

REVIEWS

THE CONSECRATION OF THE MOST REVEREND MATTHEW PARKER, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY : EFFECTED BY THE RIGHT REVEREND ANTHONY KITCHIN. By J. C. Whitebrook. (Mowbray; 8s. 6d.).

Much controversy from the Nag's Head fable onwards has gathered round the question of the consecration of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, from whom the whole episcopal succession of the Church of England descends. It has been claimed that Bishop Barlow, his consecrator, never himself received consecration; that the part of the Lambeth register which describes Parker's own consecration on December 17th, 1559, has been tampered with and does not record what actually occurred on that date; and that Parker himself was never consecrated at all. The evidence for these contentions is generally held to be neither complete nor decisive; there are gaps in it which make the attainment of historical certainty in either direction unlikely.

The thesis of the present work, based upon extensive documentary research, is a new one, but it only appears to add to the existing confusion and uncertainty. It is that Parker was consecrated not by Barlow on the date given in the Lambeth register, but by Anthony Kitchin, Bishop of Llandaff, at an earlier date—perhaps the last Sunday in October, 1559; and according not to the Edwardine rite but to an adaptation of the Sarum Pontifical.

The evidence for this is drawn mainly from the fact of the illegality at the time of the Edwardine rite; from Parker's consecration years noted in the dating of various official documents in the Lambeth registry—registration and probate of wills and the like; and from the position and treatment of Kitchin, who remained till his death, probably late in 1563, in possession of his see, yet never apparently conformed to the regulations of the Elizabethan settlement.

The checking of all this evidence involves the expert work of examining documents, and until this has been done, the non-expert must suspend judgment. It may however be said by way of generalization that the dating of documents of this kind is no very sure ground on which to build so startling a theory, and that an impression left upon a layman in these matters, after reading the book, is that the learned author shows a tendency to draw conclusions which his evidence does not seem fully to warrant. The truth or error of his thesis does not of course affect the Anglican Orders controversy, since the question of whether or no Parker's consecrator was a Bishop in the Catholic sense is expressly excluded in the Bull *Apostolicae Curae* from the grounds on which those Orders were judged and declared invalid. The author indeed, interprets a somewhat ambiguous passage in the Bull to mean that this exclusion was largely due to the fact that the Vatican Archives contain unpublished evidence which would prove the truth of his thesis.

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