

Book Reviews

ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND: The Anglo-Saxons to the Reformation

Robert E Rodes Jr

Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1977 287pp \$30 hb
ISBN 0-268-00903-1

LAY AUTHORITY AND REFORMATION IN THE ENGLISH CHURCH: Edward I to the Civil War Robert E Rodes Jr

Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1982 319pp \$30 hb
ISBN 0-268-01265-2

LAW AND MODERNIZATION IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: Charles II to the Welfare State Robert E Rodes Jr

Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1991 497pp \$30 hb
ISBN 0-268-01293-8

It is probably true to say that most British people think that the USA is a highly litigious society, in which lawyers occupy a place out of all proportion to their worth. It is not often realised, though, that these same lawyers often display a range of interests which is both surprising and impressive. Dr Rodes is one of these. He has taught at the University of Notre Dame Law School for most of his career, but he is anything but a dry-as-dust lawyer. On the contrary, he has a lively interest in all aspects, including the most curious, of the Church of England, and has written a trilogy about it which, if it cannot be compared to Trollope or Susan Howatch, is nevertheless a most remarkable achievement. What Dr Rodes has done has been to study the history of the Church as a legal body, showing how at every stage of its life, the law – both civil and ecclesiastical – has shaped it. The result is a magnificent portrayal of a living institution in its journey across time, from Augustine of Canterbury to the Reformation and on up to the present day.

The first book takes us back to the misty beginnings of the English Church, and demonstrates how much of what we now take for granted can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon times. We are guided skilfully through the Gregorian reforms of the eleventh century, and Dr Rodes points out how William the Conqueror managed to get most of them accepted in England. Even in those very early days, he tells us, there was a tension in Church life which has remained fundamental to its character, and which in Dr Rodes' view, is part of the tension of the Gospel itself. This tension manifested itself in the contrast between High Churchmanship and

Erastianism, a term which Dr Rodes admits he uses anachronistically, though not without justification.

Seen from the lawyer's angle, a High Churchman is somebody who thinks that the Church is a divine society with a mission to accomplish on earth. The world is fundamentally foreign (and hostile) territory, and there should be as few compromises with it as possible. This does not simply mean that the Church should choose its own bishops, but that even its canon law should be designed to reflect the divine ideal, not the real world of sin in which we unfortunately have to live. In the Middle Ages the High Church party dominated the Church's legal wing, with the result that the Church was saddled with a huge corpus of law which could not be properly applied. It was more of a theological statement about what the Church should be like, than a description of what actually happened on the ground.

In the face of such impracticality, it was inevitable that an 'Erastian' counter-tendency would emerge, and would actually run the Church's affairs much of the time. This tendency viewed the Church as one institution among many within a Christian society. There was nothing special about it except its functions, but these could be codified and governed just as well as any other institution's could. The dominance of Erastianism as thus conceived was already firmly established in England before the Reformation, and it was this factor, as much as anything, which enabled the country to break with Rome without overhauling the Church very much. Dr Rodes is thus able to describe the place of the Papacy in pre-Reformation England as follows:

...the position of the Pope, although fully recognized in theory, was not fully integrated into the increasingly coherent structure of the church-state nexus as the royal authorities envisaged it. Theology and custom required a Pope, but the internal logic of the institutional system did not. When the time came that the English were prepared to break with theology and custom, they could do so without too much wrenching of their institutional forms (1982 pp 64-5).

Dr Rodes points out how the English Church survived the Reformation institutionally intact, and that disaster did not strike it until Archbishop Laud tried to apply the impractical High Churchmanship of his medieval predecessors. Laud's most powerful enemies were not the Puritans (who were also High Churchmen in Rodes' definition) but the lawyers in Parliament, who were not going to let centuries of Erastianism go down the drain overnight.

In this perspective, the Church of England's Golden Age was the

eighteenth century, when its easy-going attitude to life reflected English sentiment in general. As long as most people were content to have a state Church in which nobody took religion too seriously, the Church of England was in its element. But then along came Methodism and the Catholic revival, and everything started to fall apart. Even so, the Church of England managed the transition to a pluralist, and then secular, society with considerable grace, and with much of its ancient panoply still intact. Even today, it has a remarkable degree of acceptance in a country where only about 10% of the population actually enters its doors.

Of course, Dr Rodes is writing with the perspective of a lawyer, and that certainly colours his judgment at many points. But it is refreshing to take a look at the Church from what for many will be an unusual angle. What comes across is the sense of underlying continuity across the ages. Law has a conservative effect on the whole, restraining innovation rather than encouraging it. Thus it happens that many features, like the office of churchwarden, survive every kind of upheaval, and anachronisms abound. These can be very frustrating for those who have to live with them, but their presence is part of a wider stability which has to be protected if the institution as a whole is to perform its duties effectively.

