Bishop Ivo of Chartres (d. 1115) has long been seen – both by contemporaries and historians ever since – as a committed episcopal reformer, as a gifted theologian and scholar, and indeed as one of the pivotal figures in the development of a scholastic approach to medieval canon law that would triumph in Gratian. These judgements (again both in his own time and ever since) have rested on a number of assumptions about his extant texts which include an extensive correspondence and sermons, but most especially on assumptions about his authorship of a range of canonical collections: the Tripartita A (and Tripartita B), the Decretum, and the Panormia, the latter two of which were transmitted with Ivo’s important canonico-theological treatise, the Prologus, in which he set out his understanding of the nature of Church law in his methodology of ›mercy and justice‹. In this exceptional new study, Christof Rolker challenges prevailing historical ›truths‹ about Ivo of Chartres and the so-called ›Ivonian corpus‹, thereby on the one hand reducing Ivo’s stature whilst also paradoxically restoring him to his rightful, distinctive place as an intellectual giant whose work intimately linked theology and law. At the same time, Rolker offers powerful arguments against two meta-narratives about the role of papal reform and the rise of scholastic legal culture that have long underpinned – consciously or unconsciously – the work of historians of medieval canon law in the era before Gratian, including that of the present reviewer.

The book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 on Ivo’s ›life and letters‹ discusses some aspects of Ivo’s less well-known early career as abbot of Saint-Quentin in Beauvais, his contested election as Bishop of Chartres, as well as key conflicts with Hugh of Lyons over jurisdiction of the Sénonais and with Philip I’s marriage affair that dominated his episcopate. The chief focus, however, is to introduce the nature and development of Ivo’s thought by surveying how historians from Ivo’s own time to the present have viewed his authorship of what are known as the so-called Ivonian collections: Tripartita A, the Decretum, Panormia and Tripartita B with especial focus on the interpretation of the great French historian of medieval canon law, Paul Fournier, who argued that Ivo had compiled the Tripartita A (or at least that it was made in his immediate circle) and the Decretum as preparatory collections for his more intellectually cohesive, systematic and superior Panormia, all within a short space of time. It is here that Rolker advances the principal aim of his study to revise the Fournier model and the question of Ivo’s authorship, not as an end in itself but rather as a means of exploring the changing modes of organising legal and theological knowledge in the age before the universities (p. 48).

Chapter 2 on canon law before Ivo provides the historical and intellectual context for Ivo’s distinctive work by examining the range of canonical material and collections in circulation especially in northern
France in the earlier eleventh century. Rolker then goes on to consider at some length the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms, the single most important systematic collection in Europe before the advent of the Ivonian collections and the collection that most framed both the structure and the substance of the Ivonian *Decretum* (apart from Burchard, book 16 on procedural norms, which Ivo ignored), along with Burchard derivatives and other eleventh-century collections such as the 74T and the Gregorian compilations.

In chapter 3, Rolker turns to the collections known to (or once deemed to have been compiled by) the bishop of Chartres in an effort to elucidate Ivo’s legal education by considering his letters and the canon law from collections quoted therein, focusing in turn on *Tripartita A* and the *Decretum* (and *Tripartita B* – itself an extract compiled from the *Decretum*), as well as the sources from which these collections were derived. Here Rolker first examines in turn the sources of the *Collectio Britannica*, *Tripartita A*, and the *Decretum*, underlining in the latter the extensive, new theological content which went well beyond his predecessors. Rolker then addresses Ivo’s minor sources, the sources of the *Prologus* and finally the *Panormia* and its sources, which he argues stood completely apart not only from the materials required (and used) to produce the other ‹Ivonian› collections but also in the methods that the *Panormia* compiler employed.

Chapter 4 extends this argument by concentrating on the canon law quotations in Ivo’s correspondence, which was being collected even in his lifetime and was rapidly disseminated in letter collections. Following the methodology of the famous study by Ryan on Peter Damian’s letters, Rolker investigates the parallels between the letters and the *Tripartita A*, the *Decretum*, *Tripartita B* and the *Panormia*, acknowledging that even given the stable manuscript tradition of the letters (which he has meticulously established) that some of the conclusions rest on negative evidence (133f., 144, 161f.). Here, he nonetheless persuasively demonstrates that the *Panormia* leaves no trace whatsoever in Ivo’s letters.

