

This should not be misread as implying that Professor Hastings is pressing a 'Catholic' point of view. I would agree in any case that the vital fact in the recent history of English Christianity has been a shift in the balance of power in the religious subculture from Anglicanism to Catholicism. This comes out clearly in the separate chapters which he devotes to the up and down fortunes of academic theology (that most misunderstood of trades), as well as in the sections on theology and culture, including literature (where much will depend, however, on the reader's own view of writers like Evelyn Waugh and C.S. Lewis). Moreover, Hastings makes no effort to hide his distress at the largely negative effect of Vatican II in the time of Cardinal Heenan. In a moving paragraph he says: 'The tragedy in England of the post-conciliar Church was a tragedy of devout young people, desperate for the pill, but unable to reconcile it with the confidence in Roman authority they had learned at mother's knee. It was a tragedy of a whole generation of able priests—perhaps the ablest the Catholic Church in England has ever had—who went down leaderless between Rome and their people; but it was the personal tragedy too of John Carmel Heenan'. And he quotes the brave, noble words of Bishop Butler writing on *Humanae Vitae*, words which Newman would surely have endorsed: 'It is simply and solely to man's conscience that the Christian gospel, the Catholic faith, makes its appeal. And it seems to me that at the very point where authority fails to communicate its message to conscience, it fails to *be* effective authority ...'. Again and again Professor Hastings seems to me to underline the dilemma of the modern Christian, alternatively attracted and repelled by the spiritual courage and the intellectual crassness of so much institutional Christianity. Hence the wisdom of his conclusion, that only when the Churches adjust to their exclusion from the commanding heights of present-day society (an exclusion made obvious, I would say, in the British government's treatment of the Aids issue) can they effectively resume their missionary task.

JOHN KENT

MARRIAGE IN CANON LAW: TEXTS AND COMMENTS, REFLECTIONS AND QUESTIONS, by Ladislav Orsy. *Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1986.* pp.328. £25.00

Tucked away in one of his footnotes is a good clue to what Orsy's commentary is aiming at; the greatest precision obtainable, for the sake of those who eventually will have to carry in real life the burden of our theoretical conclusions. This is the spirit of Orsy, an internationally-known Jesuit canonist, born in Hungary and teaching mainly in the United States. He studied theology at Louvain, civil law at Oxford and canon law in Rome.

There is no mistaking his intellectual vigour, the sheer theological inquisitiveness of the man, or his marked sense of pastoral responsibility. The bulk of the book is a canon by canon commentary on the 1983 Code as it deals with marriage (canons 1055—1165). But the framework can scarcely contain the exuberant dialectic, which spills over into footnotes, extra notes and finally into thirteen fundamental questions concerning problem areas and disputed matters. Question 12, on whether the tribunal system is satisfactory, and question 11, on whether canonical form should be required for validity, are especially good. Even the bibliography is annotated.

Keeping pace with such a probing mind does make extra demands on the reader, who should expect not so much a placid and thorough exposition of the canons but rather the constant highlighting of the assorted elements that make up the canons, and the unresolved problems and tensions involved. This is not an introductory textbook. Here and there this method, or perhaps intellectual predilection, means that points needing to be covered are not treated as they deserve. The perfunctory explanation of canon 1101 is a glaring example, despite its prominence in societies in which divorce, infidelity or contraception are deeply rooted.

Notwithstanding having such a critical mind, Orsy can be, shall we say, excessively optimistic about the strength of his own assessments. This optimism takes different forms. In the case of the law on mixed marriages it underplays the restrictive nature of the current legislation. When canon 1025 says that permission for a mixed marriage can be granted if there is 'a just and reasonable cause' it will not do to comment that the honest decision of the parties to marry amounts to such a cause. More is demanded surely, and one recalls that Paul VI's *Matrimonia Mixta* of 1970 had simply envisaged 'a just cause'. (Wags will remember the *ben trovato* story that Pius IX on being asked for a certain dispensation, smiled and said, 'The Pope cannot grant that dispensation. You must go to an American bishop for it'. Possibly, the story is less funny these days). Another kind of over optimism surfaces in dealing with canon 1055:2, a canon raising a whole cluster of problems that have taxed even the International Theological Commission. The canon states that between the baptised there can be no valid matrimonial contract that is not by that very fact a sacrament. Here Orsy seems over-optimistic in minimising the weight of the views contrary to his. Yet another kind of optimism is shown in the lengthy treatment of question 13 on the delicate and pressing question of the reception of the eucharist by those in irregular marriages. Orsy's account of the position of those couples appears excessively optimistic in largely ignoring their inability to receive sacramental absolution in addition to being excluded from receiving the eucharist. The requirement that a couple should live as 'brother-and-sister' as a condition for returning to full sacramental life is ascribed by Orsy to the authors of 'manuals'; no mention is made of such evidence as there is of the requirement actually working in practice, nor is it mentioned that the requirement is endorsed by John Paul II in the very document, *Familiaris Consortio*, quoted for other purposes by Orsy.

In sum, the main achievement of this stimulating book does not lie in being a consistently thorough exposition of the canons but rather in showing in detail and with learning just to what extent the present law of marriage is a *construct*, or even a series of constructs, that is a provisional fitting together of assorted elements. Guided by Orsy, the reader is invited to identify if each element expresses a point of dogma, a philosophical position, an exhortation or whatever, to assess it, and not to close any debate prematurely. Canon law studies *can* be intellectually respectable.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

**THE THOUGHT OF GREGORY THE GREAT by G.R. Evans. Cambridge, 1986.
164pp. £25.**

This is a very indifferent book. It adds virtually nothing to our understanding of Gregory the Great and charges £25 for it into the bargain. I associate Dr Evans with Anselm and the twelfth century rather than the world of the early middle ages. She has in fact followed a method of studying Gregory that would have been richly rewarding when applied to Anselm: that of summarising and presenting the essence of his *opus* for the interested reader. But Gregory was simply not an original or very striking thinker and most of his 'thought' was commonplace or derivative. Dr Evans does, to be fair, dig out a few plums: an interesting use of astrology for instance. What was interesting and original about Gregory were his radical reversals of the policies of the Roman Church and his reluctant but firm change of perspective on the way he looked at his world. It is the 'historical' aspect of Gregory that matters not his 'thought'. It is the application of his powerful intelligence to the task of changing his world that matters. On these matters Dr Evans has little to say. The bibliography is very revealing for what isn't in it. The *Liber Pontificalis* is used in Mommsen's incomplete and inferior edition instead of Duchesne's classic edition. There is nothing of the late J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, though there are any number of points of discussion that call for his insights. Worst of all she does not seem to know D.H. Green's