

SEEKING SALVATION: COMMEMORATING THE DEAD IN THE LATE-MEDIEVAL ENGLISH PARISH CHURCH by Sally Badham, *Shaun Tyas*, Donington, 2015, pp. ix + 278, 118 illustrations, £39.95, hbk

Many visitors to England's late-medieval parish churches enter a lost world of imagery and meaning. Although there can be physical proximity to a variety of artefacts, they are now distant and not just in time. One dominant concern which became visible and tangible in wood, paint, stone, glass, metal and so on was the widely-shared Christian belief that there is an after-life and that it might well involve the experience of Purgatory. That a good deal of the material evidence has been obliterated, fragmented or disfigured points to momentous shifts.

Sally Badham's well-documented and successful book emphasizes the active *seeking* of salvation, relating the commemorated individual to a whole network of persons on earth and beyond. This is not an antiquarian study or a coffee-table book because it has wider intellectual preoccupations. There is also a personal engagement. Having sketched the hostile reactions from Reformers and others, Badham's concluding words are: 'So for all of the medieval Christian faithful mentioned in this book, may God have mercy on their souls'. The many excellent photographs, taken mostly by C.B. Newham, and the characteristically accomplished work of Shaun Tyas as publisher, contribute to the author's project concerning commemoration of the dead. Memorial culture, she explains, comprised a complex of liturgical and social acts connecting the living and the dead, collectively termed *memoria*, research into which at its best is characterized by the integrated use of objects and texts.

The plentiful illustrations and the descriptions facilitate our access to the material, which is generally accompanied by explanations at various levels ranging from the spiritual to the economic. Within the parameters of the study, frequently indicated by Badham, a vast array of objects and practices are presented. The intentions and motivations of the donors can be interestingly retrieved from wills, of which sustained use is made, and there are insightful considerations concerning both the earthly and the heavenly audiences being sought by those who commissioned memorials. A significant minority of images of individuals or family members on monuments form part of a devotional or intercessory discourse in which the intended recipient of the prayers is also shown. The objective, we might say, being that the chosen saint should intercede with God to ease the attainment of salvation and, if need be, their passage through Purgatory. It seems that from around the turn of the fourteenth century, brasses are found peppered with short invocatory scroll often addressed to Jesus. Badham can turn with ease from noting that the invocation of the name of Jesus was a feature of revivalist preaching, associated with travelling friars such as St Bernardine, to the fact that short invocations reflect contemporary contemplative practices as promoted in *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

The doctrine of Purgatory shaped in significant ways how life was lived, how death was approached, and how the after-life was hoped for and envisaged. Badham devotes a chapter to the ‘theological underpinning’ of the myriad of objects and practices she describes, and there are other comments on theology. Even within the constraints of space, a fuller account would be possible. St Augustine is presented in truncated form, a summary of St Thomas Aquinas’s medieval exposition would be helpful (*Summa Theologiae* II-II q.32 on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, ‘*eleemosyna*’, would be apposite), and the Council of Florence (1439) might feature. Regrettably, the biblical foundations for the relevant doctrines as they came to be understood by the Middle Ages are not discussed. Specific attention needs also to be given to medieval representations of Purgatory and related topics, including in England.

As happens when we enter an English late-medieval parish church, in looking at this accomplished volume many things jostle for attention. According to Badham, many of the most important categories of *memoria* are church fabrics, fittings and items used for carrying out divine services and they are amply surveyed with explanations coming from various sources. The author deliberately restricts her study to England, excluding therefore material from elsewhere. Yet the occasional observation shows what would be gained from comparative analysis, as when she remarks that funeral processions were quite commonly depicted in the subsidiary imagery of French, German and Iberian monuments, but they did not form part of the mainstream iconography of English monuments. The consequences of belief in Purgatory touched many aspects of life before death, and the centrality of the virtue of charity was not neglected. This is strikingly brought by a quotation from John Lydgate’s medieval poem, *Virtue of the Masse*. There it was said that without charity no alms or various works of mercy listed will avail; and that Paternosters, Aves and Creeds will profit little or not at all where charity is lacking.

Visibility, identification and the stating of relationships were important concerns in seeking prayers, and they were achieved by a variety of commemorative strategies. No doubt each reader will be struck differently. A man left money in his will to be expended in that part of a named Nottingham church where his mother lay, so that her tomb ‘may better be distinguished for the health of her soul’. In his will, Robert Toste requested that a marble stone be laid over him with an inscription to induce people to pray for his soul. There is a fascinating section on ‘mnemonics’ to ensure that Masses and prayers were said, and there are references to commemorative graffiti particularly in churches with interior structures of soft stone. Miniature images of the donor, heraldry or merchants’ marks, rebuses and inscriptions were deployed as means of identification. Badham herself considers the brass at Elsing (Norfolk) commemorating Sir Hugh Hastings (d.1347), to be understood in the whole context of its location, to be perhaps the artistically finest and

most intrinsically interesting monumental brass to survive in England. On a window, Mary is asked to pray to her Son for Sir Hugh and his wife: 'Lady Forgete us noght'

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THEOLOGY FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW by Esther D. Reed, *Bloomsbury T&T Clark*, London and New York, 2013, pp. xi + 350, £19.99, pbk

In his introduction to a book of essays (McCormack and White (eds.), *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth. An Unofficial Catholic Protestant Dialogue*, 2013), paraphrasing a sentence by T.S. Eliot on Dante and Shakespeare, the Dominican friar Thomas Joseph White writes that Aquinas and Barth 'are, arguably, the greatest proponents of Christian theology of a traditional form', each one being indicative of a kind of Christianity 'that can speak to the heart of the contemporary world'. If the two can be set in 'ecumenical conversation' (how fruitfully remains, though, an open question not to be addressed here), it is not surprising that the author of the book under review should select these two thinkers as her main source of intellectual inspiration. Dr. Esther Reed is a Protestant scholar and an Assistant Professor at the department of Theology and Religion at the University of Exeter. In her own website, she indicates that her current work is 'at the interface between theology and international law', with special attention to the Christian teaching on natural law.

The theme of her book should come as no surprise to international lawyers, who are well aware that the thinkers at the origins of the modern conception of international law were either theologians (such as the Catholic Francisco de Vitoria and Suarez) or jurists who also wrote on theology (such as the Protestant Grotius). Actually, in recent times, the contribution of theology to international law has been attracting renewed interest: for example, the 2014 tenth anniversary conference of the European Society of International Law hosted an *agora* on this very topic among those addressing the relations between international law and other disciplines.

The aim of her book, as articulated by Reed, is 'to move issues of international law higher up the agenda of Christian theology, ethics and moral reasoning' (p.1). Hence the book is intended to be as much a reflection on the contribution of international law to theology as the other way around. Chapters 1 and 2 set the stage. It is here that Reed explains what she means by her perspective of 'Protestant Thomism', which takes from Barth 'a central emphasis on the dynamic of the Word of God that speaks and is answerable in human affairs' and from Aquinas 'an emphasis on common good and the relation within divine providence