In chapter 5, Rolker moves away from more textually oriented investigations to address Ivo’s views on divine law and the ecclesiastical hierarchy by examining the *Prologus*, his letters and the ordering of the *Decretum* itself despite acknowledging the problems of using the *Decretum* to uncover Ivo’s chief preoccupations. By focusing on the collection’s structure and its use of its principal formal source, Burchard, Rolker shows how the more reworked books of the Ivonian *Decretum* 2–6, 8 and 16 (themselves the source of the legal quotations in the majority of Ivo’s letters) give evidence of Ivo’s chief interests in marriage, sacramental theology and issues of hierarchy. Underlining the range of new sources brought to the *Decretum*, especially patristic authorities, Rolker argues that Ivo understood the law of the Church as the application of the consequences of sacramental theology in which the principles of mercy and justice needed to be set against the contradictions and discordance in the law which he did not seek to resolve, as previous and subsequent compilers such as that of the *Panormia* would do (p. 181).

In chapter 6, Rolker addresses Ivo’s thought on the laws of marriage and the contribution of his theology of marriage with its emphasis on the primacy of consent, as well as the pastoral quality of his
thinking that is shown in the extended analysis of Ivo’s position on the marriage affairs of Philip I.

In chapter 7, Rolker turns once more to the consideration of the relationship of the Decretum and the Panormia by analysing the reception of the Decretum in the twelfth century, and then the author, provenance and date of the Panormia (which he convincingly argues is much later – c. 1115 – than previous estimations). Whilst acknowledging the undeniable fact that the Prologus was transmitted in most extant Panormia manuscripts – in itself not a compelling argument for establishing authorship, he argues that two radically different compilers with very different attitudes towards the law were at work in the respective collections. Thus, Ivo’s Decretum was not a preparatory collection for the much later Panormia but a collection that met the needs of its time.

In the final chapter on what Rolker terms »Ivo’s pastoral canon law«, which effectively serves as the conclusion, Rolker completes his arguments against the traditional attribution of the Panormia to Ivo whilst also neatly demolishing the two meta-narratives that have done so much to maintain that tradition, namely: Fournier’s belief in the role of the reform papacy in inspiring not only the compilation of new collections but also the development of new methods of interpretation (in which the Panormia – dated much earlier by Fournier – was seen as the culmination); and also the impact of reform on the development of a scholastic legal culture – in both of which Ivo had become the pivotal, linking figure.

Having thus saved the bishop of Chartres from teleological narratives, Rolker presents the reader with Ivo as a pastoral canon lawyer who used law to decide »cases« according to the principle that »charity is the mistress of the law«. The volume includes an appendix with a concordance of the canon law quotations in Ivo’s letters and their parallels in the four Ivonian collections, an impressive bibliography, and manuscript and general index.

This book, quite simply, is a tour de force that makes judicious arguments based upon the evidence of a phenomenal range of manuscripts, printed editions and scholarly commentary from Ivo’s own time to the present. Special attention must also be drawn to the phenomenal service that Rolker has done for successive generations of scholars in explicating and analysing the canon law sources of Ivo’s letters. It must be conceded that this book, necessarily, is a difficult one given the detailed investigations of the formal sources of Ivo’s letters and the Ivonian collections, their manuscript transmission and parallels in other collections. Whilst its audience will perhaps inevitably encompass chiefly specialists in the field of pre-Gratian canon law who will ponder and also question his arguments against the Panormia being the work of Ivo, it is to be fervently hoped that the volume will be taken up by a range of medievalists interested not just in legal history but also in the changing ways that legal and theological knowledge was approached, handled and disseminated in the era before the universities. Rolker’s strong corrective to the Fournier model should also become required reading for anyone working on eleventh- and early twelfth-century ecclesiastical and intellectual history.

That said, not everyone will agree with Rolker’s arguments about the Panormia or at least every aspect of them, and his much later dating of the Panormia will not find universal favour. Others will object that some of his contentions rely on »negative« evidence, namely that because Ivo did not cite the Panormia in any extant letters, ergo he did not know it, and hence he did not compile it. Rolker, to
my mind, however makes a compelling case on this purportedly negative evidence: »if a collection cannot be linked to any of the hundreds of letters, it may be reasonably suspected of having been unknown to Ivo«, (p. 134). Moreover, Rolker’s »elegant explanations« are repeatedly bolstered by the positive evidence of the compilers’ very different preoccupations and radically different understanding of the law. At the same time, having broken the Fournier straitjacket (with which others also will not agree), Rolker challenges historians working in the field of medieval canon law to focus on understanding the canonical compilations of this period from the viewpoint of their users and audiences, and not just their compilers. This will reap untold benefits in explicating a new narrative, or set of narratives, for understanding the history of canon law in the era before Gratian. The bishop of Chartres may finally and definitively have lost credit for compiling the Panormia, but in the end Roller offers us an even more compelling understanding of the distinctive work of this immense pastoral canon lawyer.