

Reviews

MARRIAGE IN THE WESTERN CHURCH: THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF MARRIAGE DURING THE PATRISTIC & EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIODS by Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1994*, pp. xxx + 436

Christians are divided by a common Bible. The truth in this statement comes out clearly on the issue of marriage and divorce, and divisions emerged long before the Reformation. Reynolds posits a 'normative Western position' on divorce and remarriage and argues that it was relatively new and still localised at the time of Augustine. The normative position sees divorce as licit only on the ground of adultery, with the wife and husband having equal rights in this regard, and that neither divorced spouse can ever validly remarry in the lifetime of the other.

Reynolds's contention is that what Christianity did at first was limited to setting higher standards for married people, as it did for the treatment of slaves. Later, the Church was to effect a more radical form of Christianisation by identifying the 'sacramentality' of marriage with indissolubility. And so the normative model was established. He believes it 'unlikely' (p.177) that the invalidity of remarriage prevailed in any province of the Church before the late fourth century. The origin of the notion of a matrimonial bond is to be located in Tertullian and was a product of Montanist eschatology. In addition, Reynolds is particularly interested in why the nuptial liturgy did not become central to the Christian understanding of marriage as a holy and divinely instituted union.

To reach his conclusions, Reynolds divides the study into four parts. First comes an account of marriage in Roman and Germanic law, followed by accounts of marriage in the Church, Augustine's theology of marriage and a final part on the nuptial process. Hincmar of Reims is given deserved prominence.

Some points in the book will attract debate because the material can be interpreted differently, but Reynolds has tried to reason his way to the conclusions he draws. No one can fail to learn from his book. Now and then, however, the reader is left unsure as to the author's own position or its justification. In a rather perfunctory discussion of a crucial text, canon 8 of the Council of Nicaea is interpreted to mean that remarried divorcees were included among the *digamoi*, to be received back into communion after penance as remarried persons.

But is it interpreted by the author himself in this way? Reynolds says at p. 148 that 'one' may interpret canon 8 along the lines established by the Italian scholar Cereti. Is Reynolds, who often speaks in the first person, including himself in the 'one'? He should also have said whether or not canon 8 was commented on by any early theologian or bishop.

At another level, it is not always clear if Reynolds has seen the biblical depth behind some assertions or if he does not accept it and leaves this unsaid. In discussing Jerome (pp.223–4), Reynolds says that when the disciples realised that Jesus was ruling out divorce except for fornication, they declared that it would be expedient to remain single. Jerome is then quoted and it is said that he 'heartily agreed with these disciples'. No mention is made of the more weighty point that Jerome was in line with *Jesus*, who in *Matthew* 19 : 12 is shown to have no illusions about how difficult it would be to accept what he is teaching. Again, in discussing Augustine, Reynolds states that no one claimed that the (normative Western) doctrine made persons happier in this life. Here too no mention is made of Jesus's own words as recorded by Matthew's gospel that only those to whom it is granted can accept his teaching, and his remarks about eunuchs. If, as Reynolds notes, for Augustine the ban on remarriage after divorce brought one face to face with the ineluctable and unfathomable will of God this too was in line with Jesus's teaching. The reign of God impels the divorced believer to live as if he had no wife. God's gift enables the believer to do so. These two key verses in Matthew's gospel are never given by Reynolds the full discussion they require nor are we told if there was any early exegesis of them.

Reynolds's strengths are the clarity of his exposition, the range of documentation and topics he has gathered, and his sheer intellectual vigour as a debater. He will leave his readers questioning what they perhaps prematurely had regarded as already settled or unproblematic. A book in English partially overlapping with Reynolds's is G.H.Joyce's *Christian Marriage* and it should have been cited in its second edition (1948) especially as Reynolds disagrees with him on various matters.

In a most challenging way Reynolds assesses the significance of Justinian's legislation, the work of a truly Christian emperor that centuries later still 'amazed' medieval canonists because it went against the law of the Lord. Unlike Reynolds, the canonists' *Glossa Ordinaria* to Gratian believed that Justinian had acted out of ignorance or error or to avoid greater evils. For his part, Reynolds thinks that what the Christian emperors knew as the doctrine of marriage was less dogmatic and less theological than the doctrine of men like Tertullian, Jerome and Augustine. A problem inherent in the kind of historical reconstruction undertaken by Reynolds is always going to be differentiating what was merely tolerated by the Church from what was accepted.

The chapter on spouses separating in order to enter religious life

has not lost its relevance or its theological problems today, and when Reynolds begins his section on the nuptial process (dealing with betrothal, consummation and benediction) by saying that in the early Middle Ages getting married was a process rather than a simple act this too is part of our contemporary debates.

Jerome reflected that 'the laws of Caesar are different from the laws of Christ'. The book by Reynolds is a scholarly contribution to mapping out this difference. The relevance of such research is shown by the assertion in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1994 letter on divorce and remarriage that even if pastoral solutions analogous to the ones the Congregation was rejecting have been proposed by a few Fathers and in some measure were practised, nevertheless these never attained the consensus of the Fathers and in no way came to constitute the common doctrine of the Church nor to determine her discipline.

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THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: SOURCES AND METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF EARLY LITURGY by Paul F. Bradshaw. *SPCK*, 1992. Pp 217. £15.

Paul F. Bradshaw is currently Professor of Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. In this work he follows the well-trodden path of those who have attempted to isolate and identify the origins of Christian worship. What differentiates him from his predecessors on this trail is that he displays considerable humility and caution in his conclusions. He subjects the surviving evidence to a minute examination and is thorough and painstaking in his research. The most valuable results of research are negative. Dr Bradshaw has honestly combed the sources and decisively proved in a number of instances what cannot have been the case, thereby calling into question certain firmly and fondly held theories.

Dr Bradshaw offers a magisterial treatment of the Jewish background of Christian worship as an overture to his book. It would have been interesting, although admittedly this did not fall totally within the brief that he set himself, to have some references to the 'Philo-semitic' movement in eighteenth century Europe and an investigation of the relation of early Jewish liturgical scholarship to both the Enlightenment and Romantic projects. His most suggestive remarks, and those which must strike considerable fear into most modern liturgical scholars, are those relating to the effects which modern Jewish liturgical scholarship might have on its Christian counterpart. Recent discoveries by Jewish scholars, particularly those associated with Jewish prayer forms connected with meals, have been challenging many of the firmly accepted nostrums of Christian liturgists.

In the past too much reliance has been placed on the theory that a