In the third volume, Dr Rodes brings the story up to date, and it is here that English readers will sense that he ran out of steam somewhere about 1975. He occasionally discusses some nineteenth-century issue and then speculates on what has happened in the Church since that time, without checking his facts too closely. Thus, for example, he has quite a bit to say about the attempts which CPAS made to get reluctant incumbents to accept a curate, by providing funds for that purpose. But when updating this in the light of the centralisation of Church funds in 1976 he says:

Now that the curate's pay does not have to come out of the incumbent's pocket, we may suppose that getting a conscientious but overburdened incumbent to accept a curate is no longer a serious problem (1991 p 178).

It seems that Dr Rodes is unaware that the boot is very much on the other foot; it is now a serious problem for overburdened incumbents to get a curate at all!

Dr Rodes is a former Anglo-Catholic who converted to Rome about 1950, but although this allegiance naturally surfaces from time to time, it cannot be said that he has let his bias interfere with the overall presentation. Thus, he accepts that the Reformers had a case when they rejected papal supremacy, and he recognises that the ritualist trials of the nineteenth century, however distasteful to him personally, were

understandable in the light of the legal situation at the time, and should be judged accordingly. Such fairness is unusual, and it gives his work an authority which a more polemical book would not possess. He is also a delight to read, and page after page cries out for quotation. Anyone who thinks law is dull ought certainly to read Dr Rodes! He has a wonderful way of bringing long-forgotten issues to life by relating them to human situations, some historical and others invented for the purpose. He is also aware of theological issues, and does not hesitate to comment on them where appropriate. But if the law of the Church ought to reflect good theology, good theologians do not necessarily make good law. To quote Dr Rodes:

The final judgement on the medieval High Churchmen as ecclesiastical administrators must be not that they were corrupt – all men are corrupt – but that they were dreamers. Poets and visionaries to the last, they built a system that gave no quarter to human frailty. In the long run, human frailty gave no quarter to their system (1977 p 203).

It is a verdict which could be applied to many since, and a useful reminder to us of how necessary it is to find the right way of applying principles to practice in the life of the Church.

GERALD BRAY

CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION Volume 2 Part 4 The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451 Alois Grillmeier SJ with Theresia Hainthaler translated by O C Dean
London: Mowbray 1996 431pp £45 hb ISBN 0-264-66018-8

This book was originally published in German in 1990, and appears as the fourth part of a series which covers the Christology of the Church from the Council of Chalcedon to the time of Gregory the Great (d 604). Theological students are already familiar with Volume 1, which has gone through a number of editions, and takes the story of Christology from the New Testament up to Chalcedon. The subsequent period is more obscure, though scarcely less important, since it was the time when Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian (Monophysite or Nestorian) forms of Christianity took their classical shape.

To the extent that this subject has been studied at all, it has been the Greek and Latin traditions, both of them largely pro-Chalcedonian, which have received the bulk of scholarly attention. This is hardly surprising, given the recondite linguistic skills which are required for anyone who

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wishes to penetrate further. After all, it is not everyone who is equally at home in Syriac, Coptic and Ge'ez!

The present book (Part 3 has not yet appeared) breaks the mould and takes us into the heart of Africa. With his usual thoroughness and objectivity, Fr Grillmeier dissects the little-known world of Coptic Christianity, introducing us to the complexity of post-Chalcedonian Church politics at Alexandria and the men who fuelled the debates. Even more excitingly, he travels up the Nile to Nubia (now in the Sudan) and Ethiopia, which still preserves its ancient Christian faith. Dr Hainthaler, for her part, has contributed most to the first section, which treats the Alexandrian material available in Greek.

It seems almost certain that this work will be the standard in its field for generations to come. Many potential readers will no doubt think that the subject is too obscure for them, but they should not be put off by this. Non-Chalcedonian Christianity may have been cut off from the rest of the Christian world for centuries, but it is very much back in business now, and fully involved in the Ecumenical movement. There is even a real possibility that the ancient divisions between Copts and Greek Orthodox may at last be resolved, enabling the two churches to reunite in the foreseeable future. This gives the story of these centuries an actuality which it might not otherwise possess. But theologians will of course be interested in all aspects of Christology, however obscure, and for them, this book will be a delight.

Fr Grillmeier and Dr Hainthaler have done an excellent job of making all this accessible to the non-specialist reader, for which they are to be congratulated. We can only look forward in eager anticipation to the completion of the entire work.

GERALD BRAY

STRANGERS AND FRIENDS

A New Exploration of Homosexuality in the Bible

Michael Vasey

London: Hodder and Stoughton 1995 276pp £9.99 pb

ISBN 0 340 60814 5

The Rev Michael Vasey is a tutor at St John's College with Cranmer, Durham. In this book he seeks to establish that a new 'paradigm' in the Christian understanding of sexual behaviour has emerged, and the Church must face this and change its attitude to the 'gay' constituency.

