

it. His literary output was somewhat unconventional for a don of his time. He wrote very few technical articles but a substantial range of books. He himself was modest in his claims. He wrote: "I cannot hold a candle to a Stenton or a Douglas or a Powicke or a Macfarlane – *nequid* to a Maitland – as a professional historian; I have made no important discoveries and changed no patterns." What, of course, he could do was write better than any of these, even Maitland. Any anthology of twentieth century English prose must include some of Knowles. Dom Morey quotes very freely from some of his marvellous letters about his feeling for the Somerset countryside. His great work was his voluminous history of Monasticism and the Medieval Religious Orders and it is superbly written. But it is not only style. He was lucid – his lecture on the tangled connexions between the so-called rule of the Master and that of St Benedict is a masterpiece of exposition of an appallingly complicated subject – he was elegant, he was richly emotional but never, or very, very seldom, sentimental or mawkish: above all he was always serious. He was a better 'technical' historian than he admitted – I suspect he rather cherished his amateur status. Forty years ago he published a technical article that establishes most of what there is to be established about King John's quarrel with Innocent III and his edition of Lanfranc's Monastic Constitutions leaves little to be desired. It is not simply style that explains his influence. Of the scholars he names, Powicke was no mean stylist and his late work *Henry III and the Lord Edward* contains many notable passages, Powicke was a tradition in himself. He had scores of pupils whose theses enriched – sometimes – his

pages, always scrupulously acknowledged. The culmination of his life's work was his volume in the Oxford History. It seems to me unreadable and it has certainly killed the subject stone dead. But *The Monastic Order* and *The Religious Orders* are very much alive. What Knowles did was to create a vast synthesis that could serve as a map by means of which later scholars could fill in the gaps and even radically alter the contours. Anyone interested in medieval monastic history could still easily find a life's work following up some of his themes: Knowles offered a stimulus where Powicke erected a tombstone.

He had his faults. He was much given to sitting 'in his professorial chair giving marks to men'. His character-study of Becket was a disaster in my opinion – as much a character-study of Becket as would be an essay on Tony Benn culled from the *Telegraph* and the *Mail*. In his collected *comminations*, published as a *Festschrift* under the revealing title of the *Historian and Character*, the longest is an extraordinary obituary of Cuthbert Butler. It is, I think, very unfair and it has helped eclipse what is a much more balanced survey of *Benedictine Monasticism* than can be found in Knowles' writings even if it is much duller. On the other hand his essay on Cardinal Gasquet is bitchiness raised to a fine art: but it is a just study all the same. The book concludes with a bibliography. There is the odd error. The Gasquet lecture was delivered in the university of London not the British Academy. Dom Morey notes that 'MDK contributed an essay on Becket to John Coulson's *Book of Saints* in 1969, He also wrote the lives of Dunstan and Francis of Assisi for that collection if my memory serves me rightly.

ERIC JOHN

**THE EVANGELICAL ANGLICAN IDENTITY PROBLEM: AN ANALYSIS** by J. I. Packer. *Latimer House, Oxford 1978. pp. 40 75p*

**THE INTEGRITY OF ANGLICANISM** by Stephen W. Sykes. *Mowbrays, London and Oxford 1978. pp. 117 £2.50 paperback.*

J. I. Packer doubts if any but his fellow Evangelicals will endorse his belief that the Church of England is "under judgment in these days for multiple unfaithfulness to

the gospel". Toleration of erroneous doctrine—"a licensed pluralism of belief about basics"—is making life impossible for Evangelical Anglicans. His pamphlet con-

cludes by declaring that excommunication, or anyway deprivation of office, for heresy is consistent with biblical thinking (2 John 9-11): "Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God ... do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting".

An outsider cannot tell if he would be much comforted by the book by S. W. Sykes (Professor of Divinity at Durham University). But, starting from exactly the same question about the limits of toleration to be extended to 'liberal' clergymen and theologians, Sykes moves ruthlessly through what he regards as the cosy Anglican myths that are responsible for "the sad state of Anglican theology today" and, to my mind at least, the severity of his criticism shows, in the outcome, not the hopelessness of Anglicanism but on the contrary its real and deep-rooted strength and attractiveness. A Church that calls forth this kind of attack on it from one of its members is a Church that a man loves and cares for. None of the bland, congratulatory portraits of the Church of England by Wand, Garbett and others, has ever shown me, as Sykes has done in this book, why Anglicanism matters.

The first myth is that Anglicanism is "comprehensive" in a way that other traditions are not. The Church of England, after all, is what survived of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* after thirty years of unparalleled liturgical changes and prosecutions for heresy: most of the clergy and people of the time in fact, but excluding Presbyterians, Anabaptists and the like on the one hand, and minus an equally small number of dedicated Papists on the other hand. In passing, it seems likely to me that what the latter missed was the "old mass" and the sort of priests it produced and required (a point of view the bishops and men like Thomas More could have understood): it was the liturgical "fare" of the reformed Church, in John Bossy's word, that they disliked. But, as Sykes insists, the Church of England demands agreement on fundamentals. It may be a *Via Media*—in George Herbert's phrase, "neither too mean, nor yet too gay", or in Bishop Simon Patrick's glorious description, "virtuous mediocrity ... between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of

Rome and the squalid sluttishness of fanatic conventicles" (he had once been a Presbyterian minister); but this must not, so Sykes says, be interpreted, with F. D. Maurice (who comes in for a hammering in this book), as a "union of opposites", a Church in which contradictory views can all be true and in some yet undiscovered way reconcilable.

