

This is, however, an important collection of essays, which will be of interest not only to scholars of Russia but to those interested in the encounter between religion and 'modernity' in general. It will make an exciting addition to undergraduate and graduate reading lists on the culture or history of Russia's 'Silver Age'.

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*The history of England's cathedrals.* By Nicholas Orme. Pp. xii + 304 incl. 91 black-and-white and colour ills and 1 table. Exeter: Impress Books, 2017. £20 (paper).

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Nicholas Orme has given us a history of English cathedrals as living institutions as well as architectural monuments. This is both a service to the public and an acknowledgement of reality. It is, perhaps, not quite true to claim (p. 4) that this has not been attempted before, for Stephen Lehmburg's *English cathedrals: a history* (London 2005) has a brief chapter on the twentieth century. But Orme's book is the more comprehensive study; he devotes many more pages to the period of the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries than to the Middle Ages, and he takes us further into the present century. We are a world away, not in just in time but in attitude, from the old standard works, such as Harvey's *English cathedrals* (London 1950, 1956), which treated a cathedrals simply as medieval artefacts, with a final chapter tellingly entitled 'The Renaissance and conclusion'.

Orme rightly begins with the pattern of early Christian bishoprics in the Mediterranean world and describes the mission of St Augustine as the 'reconstruction', not the foundation, of the Church in England. Without this perspective one cannot grasp what Gregory or Augustine or Theodore thought they were doing, and why they even conceived the necessity of a 'cathedral' church. When we get to 1066, I might quibble at the broad statement that Norman clerics were appointed as bishops, overlooking the significant continuity with the pre-Conquest Church represented by St Wulfstan of Worcester. But I delighted in the survey of medieval cathedral organisation, and the differences between the monastic and the 'secular' foundations. Orme alerts us to the new cathedrals that Henry VIII might have founded but did not: Bodmin and Dunstable cathedrals would today be as familiar sights as Gloucester or Peterborough.

The cathedral as a place of learning in every period is an important theme of the book. The lively learning programmes in cathedrals today, serving worshippers, visitors and dioceses alike, are built on a long history of chronicling and scholarship, archives and libraries and cathedral schools. The book describes the nineteenth-century campaign of Edward Pusey and George Selwyn to utilise these resources for a more professional training of the clergy and gives honourable mention to Chichester Theological College as the first of such foundations. From the mid-nineteenth to the late twentieth century, many cathedrals had a theological college attached to them, to the mutual enrichment of both.

When Orme reaches the great restorations of the later nineteenth century, associated above all with the name of the George Gilbert Scott, I wonder whether he quite brings out the connection, in the minds of deans and chapters of the time, between restoration and mission? To use the example of Worcester, it was a

single outburst of creative energy that led to the restoration of the building, begun by Perkins and completed by Scott, and the institution of a Sunday evening service for the city. The new open quire screen, the new nave organ, the new nave pulpit and the establishment of a new voluntary choir of men and boys, all served the evening service which attracted a thousand or more week by week. Deans and chapters still wrestle today with the tension between the building and its mission, and we lack both the supreme self-confidence and the unfettered liberty of our Victorian predecessors; but the inventiveness needed to make the building work for the Church today is no new challenge.

In passing, may I suggest that the nineteenth-century enthusiasm for the restoration of cathedrals was not an insular one, and there is still a story to be told about the cross-fertilising of theory and practice between England and, say, France. Victor Hugo campaigned on behalf of *Nôtre Dame*, of which his great novel is but an echo. Proust was preoccupied with the restoration of churches and cathedrals, having translated Ruskin into French. There was a whole French debate about over- and under-restoration, on which Percy Dearmer delightfully commented in *Highways and byways in Normandy* (London 1899). It will be good one day to read a book on nineteenth-century restorations that looks across the Channel.

Orme acknowledges the most astonishing feature of cathedral history, over seventeen centuries, as its ‘immense and varied creativity’. That is good to read; and the fact that such creativity has carried on into the present century is an antidote to the unvarying narrative of the decline of Christianity. Having said that, creativity is often borne of crisis. The publication of the book in 2017 means that Orme finished on the verge of two extraordinary crises for English cathedrals, and a third for cathedrals the world over. The crisis of government at Peterborough showed the stark reality that cathedrals could fail, go bankrupt and come to the brink of closure. The result is a new Cathedrals Measure, new constitutions and statutes for every cathedral, registration for the first time with the Charity Commission and a new and constructive interest on the part of the Church Commissioners and other bodies in the welfare and financial sustainability of cathedrals. The infinitely greater crisis of a global pandemic, leading to the longest period of general closure since the interdict in the reign of King John, and the prospect of financial disaster for every cathedral, put the new awareness of the financial fragility of cathedrals to the test – with generally welcome results. And the catastrophic fire at *Nôtre Dame* in Holy Week 2020 reminded us that the accidental peacetime destruction of a great cathedral (a not infrequent experience in the Middle Ages) is still possible. The unfinished story of the rebuilding of *Nôtre Dame*, blending ancient and modern materials and skills, will be fascinating indeed. It is to be hoped that these crises will result in further ‘immense and varied creativity’. Nicholas Orme has given us a richly informative and immensely readable book. It is, however, no criticism to say that the second edition of this valuable study will have much new material to work on.

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