In the first chapter Vasey seeks to champion the practising homosexual male, and says, 'Mention the subject of homosexuality and feel the temperature rise [and] there will be tension as the topic resonates at many levels'. The chapter comes to a climax with quotations from Housman's poem of lament for Oscar Wilde's conviction and imprisonment and Thomas O'Neil's rhapsodic 'Jesus is seen at a gay bar'. He has prepared in a question-begging way for these songs of protest by asking if the Jesus of the Gospels would have had gay friends and felt quite at home in a gay bar. His comment is: 'The answer must be, Yes', and he goes on to claim that 'God is not a moral policeman; he is a strange and unpredictable player in human history' (p 18). Vasey's punchline confirms one's initial impression that he discounts the validity of any contrary argument. 'Any discussion of homosexuality must leave room for the possibility that Jesus is making significant friends beyond the pale of "righteous" society.' This is plainly seen in the Gospel story and one could accept the statement at its face value. Jesus did 'receive sinners and eat with them', but emphatically not in order to condone their life-styles. However doubts arise in one's mind at the application he makes, for what Vasey does is to quote in its entirety the preface to O'Neil's highly provocative 'Jesus is seen at a gay bar', and comment that O'Neil 'may not be far from the mark'.

After this introductory chapter the book is divided into three parts:

- 1 Looking at sexuality, nature and culture;
- 2 Homosexuality (mainly male): what it is and what the Bible says about it;
- 3 Exploring life-issues arising from the previous sections.

Each chapter is headed by a quotation such as 'If two lie together they are warm' (Ecc 4:11) and others in the same vein. One has the distinct feeling that they are used to introduce a sort of *double entendre*, rather than as a plain statement of fact. Vasey insists that this text refers to two men in the same bed, as also in Jesus' reference to 'two in a bed' (Luke 17: 34) – a quite unnecessary implication. He identifies what he calls a 'homoerotic strand' in the story of the friendship between Jonathan and David. Even in Crossman's 'My song is love unknown, My Saviour's love to me', he detects a homoerotic element, and the same goes for Bernard of Clairvaux's devotional hymns (p 84).

Vasey employs a curious and unusual hermeneutic in his approach to the Bible. First of all he lays down a cultural 'smoke screen', then behind it weaves a web of interpretation (chapter six). Then in the next chapter ('What Does the Bible Say?'), he confidently interprets Romans 1: 26-7

claiming, without any positive evidence, that Paul is referring not to 'an affectionate, egalitarian homosexuality', but one 'strongly associated with idolatry, slavery and social dominance'. He furthermore contends that these verses read 'as if addressing the defiance of the seventeenth century rake rather than the vulnerable but demonized gay subcultures of the twentieth century'.

He must be commended for his assiduous support for persecuted homosexual men and women and his persistent condemnation of mindless violence against them, as instanced in the murder of the French champion of such people, Pastor Joseph Doucé (pp 167-8). This was completely contrary to Christ's teaching and merits the same rebuke he expressed, in another context, to the thunderous though misplaced indignation of James and John (Luke 9:54). That is not the same as saying that Christians must condone or even commend alternative sexual relationships. Yet this is exactly what Vasey enjoins with the question: 'If appropriate sexual activity is seen as the product of healthy relationships, why should the Holy Spirit be thought to be less able to impart his wisdom to individual gay Christians?' (p 139). He supports his argument with the doubtful assertion that 'sexual acts derive their primary meaning from the social context in which they occur'. He argues that the prevalence of a public gay identity since the eighteenth century has created a very different situation. He defends it by declaring that it is 'not about a proud rebellion against God'. On the contrary 'it arises from the sensitivity of certain vulnerable individuals to *certain truths of creation* suppressed in the wider culture' (my italics).

I am as much against 'queer bashing' as Michael Vasey, but cannot agree with his claim that homosexual acts, however idealised by some modern writers, are not specifically condemned in the Bible. To validate this claim he has to plead that certain relevant biblical statements have been misunderstood. He arbitrarily limits the application of Romans 1:26-7 to homosexual acts in association with idolatrous worship (vv 24-5). He also applies this method to 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 (and to the Levitical sanctions). The implication is that in these passages 'genuine' person to person same-sex relationships are not envisaged by Paul. As for Cranfield's commentary in which he identifies such liaisons as 'against nature', Vasey gets behind his cultural smoke-screen and alleges 'the "natural" is a real but culture-specific response to the order inherent in God's creation' (p 131). It is therefore unreasonable to censure practising homosexuals and keep them on the margin of the life and ministry of the Church. However the author's exegesis of Scripture does not represent the truth. Paul's reference to these practices in Romans 1: 26-7 is an essential part of his demonstration of the extreme sinfulness of mankind, which can only incur God's righteous judgment (v 18) and shows their desperate need of his

