

Mr Petersson has 'attempted to date everything according to the Gregorian Calendar' (p. 11). This was once the practice in England, but it led to such chaos that it was given up a century ago. The trouble is that it is so difficult to be consistent. Mr Petersson does not, for the Gunpowder Plot, 'Remember, remember' *the twenty-sixth of October*. The only satisfactory, and now almost universal, practice is to print the actual date on the manuscript, and leave it to the intelligence of the reader. But the author seems loth to leave anything to the intelligence of the reader.

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CHARLEMAGNE. By Richard Winston. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 25s.)

The author of this new biography rejects the idea that Charlemagne was merely a rude and unlettered barbarian. He insists that he was not only a great political figure but also a profound theologian and one of the foremost intellectuals of his age. These are high claims: that the reader is left convinced that they are justified is perhaps the fairest measure of Mr Winston's success.

His interpretation of the problem of Charlemagne's coronation as *Imperator Romanorum* is certainly original. In his view it was primarily an attempt by Leo III and the King to reconcile the citizens of Rome to Frankish rule and to their pro-Frankish pope whom they had already tried to depose. For Charlemagne it also represented, of course, the culmination of his ambitions.

Some readers may question Mr Winston's rendering of the title *rector ecclesiae*. He suggests that Charlemagne saw himself as 'the true head of the church'. If this is so little room is left for the more common view that the coronation of A.D. 800 was intended to establish a dual system with Pope and Emperor ruling together, the one governing the spiritual, the other the temporal domain.

A theocratic institution, the new Empire embodied the conception of Christianity as the ultimate social unity with the temporal ruler holding a sacred character as the divinely appointed leader of the Christian people. Within this unitary conception of the Christian community the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual powers may indeed have become blurred, but it is surely unwise to press too far the idea of the two powers as no more than two aspects of the one society. The deposition of Childeric III should warn us against this assumption. By the death of Charlemagne the three powers of Papacy, Roman Empire and Frankish Kingdom, to use Alcuin's trichotomy, had of course become confused beyond unraveling, and the fall of the Empire may in large measure be explained by just this confusion.

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