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Review Of "Christian Doctrine And Modern Culture (Since 1700)"

By J. Pelikan

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writers, flourishing at the time of the Restoration and after, we find evidence of an increasing separation of church and society, the sacred and the secular, the public and the private, with religion becoming, more and more, an individual and private matter. Wall says: "the liturgical life of the Prayer Book lost its centrality and became increasingly an adjunct to the private devotional life of believers" (p. 368). Wall presents, then, an historical analysis which includes evidence of a trend, which is a decline and a falling away from an ideal seriously espoused by Erasmus and Cranmer, and, the reader might rightly conclude, one held by Wall. There is other evidence, but Wall's argument is strong, carefully documented, and such as I believe should be taken with the utmost seriousness.

The chapters on the three poets are illustrative of the author's thesis "that Spenser, Herbert, and Vaughn set out to promote the social agenda of the Church of England, both its assurance-giving worship and its transformation-promoting goal of realizing the true Christian commonwealth in England" (p. 6). These chapters also provide exceptionally able interpretations of the poets, their poetry, and many of their most important poems. They do so from out of the wisdom of an author who knows the relevant history, has command of a vast bibliography of critical works, both literary and historical, and is himself engaged in the Prayer Book worship which provided for him both a key and inspiration.

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The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrines. Vol. 5: Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700). By Jaroslav Pelikan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, ix + 361 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

This monograph completes Professor Pelikan's monumental series on the development of Christian doctrine. It is, therefore, appropriate for this review to have a double focus—first, to appraise the present volume, and second, to place it in the context of Professor Pelikan's whole project.

Like the earlier books in the series, the present one is remarkable for the depth and comprehensiveness of its coverage of the diverse issues and problems that have exercised the attention of the church, this time from 1700 to the Second Vatican Council. In his command of the many and voluminous sources, Professor Pelikan has amply fulfilled his own demands

laid down in his earlier *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena*: "To be rescued from philosophical or theological aphorisms, the study of the development of Christian doctrine needs total immersion in the concrete life of the Church's past" (p. 48). With clarity of style and organization, he leads the reader through nineteenth century controversies over miracles and infallibility, the challenges that emerged from historical studies, and the impact of evolution. Equally skillful is his discussion of the growing ecumenical concern of the twentieth century. In addition to these well known themes, ample treatment is given the lesser known eighteenth century apologias for the church and disquisitions on the spiritual life.

Hovering in the background of the whole Modern period is the lament of Goethe's Faust as he hears the Easter choir sing "Christ is risen." To this Faust replies: "I hear the message all right; it is only the faith that I lack" (p. 1). Given the untold agony that has gone into attempts to help the Fausts of this world find or recover the Easter faith, some readers may be disappointed that this concern remains only a sub-theme of the book rather than a primary interest. Standard treatments of Christianity and modern culture focus heavily on this issue. Why has Professor Pelikan not chosen to do the same? Have contemporary conclusions influenced him here? Has he been swayed by the "growing doctrinal consensus of the twentieth century" that shifts "the emphasis from rationalistic arguments, whether heterodox or orthodox in their outcome, to the testimony of the word of God" (p. 329)? I believe that he has, but that this fact only partially explains Professor Pelikan's own focus.

Throughout the series Professor Pelikan has characterized Christian doctrine as "what the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God" (Vol. 1, p. 1; Vol. 5, p. viii). Two points need to be made here. First, Christian doctrine is church doctrine. The full import of the word of God is not to be found in the Bible only but also in the church's experience and explanation of the gospel throughout its history. Second, Christian doctrine develops primarily from its own inner dynamic. Professor Pelikan does not understand the development of Christian doctrine to be a dialectical process wherein culture raises issues and questions and then the Christian community searches its tradition to find answers. He has consciously rejected approaches like Tillich's method of correlation or Bultmann's similar starting point in contemporary culture. In Professor Pelikan's view, such approaches so readily move from crisis to crisis that the real continuity is submerged in the mistaken impression that Christian doctrine is a mere epiphenomenon of the needs of the moment and thus lacks real integrity. To avoid this impression, Professor Pelikan devotes more attention to "the use of the Christian past—of tradition, creed, and dogma—by the church in the

modern period . . . [than do] most histories of modern theology" (p. ix). He also concentrates on the chorus rather than the soloists. Theological virtuosi often extend the church's understanding, but in the end their contributions are examined and judged by the many, who seek to bear witness to the tradition they have received.

Although Professor Pelikan describes in this history both a movement toward variety and a movement toward unity, it is the latter that most interests him. To be sure, the movement toward variety reflects the church's need to meet the challenges of the modern world, but the movement toward unity results from the church's need to recover its grounding in the word of Jesus Christ as understood and proclaimed by the church. Thus the creedal affirmation with which Professor Pelikan both begins and ends the series, "Credo unam sanctam catholicam apostolicam ecclesiam" (Vol. 1:10; Vol. 5:336), represents both a presupposition of the study as well as its regulative principle. To believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is to ground oneself in the communal life of the faithful, which began in ancient times and continues into the present, and in which continuity of commitment is more important than engagement with the issues confronting us in the modern world.

In characterizing Christian doctrine as he has, Professor Pelikan has provided a formal rather than a material definition. He has not given us a list of Christian doctrines that he takes to be essential and then justified subsequent developments on the basis of a deposit of faith. In his definition he has told us more about who decides what Christian doctrine is than about how to judge which is a true and which a false development. Although he has strong opinions on this subject, he does not allow them to obtrude on his history. After all he is but one voice among the many. Rather he allows the elements of continuity to be revealed in the church's continuing confession, teaching, and belief. To place one's confidence in such a process is undoubtedly a large part of what believing in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church means to Professor Pelikan.

LINWOOD URBAN

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Dear Miss Nightingale: A Selection of Benjamin Jowett's Letters, 1860–1893. Edited by Vincent Quinn and John Prest. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, xxxvii + 359. \$69 (cloth).

Benjamin Jowett entered Balliol College, Oxford as a nineteen-year-old scholarship student in 1836 and never left. Elected successively as a