

in John Nurser's numerous quotations from the *Nachlass*. Whether the enormous range of reading from which Acton culled his notes over so many years would ever have yielded a coherent account of the place of individual conscience remains doubtful. Nurser does his best to reconstruct the history of Acton's project but no very clear picture emerges—Acton's polymathy and his (justified) pessimism about ecclesiastical authoritarianism would perhaps always have prevented him from writing a lucid monograph. Sometimes he seemed ready to take up the theory of conscience adumbrated by Thomas Aquinas but then some fresh stretch of reading sets him off in a different direction. Of the importance of Acton's work on freedom and conscience John Nurser leaves us in no doubt. As he says, it bore fruit eventually at the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the contribution of John Courtney Murray SJ to the document on religious liberty. Acton's deeper questions and anxieties about freedom of conscience are perhaps only now being properly heard. John Nurser's clear-headed discussion is a valuable addition to the literature on Lord Acton.

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THE CHURCH AND WEALTH edited by W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood. *Basil Blackwell*, 1987. Pp. 426. £32.50.

This is the 24th volume of the 'Studies in Church History' series published by the Ecclesiastical History Society, and contains thirty-one papers read at meetings in 1986 and 1987. The President, Michael Wilks, who is Professor of Medieval History at Birkbeck College, defines the book's subject-matter in his presidential address, 'Thesaurus Ecclesiae', which deals with the intellectual relationship between Wyclif and Augustine in the area of financial theology. He comments that 'Christ's admonition to the disciples to "sell all thou hast and follow me" was to create a problem for the Church which, as the following papers illustrate, is as live an issue today as it has been for nearly two thousand years'. A reviewer can never do justice to a collection of this kind, and I can mention only a few contributions, without prejudice to the others.

Many of the authors are concerned with the way in which different ecclesiastical groups finance themselves, and with the frequent contrast between their supposed wealth and their actually limited means. For example, Professor D.G. Thompson gives an account of the inability of the 17th-century French Jesuit colleges to survive the troubles which came upon them in the Lavalette affair of 1756–62, when Antoine Lavalette's Jesuit commercial adventures in the Caribbean collapsed: this was part of the process which culminated in the Order's suppression in France in 1764. There is a similar theme in Thomas McCoog's discussion of the finances of the English Jesuits in the 17th century, and in J.F. McMillan's essay on 'Money and the Scottish Catholic Mission in the Eighteenth Century', when the problems of poverty were complicated by divisions over Jansenism. Scottish Catholicism is also the subject of 'The Stewardship of Resources: Financial Strategies of Roman Catholics in the Glasgow District 1800–70', by John McCaffrey, and we enter the twentieth century in Bernard Aspinwall's 'Broadfield Revisited: Some Scottish Catholic responses to Wealth, 1918–40'. Broadfield was a farm in Lanarkshire which expressed

the vision of the Scottish Colonisation Association of a revitalised peasant proprietorship which would liberate people from the oppression of an industrialised world.

Turning to Central Europe, Linda Kirk, in 'Godliness in a Golden Age: the Church and Wealth in Eighteenth-Century Geneva', shows how rapidly the increasing riches of the small Genevan upper-class reduced the Venerable Company of Pastors to underpaid unimportance. Another essay on the 18th-century is Professor Ward's 'Zinzendorf and Money', in which he traces in as much detail as possible the Count's tortuous and speculative financial history. Given aristocratic habits of living on borrowed money, however, the Count's behaviour is perhaps more commonplace than Professor Ward implies, and the contrast with 'bourgeois old Wesley', as he calls him, less striking: Wesley did not *play* with money as Zinzendorf did, but he expected it to appear when Methodism needed it. Another interesting article on this period is Jeremy Gregory's 'A Just and Sufficient Maintenance: some defenses of the clerical establishment in the eighteenth century'. Gregory shows how Anglican parsons dropped the assertion that tithes were divinely appointed and turned to the position that Anglican incomes gave the clergy both independence and the chance to be charitable. For most of the 18th century the administration of Anglican property was relatively lax—it was the French Revolution which sanctified a more commercial approach, and the outcry of the 1830s against clerical insistence on the rights of property was a response to early 19th-century changes of method, not to the conventions of the previous century.

Finally, I must mention a fascinating article by Peter Hebblethwaite on 'Liberation Theology: the Latin American Option for the Poor'. Hebblethwaite discusses the Vatican's reaction to Liberation theology in the 1980s; he makes clear that any softer approach on the side of the Vatican does not run very deep. The *Instruction of March 22, 1986*, for example, set out to weaken the favourite texts of Liberation theologians when speaking about poverty. The *Magnificat* is 'rendered harmless and unsubversive', and the *Beatitudes* are said to 'teach detachment and otherworldliness'—'the move is evidently from the literal "Blessed are the poor" to "Blessed are the poor in spirit"'. To be tolerated, the language of 'liberation' must be separated clearly from the language of Marxism. Such an attitude chimes in with the tendency, illustrated in this volume, to see the ideal Christian society as a self-sufficient small-town of peasants and artisans, subordinated to central ecclesiastical direction.

As traditional church history, these are interesting, well-researched essays. *The Church and Wealth*, however, raises fundamental questions about the nature of Christianity in history, and one could wish that they had been treated with greater boldness. More emphasis on the role of the laity might have helped. Professor Ward notes in passing the existence of 'networks of businessmen' who financed religious activity; the same theme occurs in Jane Garnett's 'Systematic Beneficence in mid-19th-century England'; Brian Stanley writes about Robert Arthington's part in the Baptist Missionary Society in the late 19th century. All in all, Linda Kirk seems to me to touch the most important questions about money, religious activity, and religious indifference.

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