The second myth is that there is a liberal party in the Church of England. Liberalism in theology is a habit of mind; in all schools in the Church there will be those who question received opinion. That means only that there will always be doctrinal conflict, and a good thing too. It doesn't mean that Anglicans have no firm standpoint on matters of doctrine. In his third chapter Professor Sykes insists that the doctrine of the Incarnation is basic to Anglican liturgical life as enforced by canon law (whatever the "experiments" and however much the law has been flouted). He makes the important point that how liturgy is performed expresses doctrinal commitments, as well as what the texts actually say. But as a worshipping body, as a matrix for the nurture of Christian people, so Sykes insists, the Church of England has a firm and strong doctrinal tradition.

The trouble is, as the next three chapters show, that Anglicans have pretended that they have no doctrine, as Lutherans and Romans have, and that they have no systematic theology, like German Protestants and Thomist Catholics—and they have taken pride in this! There has only been an Anglican *method*, an "approach". It has even been claimed (by Wand among others) that the best source for Anglican theology is the private letters and papers published in the great biographies of the archbishops of Canterbury (not even the pope's official letters would be that important for Catholics). Sykes shows that there is indeed a distinctively Anglican doctrinal tradition, in which the doctrine of the Incarnation is important, but it is not a matter of pride that there has been so little systematic theology. Far from there being only a "method", it can be shown (from Michael Ramsey and others) that the method carries doctrinal commitments. But the real problem is the myth of the

"English mind", which turns away from "system" (in Anglican theology and in Oxford philosophy maybe, as Sykes says, but obviously English physicists, biochemists and so on must be capable of systematic thinking). The best way for Anglicans to discover the fundamental doctrines of the Church of England, and thus to get out of the impasse of apparently tolerating the incompatible, would simply be to do some serious theology. Far from its being a distinctive advantage of Anglicanism that it doesn't go in for systematic theology it is, so Sykes argues, vital for its future that it should do so. He cites books by John Macquarrie and John Austin Baker as the kind of work that is needed.

In his final chapter he goes back to the account of authority in the Church set out in the Lambeth Conference Report of 1948. The picture of a "dispersed" authority—an interplay of checks and balances—is, as he says, very like the model for

which the Church of Rome is reaching; but it takes for granted an experience of permanent conflict, which Catholics have not perhaps yet come to terms with. However that may be, Sykes concludes that "the basic seat of authority in the Anglican Church" is "the decision-making process whereby liturgies are changed" (p.96). As he says, "what is enforced in the liturgies of the church is the most powerful tool in the hands of ordinary clergy and the laity for resisting innovations which have no right to parity of esteem or equality of consideration when compared with the established traditions". A judgment about liturgical change will be necessarily controversial; but, "because there is an obvious congregational preference for the familiar", conflicts about Christian belief and practice will finally be conducted in terms of what ordinary clergy and people will "take".

FERGUS KERR O. P.

**CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD ORDER** by Edward Norman. *Oxford University Press, £3.50*

Much of Edward Norman's argument in these notorious Reith lectures is sound, sensible and convincing. Christianity, Norman claims with evident good reason, is in dire danger of being reduced to the political. Fashionable clerics, many of them amusingly naive in their zealous espousal of complex revolutionary causes, have deceived themselves into indentifying the Christian gospel with the partial, problematic, historically relative beliefs of Marxism and liberal humanism. Fired with uncritical enthusiasm for the 'secular', and progressively embarrassed by a hint of the sacred, the Christian churches are well *en route* to drastically recasting the whole of scripture and tradition into a particular, absolutised ideology of Human Rights. Not only are they naive, modish and reductionist, but hypocritical too. 'Progressive' Christian commissions will denounce right-wing violations of human rights but drag their feet over left-wing ones. 'The present identification of Christianity with western bourgeois liberalism', as Norman writes in a sentence which could have been culled from any *New Blackfriars* editorial,

'seems an unnecessary consecration of a highly relative and unstable set of values'.

Given the indiscriminate indignation to which many of the clerics in question were roused by Norman's extremely reasonable case, it is important to emphasise what he is not arguing. He is not claiming that the gospel has nothing at all to do with political values and actions. He entirely accepts that Christian faith must bear fruit in social practice, and even regards aspects of Marxist analysis as 'extremely valuable'. Nor does he intend to suggest that many of the personal freedoms now struggled for within the ideology of human rights are not to be desired. It is just that, 'to the Church's real and important concern with the conditions in which people live has been added a succession of ideological superstructures whose content has been acquired, not from a distinctively Christian understanding of the nature of man and his social state, but from ideas current within the educated classes of the western world in general'. On this score, once again, Dr Norman's case is wholly in line with the editorial policy of this journal.