

**THE CHURCH AND SOVEREIGNTY c. 590–1918. Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks edited by Diana Wood. (Studies in Church History: Subsidia 9). Basil Blackwell, 1991. Pp. xx + 513. £37.50**

One of the first things published by Michael Wilks was a book review in *Blackfriars* in 1958. In it, he admonished Thomas Gilby OP for giving an over-idealised picture of the age of Aquinas. He asked what the author meant by 'State' and concluded that the legal implications of Aquinas's political philosophy were a vital factor in the growth of the modern European state. Since 1958, Professor Wilks has continued to show just how important and many-sided was the theme of sovereignty, inside and outside the Church. These collected essays testify to how influential and considerate he has been as a teacher and scholar. Behind Wilks himself, and several of the contributors to the present volume, there stands the formative influence of the late Walter Ullmann.

Wilks has brought subtlety and precision to the study of sovereignty, or supreme authority. One of Ullmann's abiding lessons has not been forgotten: never to neglect law and lawyers in studying the Middle Ages. The individuals who have come to dominate Wilks's researches have been the friar Augustinus Triumphus (early on), Pope Innocent III and Wyclif (increasingly). All three are examined in these essays. Perhaps Wilks, and the contributors writing this collection, have rather neglected the sustained study of Aquinas, once described by Wilks as the medieval author who has most dominated the European intellectual tradition. Aquinas's *De Regno* must surely be one of the classics of political literature.

Chronologically, the 29 essays published in the present volume go from about 590 to 1918. And the volume includes a bibliography of Wilks's writings. Thematically, the essays range widely, beyond the scope even of summary and assessment here. Robert Markus, writing on Gregory the Great, congratulates Wilks for sharpening our sense of the political overtones and implications of religious language. Further on, Antony Black offers an exciting and pioneering essay on the political languages (note the plural) of later medieval Europe. From another standpoint, Brian Tierney explains that, when Suárez and his contemporaries formulated the rights theories that would come to characterise the jurisprudence of the early modern world, they had several traditions of discourse on which to draw. Incidentally, although various contributors refer to the use of the Old and New Testaments by the medievals, no one explores systematically in the context of sovereignty Ullmann's belief that putting the Bible into Latin conditioned later thought.

The local historian in Wilks will be glad to see some essays with a localised focus: on Westminster abbey as a site for king-making, on the diocese of Osma and a disputed episcopal election, on the university of Toulouse and the problem of subjection, for example. As well as consideration of the centre (papal, imperial and royal rulers), there are

also views from the edge, as it were, in the studies on excommunicates, Jews, and Byzantines. Wilks castigated long ago those who were crude enough to demand a straight answer to the problem of sovereignty. The shifting location of centre and periphery is part of the complexity. There were significant redrawings of boundaries from the sixteenth century onwards, and this collection also has essays on conciliarism, papalism and power in the period 1511–1518, on the conciliarism of the Scottish writer John Mair and other relevant material. There is also told the sometimes tragic tale of monks, friars and the royal supremacy in sixteenth century Yorkshire. Quarrels over sovereignty have not always remained academic or rarified. The repercussions of the theme extend to the present day, and in some ways are built into Christianity itself.

Aquinas is referred to repeatedly in this collection, yet in terms of focus he is the great absentee. But his fellow-Dominican, John of Paris, is examined thoroughly by Janet Coleman. Although he died in 1306, he had an influence on conciliarists of the fifteenth century, and republicans of the seventeenth. As for the papacy, so central to the theme of the Church and sovereignty, it is not neglected in these essays. Particularly stimulating, and a needed corrective to persisting bias, is David d'Avray's contribution on papal authority and religious sentiment in the late Middle Ages. The idea and practice of indulgences put the papacy in the middle of powerful currents of religious sentiment, and various preachers emphatically encouraged reverence for the papal office.

With an eye on today's Europe in flux over the redefinition of states and peoples, and with an eye to a papacy not reluctant to be involved with international affairs, we can ponder the essay by Diana Perry on the Neapolitan lawyer Paridis de Puteo. Perry concludes by noting that, for Paridis, the sovereign State was a political fact of life. But this did not negate his belief that the papacy had a relevant part to play in the elucidation, implementation and maintenance of the norms of universal right conduct and government. To this extent papal sovereignty was still a viable concept in the ordering of secular affairs.

The photograph in this volume shows Professor Wilks framed by a medieval abbey in ruins. Being a humorous man, he will appreciate the contrast with the flourishing state of medieval studies, in part due to his achievements.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

**THE PROMISE OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY** by Colin E. Gunton.

*T & T Clark, 1991. pp. 188 + xii. £14.95 .*

Colin Gunton is Professor of Christian Doctrine at King's College, London. In this book he offers us 'a set of essays for which is claimed a unity of theme, direction and development' (vii). The unity of theme in question is that of a relational account of trinitarian ontology, with some attempts to bring out the implications of this in different spheres.

Chapter 1 looks at Trinitarian theology today, showing how both