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BOOK REVIEWS

Shy But Not Retiring

ERIC KEMP

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Bishop Eric Kemp is the unsung hero of the Church of England in the second half of the twentieth century. Had he wavered on certain matters, our Church would have been much impoverished by the defection of a significantly greater number of its members essential for its vitality and comprehensiveness. Liddon is reported to have said about Keble, 'People would wait and see what came from Humsley, before they made up their minds'. Towards the end of the following century they would wait and see what came from Chichester.

This retrospect by the bishop over a long life and ministry is full of interest on every page, and of entertaining anecdote. Not the least fascinating chapters are those that cover decades beyond the memory of most of his readers, containing vignettes of life (including Church life) in northern Lincolnshire in the 1920s and in Oxford University in the 1930s. He pays generous tribute to those whose influence shaped his intellectual and spiritual development; among them Mr Henthorn, his history master at Brigg Grammar School; Sir Richard Southern, who at Oxford introduced him to the study of canon law; Canon Freddy Hood and Canon Arthur Couratin for their part in the promotion of his piety and of his vocation. Equally fascinating are glimpses of the chapter of Worcester Cathedral, where assumptions and attitudes persisted, old-fashioned even in the 1970s.

Of particular interest to readers of this journal will be his work in the field of canon law. In the late 1930s, as a young graduate in Oxford, he joined Canon Claude Jenkins' seminar on the subject. Later he became University Lecturer in Canon Law, and he was influential in the formation of the Ecclesiastical Law Society, becoming its first president. He writes with pride about the honour which the Society did him in presenting him with a Festschrift in 1998 (N Doe, M Hill and R Ombres (eds), *English Canon Law: essays in honour of Bishop Eric Kemp*, Cardiff, 1988).

Related to his interest in canon law was his study of the history of the Convocations, which bore fruit in his Bampton Lectures of 1960, published under the title *Counsel and Consent: aspects of the government of the church as exemplified in the history of the English provincial synods* (London, 1961). Not surprisingly, he played a leading role in the drafting of the Synodical Government Measure and in the process of steering it through the Church Assembly.

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Strangely, he was not invited subsequently to take part in discussions about the implementation of a measure, in the framing of which he had played such an influential part. He alludes twice to his disappointment at being overlooked, but his interest in the government of the Church and his long synodical experience led to his being a member or chairman of many bodies responsible for developments in, for instance, faculty jurisdiction, care of cathedrals, crown appointments, and more besides, all of them exercises that required patient skill in negotiation and close attention to detail.

These same qualities, combined, with a clear view of objectives and of principles, have been equally characteristic of his long involvement in promoting closer ecumenical relationships. In this field he is perhaps best known for the part that he played in the Anglican–Methodist conversations of the 1950s and 1960s, and for his drafting of the ill-fated service of reconciliation. He had already contributed to the consideration by the Convocations of both the South India and North India reunion schemes. Of even longer standing were his links with the Old Catholics, links that have embraced weakly the entire span of his adult life; there have been fruitful liaisons too with both German Lutherans and French Protestants. For a time he was the Archbishop of Canterbury's particular channel of communication with the Old Catholics and with Roman Catholics in Europe, a responsibility which led to warm relationships and, in due course, to the happy partnership between the dioceses and cathedrals of Chichester and Chartres. In view of this astonishing range of ecumenical contact and activity, it is not surprising that for twenty years he held office as the first chairman of the Faith and Order Advisory Group, a body which advises the Church at large and the Archbishop of Canterbury in particular on matters of theological and ecumenical concern. The exercise of this responsibility drew on several of his strengths: skill in negotiation, wide experience of the ecumenical scene, close personal relationship with prominent figures in other Churches, and his own undeviating conviction of the essentially Catholic nature of Anglican faith, discipline and orders.

All this legislative and ecumenical activity was fitted into the busy life of a teaching fellow and chaplain at Oxford, of a dean running a cathedral, and of a bishop and pastor of a large diocese. It is a wonder that any time was left for him to be himself, but it is clear that he is a devoted husband and father. Besides, his whimsical interests and enthusiasms are a recurrent motif throughout his life, from his membership of the Oxford Bach Choir at the beginning of his time as an undergraduate, to the later development of a keen interest in watercolours. Consistent throughout his life has been his social concern. This was evident when he was an undergraduate, was no doubt confirmed during his time as a curate in downtown Southampton early in the war, and received further expression in his work as a scoutmaster, as a leader of

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Oxford-Borstal campus, and in his firm adherence to the Liberal and Liberal Democrat parties.

In addition to the autobiographical narrative, readers will find shrewd observations about Anglican identity, occasional criticism of the General Synod and also frank acknowledgement of his own part in decisions that he subsequently thought to be unwise. Most of all, readers will become aware that this remarkable range of activity and achievement has been motivated and sustained by deep devotion to our Lord and the Church, a devotion that on occasion receives touching expression. There is no trace of self-advertisement; rather, we read the record of a perceptive, charitable, unassuming servant of God and the Church, a record all the more impressive and eloquent for its being understated.

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The Foundations of Medieval English Ecclesiastical History: Studies Presented to David Smith

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Professor David Smith is known to a generation of ecclesiastical historians for a number of reasons. For over three decades, he has been on the staff of the Borthwick Institute, now part of the University of York, of which he has been Director for a quarter of a century. For much of that period, since 1973, he has also been sole or joint editor of the British Academy's *English Episcopal Acta* series, an enterprise of inestimable worth not only to ecclesiastical historians generally but more especially to those with an interest in the history of canon law and ecclesiastical administration in the provinces of England. He has also acted as the general editor of Lincoln Record Society, to which in the year 2000 he contributed his own edition of *The Acta of Hugh of Wells*, the bishop of Lincoln who had formed the subject of his doctoral dissertation at the start of his career, and a subject which also celebrated his loyalty to his native cathedral city. He was also the founding editor of the *Monastic Research Bulletin*.

This Festschrift in Professor Smith's honour, produced shortly before his sixtieth birthday, brings together essays from eleven writers, together with two personal tributes to him for his achievements. The focal point of the work is summed up in the debt that historians owe to those who produce scholarly

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