salvation. These sexual sins are not just a cultural response to what is inherent in Creation. They are a violation of the elemental sexual dualism God instituted for the fulfilment of human nature and perpetuation of the human race. Again, the words Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 (*μαλακοί* and *ἀρσενοκοῖται*) referring to same sex liaisons are perfectly clear in meaning and suffer no doubt as to their application. Yet Vasey asserts that 'any translation [of them] is somewhat speculative'. The first one refers to males acting like females which gives an all too clear picture of what Paul is condemning here. Vasey tries to fend off any appeal to etymology by saying that such sexual practices were accepted as normal in the ancient world, but it was the brutal promiscuous indulgence that Paul warned against, not the sensitive loving relationship itself. He cites the centurion who pleaded with Jesus to heal his servant (*παῖς*) and insists that 'it is a standard term for servant, but also an affectionate diminutive often used in homosexual relationships'. And Vasey caps it by stating, 'Although there is an element of speculation in this interpretation the scenario is certainly consistent with the way Jesus is presented in the Gospels'.

Vasey's highly subjective interpretation of Scripture, appealing to somewhat obscure commentators, but ignoring the more notable ones who do not support his viewpoint, smacks more of special pleading than of an unbiased search for truth.

Moreover, his choice of poems punctuating the text is hardly commendable, especially the one by John Wilmot (p 93), which serves no purpose but to shock his readers and give him the satisfaction that even if he is an evangelical then he is also an *enfant terrible*! As a close follower of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement he qualifies well as their spokesman, but hardly demonstrates his ability as an interpreter of God's Word. He heads his chapter on 'Gays and the Church' with the following quotation from George Carey: 'I believe it is only fearful, insecure Christians who avoid the positive encounter of dialogue and the sharing of common life together...'. The implication of these words used in this context is that all we who do not accept 'gays' into our fellowships are fearful and insecure. So after all, we are not left to choose our own response to Vasey's persuasions, but we are chided for our negative reaction.

This book has already set alarm bells ringing not only among Evangelicals but also among the wider Christian public. It should be read; but let those who read understand and take careful note of present-day trends and consider carefully where they are likely to lead.

OWEN THOMAS

Churchman

CONSCIENCE O Hallesby 112 pp ISBN 0 85111 230 7

ESCAPE FROM REASON Francis Schaeffer 96 pp
ISBN 0 85111 231 5

THE LORD FROM HEAVEN Leon Morris 111 pp
ISBN 0 85111 234 X

THE PREACHER'S PORTRAIT John Stott 111 pp
ISBN 0 85111 235 8

GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN Helen Roseveare 160 pp
ISBN 0 85111 232 3

HE GAVE US A VALLEY Helen Roseveare 188 pp
ISBN 0 85111 233 1

Leicester: IVP 1995 pb £1.99 each

Congratulations to IVP for re-issuing these titles which became 'classics' to earlier generations and are now aimed at current students, but should also appeal to a wider readership. They could well form a 'way in' for any thoughtful Christian who has yet to learn the value of reading about their faith.

Conscience is a reprint of the abridged version, and the subtitle *Its Place in Christian Living* is fully justified by the perceptive treatment of everyday problems of moral conduct.

Escape from Reason will be especially welcome to those grappling with the practical implications of current thought.

The Lord From Heaven clearly expounds the New Testament evidence for Jesus' divinity and humanity.

The Preacher's Portrait takes New Testament words and with John Stott's characteristic lucidity shows the true character of the Christian preacher and his task.

Give Me This Mountain and *He Gave Us a Valley* recount Helen Roseveare's experience as a missionary doctor and teacher. They still offer both general relevance and a challenge for young Christians to reassess their priorities as they consider their future. They give insight into the horrors and privations of working in a country (Belgian Congo/Zaire) ravaged by war, and into Helen Roseveare's personal spiritual experiences then and following her return after the civil war.

OWEN THOMAS

YOUR PERSONALITY AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Reginald Johnson

Crowborough: Monarch 1995 186pp £7.99 pb

ISBN 1-85424-340-3

Are you an energizer, stabilizer, enhancer, encourager, renewer, crusader, organizer or analyser? These are personality categories into which we are all placed by Reginald Johnson, Professor of Spiritual Formation at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, who attempts to show how we all exhibit one or more of these traits predominantly in our lives.

There is no doubt that this book makes fascinating reading but I question whether the author achieves his objective. If the claims made and questions posed on the cover lived up to the thesis in its pages, it would be a very good buy. 'Would you like to understand yourself better?' 'How does your personality affect your relationship with God and others?' 'Why are some devotional disciplines and patterns better suited to you than others?' 'What can you do to enrich your personality and allow God to use you more fully for his Kingdom purposes?' These are questions to which we would all like an answer.

The writer seeks to explain how our personality affects our relationship with God, and suggests ways of managing our personalities, so that weaknesses are strengthened and strengths affirmed, with the purpose of facilitating spiritual growth. I found the biblical case studies quite engaging and saw my own tendencies in some of the characters analysed, which include David, Joshua and John, and one woman, Ruth.

