesses and mismanagement consequently multiplied along with the procedural methods to deal with them. This points to the real subject of the author's analysis: Lemesle is not concerned here with demonstrating actual clerical conduct per se, nor with the gap between pastoral ideals and realities, but rather with the articulation of juridical norms and categories and how they influenced church governance. This period was marked by the administratively energetic and often innovative reigns of popes Alexander III (1159–1181) and Innocent III (1198–1216), the dissemination of Gratian's »Decretum«, and the proliferation of schoolmasters' *quaestiones*, decretal collections, and their commentaries. Lemesle draws upon all of these sources in addition to papal letters, particularly from the thick registers of Alexander and Innocent, to examine the language and legal discussions surrounding clerical governance.

The book comprises five chapters followed by an epilogue. The first chapter examines the rapid acceleration, beginning in the mid-twelfth century, in papal denunciations of clerical (and occasionally lay) *excessus*



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– an »extremely flexible« term (p. 33) utilized hundreds of times by popes to signal a range of offenses, from minor to major, including disreputable conduct (*fama*), disobedience or contumacy, simony, and wasting of church resources. Such accusations of »criminal conduct«, though widely applied to bishops and abbots in this period, carried a range of meanings to the popes or decretists who employed them. A broad term to begin with, *excessus* accrued a long list of associated crimes, which invited ever more inquests and diverse disciplinary responses – the focus of Chapter 2. Here, Lemesle details the shift in papal language and canonistic texts to a tone emphasizing the need for rigorous correction of abuses, and the emergence of imprisonment as a disciplinary response to clerical and lay malfeasance (p. 66–77).

The remaining three chapters examine, respectively: the terminology and qualities associated with good pastoral governance, especially in matters of correction and dispensation; cases of inadequate or negligent administration; and finally, the conceptual and legal status of despoliation, or »dilapidation«, of the church's patrimony. Each chapter highlights the semantic and juridical associations of terms connected to episcopal (and, to a much lesser extent, abbatial) administration, including solicitude, dispensation, negligence, and dilapidation. The charge of *negligentia*, for example, came to imply a moral dereliction of duty on the bishop's part which permitted dangerous beliefs and practices, such as heresy, to fester and grow. Like »negligence«, *dilapidatio* acquired a juridical standing in the later twelfth century that associated the crime with different types of resource misuse. Primarily associated with charges of clerical sexual misconduct and simony through the eleventh century, dilapidation later was applied to virtually any perceived or real mismanagement of church goods (p. 185–190) including their sale, pawning, or personal appropriation.

Despite the prolixity of papal letters and canonical sources on these topics, an unbridgeable lacuna in our sources remains. We seldom know how, or even if, the sentences were carried out (p. 214). Nevertheless, Lemesle's point is that the letters and legal sources make clear that an evolutionary shift in the way prelates were »managed« occurred in the time of Alexander III and Innocent III. When it came to admonishing the heads of churches, Gregory I's maternal *cura* gave way to canonical »correction« and »discipline« (*regimen*). This semantic-juridical shift signaled the growing interest of a hieratic church in disciplining its clergy. But it was more than that. Indeed, Lemesle argues that emergent legal norms surrounding episcopal governance had the potential to transform social values and mold behaviors. Far from being theoretical abstractions divorced from the social processes of dispute resolution, changing juridical norms and definitions drew attention to administrative behavior in a profoundly legalistic ecclesiastical culture, further opening the conduct of prelates to scrutiny and judgment and establishing the parameters of good governance.

Lemesle sees this book as a point of departure for future studies (p. 21). As an analysis centered on juridical norms and terms, it undoubtedly will be of great use to scholars seeking to unpack the legal language associated with diocesan governance and its papal oversight. It also adds to the work of Robert L. Benson, Kenneth Pennington, and others on the legal parameters of episcopal office as they were being worked out by canonists from the twelfth century onward. If there is a weakness to the volume's selection and use of sources, it is that they are largely, and



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perhaps unavoidably for a study of terminology and legal categories, viewed from the top down. Anne Duggan and others have pointed out that prelates contributed as much as popes to the fashioning of the law, through consultation, the production of *responsa*, and the complaints they raised about their fellow pastors' conduct. One would like to know to what degree the terminology Lemesle examines was being employed, and with what intent, by the very bishops who were its focus – among whom, of course, were canon lawyers like Stephen of Tournai and his master, Rufinus, whose »Summae« are examined here. One suspects that bishops active in raising charges against or complaining about their fellow suffragans contributed to the process of naming and defining behaviors, such as *negligentia* and *dilapidatio*, that led to the elaboration of their juridical standing. This observation should not be taken to imply a reservation about the book, but, in the spirit of Lemesle's enterprise, to point the way toward future investigation of this important topic.



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