

husbands' activities than did the mountain women. This related to the difference in patterns of visiting; the infield wife was much more likely to be often alone with her husband than was the upland woman. If marriage provided more companionship in the infield, neighbourliness was warmer in the hills, where weddings and wakes and funerals still provided occasions for neighbours to gather without distinction of class or religion.

Yet despite their frequent contacts with their Catholic neighbours, it was precisely among the Protestant hill farmers that prejudice against Catholics was most marked. Dr Harris conclusively disposes of a number of theories put forward to explain relations between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster, and offers two explanations of her own for the mixture of personal tolerance and ideological prejudice; the taboo on religious or political discussions between Catholics and Protestants, which meant that people in daily contact could have the most fantastic images of each others' beliefs, and the sense of insecurity of the poorer Protestants who (in addition to being extremely Anglophobe) suspected the Unionist leadership of plotting to hand over the Ballybeg area to the Republic. To assert themselves against the better-off Protestants (whom, they thought, would swim, whereas they themselves would sink, in a united Ireland) they therefore stressed their Protestantism, largely in the form of political anti-Catholicism, and were mostly keen members of the Orange Lodges.

Dr Harris' treatment of the Orange Order is interesting and to some extent novel. In the conventional left-wing stereotype the Orange Order is an instrument in the hands of rich Protestants to divide the poor on sectarian lines; for the poor Protestants of the Ballybeg

district the Orange Order was an instrument pointed in exactly the opposite direction, since 'The one institution in which the uninfluential the unsophisticated could deal with their leaders as equals without acting improperly was the Orange Lodge. Here leaders could be safely criticised; here some attempt could be made to expose them to the force of public opinion.' (p. 197). Her conclusion is that there is little hard evidence as to the supposed greater bigotry of the poorer Protestants; their greater display of prejudice in the political and religious setting is more a consequence of the strains between Protestants of different classes. Interestingly, 'individuals could and did collect money and offerings for bazaars from neighbours of "the other side" if the object were purely religious, but no-one could do this for a political purpose' (p. 137).

Inevitably, Dr Harris has to make some comment on the relevance of her material to the present situation, but her remarks are completely in accord with the Ballybeg canon of 'modesty' (not seeking to domineer). She points out that the hostility with which the poorer Protestants greeted any sign of reformism on the part of Unionist politicians was something built into the social setting. She shows too the extreme naïvety of the Civil Rights leaders in imagining that by the late sixties class antagonisms had effectively replaced religious ones in the Ulster scene.

Much more could be said about this book, particularly about the skill with which Dr Harris sketches Ballybeg personalities; let me finish by praising her for the success with which she has shown 'Ballybeg as a community in which there was a vast amount of tolerance and good will' (p. xiv).

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THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY TO ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND, by Henry Mayr-Harting.
B. T. Batsford, London 1972. 334 pp. £4.

This extremely valuable book is a supplement to an earlier classic: Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Bede's data are explained, criticized and augmented in the light of modern scholarship. Particularly impressive are the chapters which explain the results of the conversion of the Saxons: the conflict between Christian morals and the standards of the ex-pagans, the mixed church culture which grew from the missions of Roman and 'Celt' and the eventual triumph of Roman jurisdiction. These intricate matters are treated with precision and subtlety, with the help of a

wealth of information from Irish and continental sources and from archaeology.

Bede's own description of the effects of the conversion is excellent; it is his account of the conversion itself which is open to criticism as many conversion studies are: the work of Providence is made less mundane, so that the previous degradation of the converted is exaggerated, as is the rôle of the converter, and an antagonist may be introduced—the *Brettones* in Bede's case. Dr Mayr-Harting is well aware of these trends and treads carefully, e.g. he does not follow the blurb's line that the Anglo-

Saxons had the 'reputation of ferocity'. (Like their present reputation for gentleness, this is open to challenge by comparisons.) In arguing below that he puts a foot wrong sometimes, I do not wish to detract from my praise above.