Johnson's whole thesis is dependent upon the widely accepted Myers-Brigg's Personality Type Theory and herein lies its weakness and limitations. Surely, given we are such infinitely complex beings, any attempt to categorise and label us has to be reductionist, limited and flawed. Clearly we need a greater understanding of ourselves, if only to know why we behave as we do. However, a truly biblical approach has to be holistic and personality tests by definition are particularistic. They analyse particular traits in order to categorise personality, whereas many psychologists now seriously question for good empirical reasons the use and usefulness of such tests.

The book contains a useful further reading guide. Its conciseness, style and absence of jargon make it easy to read. In my opinion the biblical case studies were sufficiently informative and, if injected with a little more depth, would have rendered unnecessary the secular theorising and personality testing.

Our personalities are bound to affect our spiritual life, but at the end of the day they are not the arbiters of the quality of our walk with God.

PAUL A O’GORMAN

FROM SHAME TO PEACE – Counselling and Caring for the Sexually Abused Teo Van Der Weele

Crowborough: Monarch 1995 317 pp £8.99 pb ISBN 1-85424-261-X

Very few books have an emotional impact upon me, but this one was a definite exception. Teo Van Der Weele has a deep understanding of this subject with which he is painfully involved. The pain comes from his own experience of sexual abuse, his pathway to healing, and his empathy with those with whom he has become therapeutically involved. Even the most hardened analyst or professional would be hard pressed not to be moved on reading his book. The author could hardly have chosen a more topical subject to bring to our attention. His principal aim in writing appears to be his deep desire for the churches to become ‘islands of healing in a broken world’, that provide hope and healing for the sexually abused. As chaplain to the staff of a Christian Psychiatric Hospital in Holland with thirty years’ experience as a missionary counsellor in Asia and Europe, not only does he share from his personal experience of the trauma of abuse, but also speaks with the authority of the professional in the whole field of abusive relationships and their consequences. The result is a compassionate, deeply spiritual, kindly critical and reliable work.

I warmed to the positive approach. He refers for example to ‘survivors’ rather than ‘victims’ of abuse, which recognizes the significance of language in the whole therapeutic enterprise. Without minimising the pain and damage, he believes that a degree of real healing is always possible, provided God is involved in the process and that survivors are handled by informed and compassionate helpers and counsellors.

Van Der Weele appeals for a greater understanding of the subject, and gives a revealing insight into living through and recovering from sexual abuse. He also speaks to survivors when he writes (page 16): ‘The aim of this book is to re-assure survivors that they are not crazy; that their lifestyle and value system, the “culture of abuse”, is common; that there are ways to help oneself; and that an infusion of life from above can work effectively in everyday life’.

He envisages cooperation with the enlightened church and involvement of suitable lay people to support effective recovery, healing and on-going rehabilitation. Training and skills are seen as tools to be used in the service

of the master healer – God himself – whose ‘powerful peace’ can plumb the depths of the most traumatized psyche to make life worth living again. Van Der Weele is however justifiably critical of certain counselling techniques, especially those seeking to uncover the past in a way that is more damaging than the memories themselves.

The book gives an encouraging demonstration of the miracle of God at work in the most horrendous situations, when those therapeutically involved seek to do his will.

This is a beautifully written book, devoid of jargons and should be read and re-read by all who have anything to do with this increasingly manifest scourge. The introduction helpfully gives a clear and concise summary of each chapter. Its 317 pages, which include a useful bibliography, are excellent value.

PAUL A O’GORMAN

THE STORM BREAKS Derek Thomas

Darlington: Evangelical Press 1995 352pp £9.95 pb ISBN 0-85234-336-1

This commentary on Job is a recent addition to the extensive Welwyn series. As with earlier volumes, it is aimed at the preacher and serious Bible student. Since Job is a particularly difficult book for any preacher and Bible student this contribution is to be greatly welcomed. It has the clear merit of showing signs that the material has been preached, which is not true of all modern commentaries.

However the accessibility of this work does not mean that the author is unaware of the more technical textual studies which have recently appeared on Job. There is a select bibliography which has helpful comments to guide the reader who wishes to undertake further research. This demonstrates for example that Derek Thomas is well aware of the work of those like David Clines who have studied the style and genre of Job carefully. He is also conscious that earlier commentators have a great deal to offer.

Thus he states that ‘Calvin grasps clearly the key that unlocks the meaning of the book: Job has a good case, but argues it badly; his friends have a bad case but argue it very well’.

This reviewer has not yet preached through the book of Job. When he does, as he knows he ought, he will have this book to hand. It is a good guide which ensures that the overall direction of the story is not lost within

the detail of the whole work. Any Christian who wants to get to grips with this book of the Bible will be wise to start here. The author has the humility to admit that he would not recommend preaching through Job in four months as he did himself; however that in itself demonstrates how much he has learnt from his studies.

