

for here German mysticism, St Hildegard and the Gertrudes, with their concentration on the sacred humanity, and on the 'Wounds of Jesus'—supply even more important influences on Tauler, Suso and perhaps the modern devotion. And here and at one or two other points I am not sure whether the medieval hermeneutic, with its ambivalent exegesis did not permit thinkers to treat 'unity in Christ' as at once a matter for the individual soul while at the same time being ecclesiological? About the Free Spirits, Dr Leff gathers together the fragments of this intriguing underworld more carefully than most—and confirms me in thinking that this is one of the clues towards the imagery of Bosch and that spiritual jungle in which another important element is alchemy. The chapter on Wycliffe is fine and enthralling, and what Dr Leff has to show in a documented analysis of his later eucharistic teaching shows a spiritualism too subtle for Wycliffe's followers but which will have to be considered and noted by those concerned with late medieval and Reformation eucharistic controversy. But about this, and about Wycliffe's doctrine of the Bible, while marvelling at Dr Leff's easy movement among the Latin imponderables, I found myself wondering like Doubting Luther on the 'Scala Sancta'—'who knows whether it is true?' Only in heaven—and perhaps in Tübingen—is there knowledge enough to answer this question. And then the question—Wycliffe's influence on Lollardy—the remote and ineffectual don and a church struggle—Karl Barth and the Confessing Church. I do not think we have got this right yet, either. I know that at the end of H. B. Workman's life, his daughter came upon him weeping and sadly tearing to pieces the manuscript he could never finish of a further volume on

Wycliffe and later Lollardy, and I suspect he might have come up with some clues which have yet to be brought out. What is fascinating is to turn from Wycliffe's influence on his disciples in England to those in Bohemia and to see what different things they found in him, and how those differences were rooted in a different historical and theological context—much as the Americans and the Germans have found two different Bonnhoeffers.

Finally, Dr Leff leaves ideology for historical events in a lucid, factual survey of the Hussite movement which show his competence in the field of historical narrative. We feel perhaps that it is among ideas that he is most at home, that it is here that his work is most rich and thought-provoking. Amid the papal bulls and the theological treatises, the articles and the meditations, the gifted and often lop-sided leaders, we only catch occasional glances of the little people. Perhaps one who has an in-built sympathy with dissenters and non-conformists may suspect that there were among them not only the perverts, the arrogant, the awkward squads; but, as Dr Leff implies, he cannot narrate this, for the records are in the main silent about them—holy and humble men and women of heart. One whose interest lies in the sixteenth century must be deeply grateful for this work, and still more exasperated that we await another Leff to explore for us the jungle of the fifteenth century where his main streams begin to run underground and the conventicles of Lollards, Hussites, Waldensians, Free Spirits, Friends of God almost disappear, to come up again one day among the Anabaptists and the disciples of Thomas Müntzer. But this is a great, memorable study for which we should be very thankful.

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DEFENSORIUM OBEDIENTIAE APOSTOLICAE ET ALIA DOCUMENTA, ed. and trans. H. A. Oberman, D. E. Zerfoss, and W. J. Courtney. *The Belknap Press of Harvard University*. vii + 387 Pp. £5 14s.

This sumptuously produced and very expensive volume was probably meant primarily as a contribution to the pre-history of the Reformation. It contains a number of documents relating to the ex-communication of Archbishop Diether of Mainz by Pius II, chief amongst them a tract, celebrated in its day, by one Gabriel Biel, called *Defensorium Obedientiae Apostolicae*. The dispute had more than local importance because it occurred very soon after Pius II thought he had given the *coup de grace*

to the Conciliar Movement with his bull, *Execrabilis*; in spite of which Archbishop Diether had the temerity to appeal to a council. The editors provide annotated texts, a valuable introduction, and a free translation which seems accurate where I have tested it. Although one of them is a professor in a German university, we get that horrid solecism, *Hapsburg*. They have conscientiously sought to identify their authors' sources, although this cannot have been their main interest, but they have, I

think, relied overmuch on the attributions in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, and these are not always accurate.

The texts themselves are madly unappetizing. Only the Biel tract rises much above the level of vituperation and fawning, and that not very much. It would be difficult to find a piece of what is allegedly theology so full of non-sequiturs, as devoid of charity as the *Defensorium*. Biel sought to erect a water-tight case against his archbishop, presenting the pope as an authoritarian Roman *princeps*, responsible to no man and hardly to God, who might with perfect propriety condemn anyone he pleased, untried, even unheard, without any right of appeal. His arguments are largely logical deductions from proof-texts not usually of much relevance in their original form to the point at issue. The basis of the argument is the Petrine texts from which Biel infers that Catholics must obey Peter and his successors in utter subjection, then Biel feels he can happily cite St Paul. It seems to me that at this crucial point this type of argument, which is still commonly urged, meets a serious difficulty. For the argument to have force it is necessary to assume that the keys of the kingdom, the power of binding and loosing, were entrusted to Peter in such a way as to make him a *princeps* in Roman law—whose will has, of course, the force of law. His authority must therefore be unique, and wholly transmittable and transmitted to his successors, the popes. On the evidence of Scripture, the authority of Peter was not at all like this. In the first exercise of authority he was defied to his face by Paul, who did something very like appealing to a council, so that clearly Peter's authority was subject to criticism and even correction, admittedly by himself, after debate. I think medievals and some moderns tend to suppose Paul was a sort of emanation of Peter, *Doppelgänger*, whose independent initiatives and powerful criticisms of anybody and anything he thought needed it, merit no special attention from students of authority in the early Church. But surely it is Paul, not Peter, who writes the first encyclicals, and it is because they were, or were believed to be, by Paul that they were held as authoritative. No early pope would have dared say, 'These epistles are authoritative, because the successor of Peter says so,' but rather 'Obey these because I, like

you, must submit to the guidance of the apostle Paul'. But what was the nature of Paul's authority? He had no share in the original commissioning: his commission was self-announced, self-justifying, and accepted on his say-so by the other 'regularly' appointed apostles including Peter. In other words, Paul's authority was charismatic in a way that apostolic authority in general wasn't quite. It seems to me that it is impossible to read Scripture as though it were a collection of Justinian's *Novels*, but this is what Biel did.

Interestingly, Biel admits (as the editors point out in view of recent discussions he could hardly avoid doing) that the pope cannot command what is contrary to the law, divine or natural, or against Scripture. He admits we must always obey God, not man, and then slides out of the admission by arguing as though only secular authority ever acted unjustly. On his arguments elsewhere in the tract he must in fact suppose it blasphemy to accuse the pope of such conduct, other than drawing his attention to the possibility that he might be wrong and accepting his judgment if he persisted in so acting.

On Biel's thesis there could be no place for the individual conscience and no explanation of why anybody might become a Catholic in the first place. There is, of course, no point in taking men like this over-seriously. In every age popes have been cursed with *epigoni* who cover the pursuit of their vested interests by corrupt encomiums of powers they need the pope to possess, if their own advantages are to be maintained.

It is only fair to add that there is no doubt that Archbishop Diether was thoroughly unsuitable for his office. Not that this is what Pius II objected to; why should he, rather how could he? He was, after all, the author of perhaps the oddest, if not the least cogent, defence of clerical celibacy: 'I have loved many women, and having enjoyed them have soon tired of them.' There was a local war and many of the smaller people lost their lives in the fighting and the heresy hunt. But in the end the archbishop and the pope made it up and Diether ended his days in the premier see of Germany in full papal favour. There is, I feel, a moral in this somewhere.

ERIC JOHN