Dr Mayr-Harting follows the usual view of Saxon origins, based on Bede's misunderstanding of 'Gildas', corrected by archaeology, but not by early Welsh and continental documents, with its contradictions resolved by common sense, though sometimes by picking the wrong alternative. In my view, the late coming of Christianity to the Saxons was due to their becoming legalized successors of Rome while they were still pagans, whereas other German heirs to Rome were already Christian (if Arian) or about to become so (The Franks). The Welsh could not convert the Saxon Bretwalda because he was their political superior, but the heir to Rome was ready to listen to its bishop. Dr Mayr-Harting does, however, bring out the importance of the Bretwaldas of the conversion century better than anyone whom I have read, and notes the pragmatism of the apologetics applied to them. Occasionally, however, his account is not 'worldly' enough, e.g. Augustine did not 'promise divine vengeance' to the Welsh bishops, he threatened them with a Saxon army. Neither did Gregory 'know very little' of these bishops; Augustine had already reported and the bishops had then been put under him. Moreover, Gregory would know of the difficulties which the Archbishops of Tours had with the Breton bishops. (Augustine had gone out of his way to Tours.) Dr Mayr-Harting is struck by the bad light in which Augustine appears in this incident, and also by the way Bede makes the Scots missionaries more attractive to us than the Romans. This, however, is a common phenomenon. Though Bede was a partisan of Rome and the Saxons, his background was largely 'Celtic'. Similarly, Gerald the Welshman, adviser of English kings, has preserved the most potent Welsh call to resistance and the deadliest Irish retort to a British 'holier-than thou'.

'The British Church was hardly one of the great formative influences on Anglo-Saxon Christianity, and the Welsh part of it contributed particularly little.' This is cautious (and followed by a wise injunction that this Church must not therefore be ignored) but not, I think, cautious enough. The Welsh could do

little in eastern England, but those Saxons who had settled in the autonomous 'Island of Britain' were a different matter. The received account of the expansion of Wessex into the southern riding of that 'Island' is largely speculation. Cornwall was Welsh and there were two Welsh kingdoms in modern Somerset, till 658 and 682, which probably replaced Irish rule. For the rest I counter-speculate: (a) 'Wiltshire': mixed Saxon-Welsh Christian dynasty (paganized after 550), (b) Dorset and most of Devon; Christian Saxon rulers from the fifth century, but with a formal status for the Welsh in Devon, where there were still some Irish also. This was the milieu which produced Boniface and the Saxon poems of the Exeter Book with their admittedly 'Celtic' influences. For the north riding of the 'Island', we have the Saxons in Iona, and the insistence of Nennius (disciple of Elbodugus, a partisan of the Roman Easter) that Edwin was baptized by a Northumbrian Welshman, in spite of Bede's detailed account to the contrary. Even for the middle riding, modern Wales, we have a few hints, e.g. a Welsh chieftain of Powys stock killed around 640 is made to worship at *Egltweysi Bassa* (Baschurch, Salop) and Bassa seems to be an English name. The second bishop in Mercia was Iaruman, which looks like a corruption of Germanus, a name to conjure with in Powys. The complexity of the conversion is epitomized by that day in 635 in Dorchester (Oxon) when a Saxon king who had brought in the Scots, after being converted by them in their own land, endowed a Roman bishop, who was succeeded by a Gaul from Ireland and a Saxon with a Welsh-looking name who co-operated with Welsh bishops to consecrate a Saxon who had been ordained by the Scots.

Finally, two acute observations of Dr Mayr-Harting: the *gravitas* of the Roman mission, that self-control which, I think, often goes with a wish to control others, and this note on Augustine talking to the Welsh: 'It is impossible to mistake the air of a man intent on doing a brisk and efficient piece of business', true of so many Roman Catholics who have come to Wales from England (myself included). We should recall that Bede's version of Saxon-Welsh affairs helped to put a Welsh dynasty into London, whose second member set up a Church which found precedent in Bede's 'heretics' who resisted Augustine.

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