

Finally the author discusses 'How is a (Roman) Catholic to vote' in a pluralist society, particularly if there is a conflict between personal conscience and duty as an office-holder. (I regret that none of the references on pages 9, 14 and 116 to President John F. Kennedy include what he actually said on this issue.) He also summarises the right and duty of the church both to teach and to persuade on matters of moral judgment, the church being an agent of divine grace for promoting social justice.

Professor Hannon hopes that his book may be of use to anyone interested in the themes which he discusses. I share that hope. The book is both learned and clear. It shows that Christians can justify their conduct, where appropriate, by sound yet compassionate reasoning.

*A HISTORY OF THE GLOUCESTER DIOCESAN ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE 1919-1922*

By JONATHAN MACKECHNIE-JARVIS

Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1992, x + 86 pp. (Paperback £5.00)

A review by June Rodgers  
Chancellor of the Diocese of Gloucester

Until reading Jonathan MacKechnie-Jarvis's book, I had not had much cause to consider what I now see to be the very real advantages of an Official Secrets Act. With mounting horror, I realised just what could be gleaned by an experienced church administrator from the minute books, correspondence and the scribbled marginalia of notes between the Chancellor, the members of the D.A.C. and what can only be described, when fighting its corner on Faculties, as the church militant. The freshness of the ill-concealed vituperation in letters, the appreciation of the really "sound" committee man at work, and the communal (well, most of the time) efforts of the D.A.C. to defeat predatory raids by the Diocesan Board of Finance will strike a deep chord with many readers.

The fascination of seeing how individual secretaries and chairmen influenced, cajoled and carried the Gloucester D.A.C. from 1919 is made the more interesting when set against the growth and development of its work.

A general introduction to the book deals with the late nineteenth century need for reform, the efforts made by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the report of Sir Lewis Dibdin, Dean of the Arches, in 1914 which proposed that each diocese should have "an honorary advisory body . . . to assist the Court, at the request of the Chancellor . . . in architectural, historical and artistic matters."

The First World War hastened rather than hindered the introduction of these Diocesan Advisory Committees, first in Oxford in 1916, as with emotional parochial enthusiasm, the war memorials of Britain were being built, many unsuitable and ill-considered for their surroundings.

By 1919 the Gloucester D.A.C. was set up, and within a short time they were advising on all applications, and not just war memorials. There was certainly a need. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings report of 1914 cites a Cotswold rector:

‘ “That old reredos”, he said cheerfully, “a hideous thing! The moment I set foot in the church, when I was appointed, I said to myself, “Well *you* have to go!”. Of course the people didn’t like it, – they said they were fond of it – but I used a little diplomacy . . . and I am just waiting to sell it to a dealer.” ’

The first Honorary Secretary, The Revd. Mr Jenner-Fust, a man of more taste than judgement, some schemes being described by him as “beneath criticism”, invited and got the first full-scale confrontation between the Bishop, the Board of Finance and the D.A.C. The D.A.C. lost.

During the inter-war years the work of the D.A.C. settled down, and this book is at its most interesting in showing how the changing tastes of succeeding generations of churchgoers developed. What they wanted was the style of the moment; war memorials in the nineteen twenties, calvaries and childrens’ corners in the period of the Anglo-Catholic Congresses, the hibernation of the second world war, the difficulties of repairs after the war at the height of Attleian austerity, the fixation of the nineteen fifties for central heating, bells and electric organs in the nineteen sixties, new stained glass in the nineteen seventies, and sound loops and re-ordering for the rite of coffee in the last decade.

All this is set against a background of a middle of the road diocese, the Cotswold Arts and Crafts movement and the D.A.C.’s encouragement (a continuing strand this), of good local artists.

The steady hand was that of William Croome, D.A.C. secretary and then chairman from 1927 to 1967 whose practical advice and independence was so important. The sensitivity of Daniel Verey in tandem with the common sense county solicitor Robin Haines as Chairman and Secretary from 1967 to 1985 ensured that the diocese was well-served during the years of “electric organs, fibre glass spires, radiant heating and artificial roofing material.”

Jonathan MacKechnie-Jarvis is too silent about his own role as the Assistant Secretary to the D.A.C. since 1985 when it came back more directly under the wing of Church House, Gloucester. The possibility of loss of independence by disappearing into a diocesan black hole -- justifiable on the grounds of expediency and business administration -- did not take place, thanks in no small measure to both the then Chairman Archdeacon Eric Evans, now Dean of St Pauls, and the author of this book.

This is the first book to review the real day to day workings of a Diocesan Advisory Committee. It catches the individual efforts of people who over 70 years have tried to do their best for a Diocese covering the High Cotswold, the Severn Vale, the Forest of Dean, stretching from the Warwickshire boundary to Wales against a welter of advice, complaints and exhortations from amenity societies, evasive P.C.C.s, grumpy petitioners, professional churchmen, not to mention their Chancellor.