Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity by Ilaria L. E. Ramelli (review)

Anders Martinsen

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tables of references to themes in Augustine (e.g. *veritas*, *caro*, *concupiscentia*, etc.). Just how that relates to Cyprian as an authority figure is not immediately apparent. The next chapter looks at three topics and how his views were influenced by Donatism: Augustine's increased acceptance of religious coercion or correction, grace, and pneumatology. While there is some reference to Cyprian with regard to grace (in both the Donatist and Pelagian controversies) and to the Spirit, the idea of Augustine appropriating Cyprian is not as strong as it could be in this chapter.

The third section offers the greatest promise: Augustine's appropriation of Cyprian in the Pelagian controversy. Gaumer finds about one-sixth of Augustine's references to Cyprian in the writings dealing with this issue, not counting letters and homilies. The argument here is that Augustine sought to prove, more so against Julian than against Pelagius, that his views on divine grace and human free will were in line with Christian tradition and were not a mere African backwater opinion—particularly as they were found in Cyprian, but also in others. I was hoping to see some comment about how highly Cyprian was to be regarded in comparison with others, and this was indeed covered at some length. Cyprian seems second only to Ambrose as an authority on grace and free will for Augustine.

How does this volume relate to Gaumer's 2012 *Augustine's Appeal to Cyprian in the Donatist and Pelagian Contorversies*, a work not mentioned in the bibliography? This was his doctoral dissertation from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Even a cursory glance at the table of contents reveals that the work under review is essentially that dissertation after some revision. This does not detract from the value of the present work, but in the interest of transparency it would have been good to acknowledge that this present work is the publication of a revised dissertation. The work contains ample footnotes and a good bibliography and reads well. There is great structure and direction to the volume, and it can be highly recommended as a valuable contribution to a topic that deserves much attention, as Gaumer points out in the conclusion, where further questions are addressed to scholars for their consideration.

Geoffrey D. Dunn, University of Pretoria

Ilaria L. E. Ramelli
Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016
Pp. 344. £70.00. $99.00.

Over the last twenty years, there has been a steady growth of studies on slavery in the ancient world. The majority of the newer studies have, and rightfully so, demonstrated the brutality of slavery and abuse—physical, mental, and sexual—of which slaves suffered. The emphasis on slavery as inhumane must be seen

as a response to apologetic tendencies in research on slavery that arose during abolitionism and in its aftermath, and that were maintained by scholars way beyond its date of expiration, partially due to political and religious motifs. In this climate of research, Ilaria L. E. Ramelli's *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery* takes a different approach to ancient slavery. Ramelli explores discourses on the legitimacy of slavery and "the relationship between asceticism and the rejection of slavery" (Preface).

The book may be described as an intellectual history on the subject of the legitimacy/illegitimacy of slavery among ancient philosophers and Jewish and Christian writers. It is arranged chronologically starting from the Greek sophists and ending with asceticism in late antiquity. The main character, however, is Gregory of Nyssa, whose opposition to slavery as an institution is, in the words of Ramelli, "eminently theological and specifically Christian" (232–33). Ramelli details that ancient philosophers debated the validity of slavery, slavery and humanity, and that they criticized excessive mistreatment but not slavery as an institution. The Stoics were more concerned about "real" slavery, that is, enslavement to vice, than social and legal slavery. Christians too were content to let slavery continue in its existence. What then led Gregory to his conclusions that human nature cannot be divided into slavery and mastery, that the elimination of slavery in the eschatological situation should set a normative template for Christians and, consequently, that they should free their slaves (188–89)?

The main thesis in *Social Justice* is that there is a strong relationship between asceticism and the rejection of slavery and a criticism of lavish wealth accumulated at the cost of the poor. This view was not only a moral criticism of the wealthy, but a deeply felt solidarity with the oppressed (17–20 and 251). In the wake of the abolitionism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars had to explain the absence of protests against slavery whilst recognizing the suffering it caused. They emphasized that Christianity did cause social upheaval but sought to change the hearts of both master and slave. Thus emerged the myth that Christianity planted the seed of slavery's implosion.

While Ramelli is interested in the relatively humane view on slavery in the Christian tradition, she notes that wealthy Christians maintained the status quo of slavery. The resistance to slavery came from those who rejected conventional values in the society. For instance, Philo's account of the Therapeutae is used to support the thesis that asceticism and renunciation led to a rejection of slavery (82–96). Apparently, the radical rejection of possessions and slaves co-existed alongside the social and economic institutions that enabled the extraction of means from the poor and slavery—and without much moral struggle for those who benefitted from these structures. An investigation of these parallel Christian ethics is not pursued in this book. Altogether, it is the thoughts, ideas, and content in the writings of the Christian ascetics that shape the book.

Due to the broad historical ground that the book covers in its seven chapters and 253 pages, there are bound to be themes not dealt with at length. However, it is unfortunate that Ramelli eschews deliberations on the methodological or theoretical complications about studying ancient attitudes towards slavery. Ramelli often presents her sources in a straightforward manner. A more critical

interrogation would have been welcome. The second chapter deals with the New Testament and serves as "scriptural background" for patristic writers. She interprets Gal 3.28 as the proclamation of equality between slave and free in both "church and society" (103). It is a favorable interpretation of Paul. In the opinion of this reviewer, the chapter would have benefitted from a substantial criticism of Paul. The early Christians did not only take part in the slave economy, for several NT texts provided the theological rationale for slaves' subordination. These matters deserve more scrutiny.

The book also suffers from some problems with its structure. Chapter One, which is the longest, provides an overview of pre-Christian sources on the themes "asceticism, slavery, and socio-economic injustice." Notably, it reads as a stand-alone chapter. At times, it feels like one is reading about one philosopher after another without any structural argument chaining them together. This is a problem throughout the book. In addition, careful editing could have weeded out some repetitive sentences and phrases.

Altogether, *Social Justice* is a somewhat frustrating read—for this reviewer at least—since questions about the social and ideological positions of the Christian thinkers that Ramelli studies (and perhaps admires) are left out. Why was it so hard for many of the Christian thinkers to denounce slavery completely? What interests had they in criticizing slavery and still accepting it? And what influence did their teachings have on other Christians? There is a suspicion that more could be said about these issues, because the detachment of intellectual history from material and ideological context is too neat.

Even if not all of Ramelli's arguments are entirely convincing and the book has some structural problems, the perspective she brings into the fray of writing the history of ancient slavery is original and welcome. It is recommended for those engaged with the topic of slavery in antiquity and late antiquity. It has important contributions to said topic, and it works as an introductory source book for anyone who wants to have an overview of a vast historical period.

Anders Martinsen, Oslo Metropolitan University

James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu, editors
Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017
Pages xi + 354. $120.00.

This volume of collected essays takes up the neat but arbitrary topic of the century spanning 100–200 C.E. With characteristic reserve, the Introduction (jointly written by the editors) carefully circumscribes the scope of its results: "As will have become obvious, it has not been the task either of this introduction or of the volume as a whole to provide a new and settled account of the second Christian century" (21). Nevertheless, the essays cover a broad range of topics crucial to