MARK BURKILL

A HOUSE DIVIDED: Evangelicals and the Establishment in Hull 1770-1914 Peter Stublely

Hull: Hull University Press 1995 136 pp £7.95 pb ISBN 0 85958 633 2

Ever since John Walsh's magnificent but, alas, never published Cambridge doctoral thesis of 1956 on Yorkshire Evangelicals in the eighteenth century, to which some of us have returned repeatedly in our studies of the movement, historians have become increasingly aware of the development and persisting influence of Evangelicalism in the area. Nowhere was this so more than in Hull, which not only produced the Thornton family and Wilberforce but also, through Joseph Milner at the grammar school and Stillingfleet at the nearby rectory of Hotham, a host of godly laity and clergy.

Peter Stublely starts from that period and then traces church life, both Anglican and denominational, through the nineteenth century. His chapters include studies of anti-Catholicism, Sunday observance, temperance, prostitution and education. He draws on a wide range of sources to convey a vivid sense of the religious life of a provincial city, bringing out the social structures, the effects of commercial development and increasing population, and the personal allegiances and suspicions, not least those between the various religious groups, concluding that 'Hull's churches, divided, vulnerable and on the threshold of decline, continued to be chiefly occupied with their own internal denominational affairs'.

Stublely is right to emphasise the divisions; they are inescapable. I am not sure, however, that he sufficiently demonstrates the extent of social stability or personal piety that the prevailing religious ethos in nineteenth-century Hull ensured and sustained; but then it is always more difficult to find evidence of contentment than of its opposite. In covering over a century within his limited scope Stublely has nevertheless given us a fine picture of the ways in which Evangelicalism worked at local level. There is room for more such studies.

ARTHUR POLLARD

THE INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW: Second Edition**Graham N Stanton ed**

Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1995 219 pp £12.50 pb ISBN 0 567 29255 X

THE INTERPRETATION OF MARK: Second Edition**William R Telford ed**

Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1995 342 pp £14.95 pb ISBN 0 567 29256 8

These two volumes are enlarged successors, that on Mark considerably so, of the originals published a decade ago. Each contains a comprehensive introduction by the editor summarising modern scholarship in the respective gospels.

The volume on Matthew starts with Dobschutz's redaction-critical essay from 1950 and ends with Kingsbury's narrative-critical study of Jesus' conflict with the Jewish leaders (1987). Three essays are devoted to particular areas of the gospel – Michel on the final verses (1950), Dahl on the Passion (1955) and Stendhal on the birth narrative (1960), whilst three others deal with the character of Matthaean Christianity – Bornkamm on authority to bind and loose (1970), Luz on the disciples (1971) and Schweizer on Matthew's church (1974). Stanton in the introduction also considers some aspects of Matthaean criticism not dealt with at length in the collection. These include Matthew's relationship to contemporary Judaism, his use of the Old Testament, the place of the law and, finally, some sociological approaches to the gospel.

Telford's introduction to the Mark volume, like the book itself, is more extensive than that in the work on Matthew. Indeed, it is positively encyclopaedic in its consideration of what has been a veritable explosion in Marcan studies. The editor tells us, and it is hard to disbelieve him, that he had problems in choosing from the plethora of material for the first and, even more, for the second edition. The articles include Weeden's work on the possible origins of the gospel in a theological conflict in the early church as to the nature of Jesus and Tannahill's narrative exploration of the failure of the disciples. The book is chiefly remarkable, however, for its five new and all very recent contributions, each of them reflecting the increasing influence in biblical interpretation of approaches long familiar in the field of literary criticism – E S Malbon's structuralist essay on *Galilee and Jerusalem*, R M Fowler's reader-response treatment of *The Rhetoric of Direction and Indirection in the Gospel of Mark* and three analytical pieces on the prologue (F J Matera), the little apocalypse (W S Vorster) and the Marcan ending (A T Lincoln).

It is impossible in a brief space to do critical justice in any detail to these volumes. Together they provide wide-ranging selections; and even where

one may find the speculation less than convincing, it is nonetheless stimulating and testimony to the persisting vigour of studies in these gospels.

ARTHUR POLLARD

**THE EMERGENCE OF LIBERTY IN THE MODERN WORLD –
The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th through
18th Centuries Douglas F Kelly**

Phillipsburg N J: Presbyterian and Reformed 1992 156 pp with index

£9.95 pb ISBN 0-87552-297-1

Douglas F Kelly is the Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. His interest in the subject of this book focuses on the debt which the Western World owes to Reformed theology in its application to constitutional law and civil liberty. It might appear that this is a slight work being only some 156 pages which includes the index. In fact, the book is full of information which while compressed is nonetheless highly readable opening an unusual area of study

Any reasonable acquaintance with Church history will confirm the fact that secular thought has played a large part in fashioning the manner in which the Church works. The 'Turnbull Report', at present being debated by the General Synod of the Church of England, is a case in point. What is less well known, or understood, is the way in which the Reformed Church has influenced the Western world in the gradual adoption of democracy. Douglas F Kelly in this work examines the development of the idea that the governing of society should be based on the consent of the people.

