

Williams explains in his Foreword that he has left out of account ecclesiastical affairs except in so far as they touch on political and social life. He does not explain why he has made this division. But as we read the book we get the impression that his real reason is because he is, *a priori*, convinced that religion had no relevance to the life of the city of London in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Indeed, it seems that he presumes that the religion of medieval Londoners was very like that of their modern descendants. Thus the religious side of the life of the guilds is represented as a formality. Their 'obsession with funeral rites' is equated with the burial rites of nineteenth century friendly societies (p. 171). The author's only generalisation on the effect of religion on the lives of the citizens is that:

'Vitality was curbed and channelled . . . by the influence of the Church . . .

Among the moneyed classes, in particular, preoccupation with life after death, intensive application to formal ritual, and an overriding concern with atonement were almost obsessive, as was perhaps natural, given the current canonical ambiguities on wealth, trade and usury.' (p. 22).

This judgment, we gather, rests solely on the evidence of wills and of Dr Moorman's 'Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century.' A scriptural quotation by a clerk chronicler receives the comment that this hardly represented the attitude of the citizens. We are told in passing that the preaching of Dominicans had strong influence during the violent political struggles in the city in the later thirteenth century—but the author does not see fit to enlarge on this point. Doubtless we have been too *simpliste* in the past in our notions of the middle ages as an age of Faith. But it would be equally *simpliste*—and historically unscientific—to see the average medieval Londoner as a modern post-Christian.

With these reservations, the book is very welcome as filling a notable gap in our knowledge of medieval history. Moreover it is, unlike the majority of modern historical theses written up into book form by specialists, written in readable and vigorous English.

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THE PROBLEM OF SOVEREIGNTY IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES, by M. Wilks. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, new series, vol. ix.) Cambridge University Press; 65s.

Dr Wilks sets out to create, from the massive heterogeneity of later medieval political thought, an order faithful to the facts and comprehensive to modern man. His relation to the writers of the period, like their own relation to their predecessors, is one of respect for every opinion without loss of unified perspective. To achieve this, he examines primarily the solution they offered to the problem of sovereignty; and succeeds in making this the pivot for an exceedingly wide arc, which takes in the universal society, the origins of political authority, the relation of ecclesiastical to lay rulership, as well as the strictly ecclesiological

topics of the nature of the papal monarch, and the relation of bishops, cardinals and council to him.

The main lines of the late medieval political thought, as they emerge from his research, are the struggle between the hierocratic view, or fully-developed and therefore extreme papalism allowing no limit to the virtually divine power of the pope, and the radical lay view, which gave political power to the community, able to order itself according to its natural needs and aims. Frequently this conflict was 'fought out . . . within the mind of one and the same author' (ix). In between the theocentric and the humanist stands a third phenomenon, the Thomist; who seeks to 'reconcile' them, maintaining the papal omnicompetence, to be limited however by the natural rights of the secular state, and monarchical government, to be balanced however by reason as expressed in the community and its communal organs. As Dr Wilks observes, the Thomist was trying to incorporate the diversity of political actuality into political theory; and, as he rightly deduces, this meant a rejection of single-principled political theory. Political Thomism, he claims, through its attempt to operate the principles of faith and reason on the same problem, involved 'intellectual schizophrenia' (528); it was a dubious half-way house between medieval God-centred hierocracy and modern man-centred rationalism; and it produced an 'Age of Confusion' (ix). However, the superior wisdom of a unitary approach to politics seems to be assumed rather than proved.

Among the many merits of this book, one may single out two. He succeeds in showing how complete was the notion of sovereignty in the fourteenth century writers on the papacy, and how little subsequent theorists needed but to transpose it into secular terms. Secondly, he achieves illuminating connexions between philosophy-theology and political thought. An example of this is the parallel between philosophical realism and the hierocratic conception of the Christian society as something more than its members (which gave a basis for papal absolutism), and the corresponding threat offered by Ockham's nominalism which opened the way for an individualist and voluntarist view of society. Generally speaking, the subjects dealt with are so various and so admirably knitted together that one may compare Dr Wilks' work with the *Summa* of Augustinus Triumphus, which formed the starting-point for it.

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REGALIAN RIGHT IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, by Margaret Howell; The Athlone Press; 42s. od.

THE NORMAN MONASTERIES AND THEIR ENGLISH POSSESSIONS, by Donald Matthew; Oxford University Press; 27s. 6d.

The Angevin monarchs and their successors have been the subjects of several recent studies. Margaret Howell and Donald Matthew have here added to our knowledge of their attempts to augment their income at the expense of the Church. 'Regalian Right' was the Crown's claim to appropriate the revenues,