The background is that by the sixteenth century feudalism was giving way in Europe to the rise of personal monarchy in the growth of nation states. Understandably Reformers such as Luther, Tyndale and Cranmer saw the national church as a means of defence from the pretensions of the papacy to temporal as well as spiritual authority. But with the growth of personal monarchy came the idea of the divine right of kings to rule the people and that the king can do no wrong. In the city-state of Geneva, John Calvin was developing a different idea. This area of Church-State relations is traced by the author through five different governments beginning in Geneva, moving to Huguenot France and Knox's Scotland, Puritan England and finally to Colonial America.

John Calvin's name is normally associated with the doctrine of predestination and election, and his work is thought to be confined to the exposition of Scripture in Geneva and the development of Protestant dogmatics in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. But Kelly points out

that Calvin's training under John Major, the Scots Scotist, who was one of the last great mediaeval scholastics, profoundly influenced him, not least in constitutional law as well as theology. Calvin after his conversion developed late mediaeval Catholic theology in a biblical direction, rather than in a 'root and branch' separation. This becomes clear in two areas. He follows John Major in the repudiation of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture in favour of the literal and secondly in the constitutional removal of unjust kings.

The story of Calvin's development of Church government related to the civil government is the story of his ministry in Geneva. Kelly traces the main ideas which lead on to the influence spreading to the Huguenots in France who developed them to meet their own particular need in the face of a hostile Roman majority. Then in Scotland Knox developed the covenant idea of the right to resist tyranny. Kelly deals sympathetically and perceptively with the Reformation in England and the subsequent parliamentary revolution which finally triumphed in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688.

It might be argued that the failure of Presbyterianism in England would have militated against the acceptance of the political theory. Kelly, citing Warfield, explains that the problem for England was the *jure divino* claim of the Presbyterians. Nevertheless, the removal of the unjust Stuart, James II, can be seen as the direct outworking of this theory which led in time to the Act of Toleration and parliamentary democracy. The checks and balances of the 'two kingdom theory' did not prevail in the Erastian settlement but the consequence of that has left a secular Parliament in England with the right to alter the doctrine of the Church of England.

As one might expect, it was in colonial America and in New England particularly that the British Puritan aspirations of a holy Church and a holy commonwealth were worked out more fully. The Great Awakening with its emphasis on personal conversion did much to break down the commitment to Great Britain and one of the contemporary jibes was that the American War of Independence was a Presbyterian Revolution. George III was declared to be in breach of his duty to govern the colonies according to their laws. As Kelly points out there were many more selfish ambitions involved but the legal justification for the War of Independence was framed in covenant legal terminology. The most pertinent fact is that if the parliament of 1688 had the right to remove the Stuarts because of the violations of duty, so did the Continental Congress, which is a very persuasive argument.

The struggle for liberty in civil and religious affairs through these centuries can be traced back to John Calvin in Geneva who in turn was

indebted to both Lutheran and Roman Catholic sources which in their own turn go back to the Hebraic tradition.

This is not an esoteric work. The question of liberty under the law and that of parliamentary democracy impinge on us today. In England the position of the monarchy in relation to pronouncements and practices of the heir apparent must leave some doubt about the future of establishment. The highly liberal interpretation of the American constitution must also cause conservative Christians much concern for the future. This book is informative and well written. It deserves to be read widely and biblical application made to the contemporary scene.

D A STREATER

CRITICAL CHOICES Michael Green

Leicester: IVP 1995 160 pp £2.50 pb

ISBN 0-851100-883-0

Many will remember Michael Green's IVP pocketbooks of popular apologetics in the 1960s and 1970s: *Man Alive*, *Runaway World* and *Jesus Spells Freedom. You must be joking!* (Hodder) followed in the same genre. For many students and others, they were an eye-opener. Their value lay not just in their content and conversational style, but they showed that it was possible to give good reasons for Christian belief.

Now, for the 1990s, IVP have brought out a successor with all the strengths of the earlier books. Painting with a broad brush, Michael Green guides us through questions of identity, gender, ecology, relevance, pluralism, love, relativism, materialism, loneliness, the reliability of the gospel story, stress, the gospel challenge and so on. For the non-specialist it is all very helpful to have such a survey and overview. The vast range of issues addressed means that the treatment must be introductory and simplified. But it is also a distillation from the vast experience of this evangelist, apologist, scholar and pastor. Two pages from Michael Green are worth more than lots from many others.

Practical rather than theoretical, choices and their consequences are put clearly before us. It all points to the ultimate gospel choice. The book's strong arguments and lively style, with illustrations and pithy quotes from the contemporary world, make it very readable. It is completely jargon-free.

As a contemporary book of popular Christian apologetic, it can be commended for wide evangelistic use. No-one does it better!

ROGER COMBES

**THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS DESIGNS OF J S BACH'S
BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS** Michael Marissen

Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995 133 pp £19.95 hb

ISBN 0 691 03739 6

This major contribution to both theological and musicological research can be seen as part of a trilogy that should be made available to students of theology. The other two works are Robin Leaver's *J S Bach and Scripture: Glosses from the Calov Bible Commentary* (St Louis: Concordia 1985); and Ruth Tatlow's *Bach and the Riddle of the Number Alphabet* (Cambridge: CUP 1991). The former furnishes us with facsimiles and explanations, some speculative but many plain to see, of the marginal notes which the composer made in his Bible concordance. The discovery of these tomes earlier this century goes some way to account for the rise in some Lutheran circles of the notion of Bach as 'the Fifth Evangelist'. All we need now is for someone to publish a complete facsimile of this work which Bach manifestly studied – Bible, Luther commentary and all – and many things will fall into place for the Bach performer and student, professional and amateur, believer and agnostic.

Ruth Tatlow's book provides a balancing ingredient for the fertile theological imagination, by limiting the extent of rampant speculation as to Bach's use of number symbolism. Based on assiduous research, it provides honest and surprising answers to questions, where conclusions have too often been pre-judged by those who ascribe to this composer many and conflicting theological stances.

Michael Marissen's book is one of the first to make use of the evidence manifest in 'Bach's Bible'. After an introduction on *Bach's Musical Contexts*, there follow two chapters studying the *Relationship Between Scoring and Structure* in concertos 1, 4 and 6, and then *The Six Concertos as a Set*. The final chapter, *Lutheran Belief and Bach's Music*, is followed by two appendices of musicological evidence and three indexes.

Without the discovery of Bach's three-volume study Bible, the topic would still have to be placed entirely in the area of speculation. However, that this the greatest of composers should have used the Bible as his guide in professional and musical, as well as family and personal, matters, is now firmly beyond doubt, as is demonstrated in the final chapter. Concerning the possible later date of the composer's acquisition of these tomes, Marissen does not mean to suggest 'that there was some kind of causal connection between highlighting various Lutheran commentaries and his composing the Brandenburg Concertos', but that 'his marginal comments reflect his ongoing interest in certain basic social issues'.

The central thesis of the whole book is this: that in the instrumental scoring of Bach's six Brandenburg Concertos we have an outworking of the Magnificat, in both its theological and its sociological implications. Using the widespread existence of musical allegory as a justification for this approach, he makes a well-argued and well-documented case for Bach exalting the humble (eg giving significant melodies to the usually unmelodic viola, in concertos numbers 3 and 6) and putting down the mighty (eg thwarting the expectation of the solo violin to dominate all, in numbers 1 and 4). Marissen allows the usual arguments from circumstance to be confronted by the abiding puzzle: why were these concertos each unique, when he wrote so many other conventionally-scored concertos?

A further example is furnished by the apparent equality of material given to the aristocratic horns, the lowly oboes of the *Stadtpfeiferei*, and the usually dominant strings, as the first concerto unfolds:

Bach is able to achieve in music what is not possible in the real world: by having the groups within the ensemble of his concerto movement gradually function as and thus become equals, Bach neutralises social distinctions that at the time would normally have been taken for granted.

The writer goes on to confirm Bach's intention by reminding the reader that the same music is placed at the head of cantata no 52, *Falsche Welt, Dir traue ich nicht*, whose text contrasts the world's speciousness with God's loyalty.

So that no misappropriation of the Capellmeister by later revolutions may be allowed, we are assured in the final chapter:

One important message of Lutheran theology, and, I am arguing, of Bach's concertos, was that in the next world, the Heavenly one, the hierarchies of our present world will not be necessary. In other words, Bach's music more likely instructed its listeners how to cope with contemporary hierarchies than how to act upon them.

The specific 'theology' referred to here is that which Bach highlighted in Luther's commentary on the hierarchy of temple musicians in 1 Chronicles 25, and in his commentary on social justice in Deuteronomy, which the composer had in his library. However, Marissen would have done well to make more than just a footnote of Calvin's commentaries on the same passages, which Bach may well have encountered in the Calvinist court at Cöthen where he wrote these concertos. For a rewarding discussion of his time here, both musicological and theological, we are directed earlier in this book to Friedrich Smend's *Bach at Cöthen* (trans

John Page ed and rev Stephen Daw St Louis: Concordia 1985).

As far as technical knowledge and readability is concerned, the non musically-literate reader will gain much from up to half of Marissen's argument. For the rest, a recording and/or score of the Brandenburg Concertos would not be wasted.

CHRISTOPHER M THOMAS

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