

CANTERBURY PILGRIM, by Michael Ramsey. S.P.C.K., London, 1974. x + 188 pp. £3.25.

Michael Ramsey is a professional theologian, the first to be Archbishop of Canterbury since John Potter, who was Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford early in the Eighteenth Century. He was subwarden of the theological college at Lincoln before he went to Durham as professor, and returned there after two years as Regius professor at Cambridge to tread in the steps of Lightfoot, Westcott and Moule as Bishop of Durham. At York and Canterbury his loyalty to the academic community of theologians in the English universities has not always been to his advantage.

In the introduction to this collection of essays and addresses, all of the Canterbury period and nearly all after 1965, he writes that he was 'scarcely prepared for a theological crisis' when 'the storm over *Honest to God* broke in 1963' (p. 4), and blames his own 'initial error in reaction'. His second thoughts were and are that 'English theology has often been very insular and unaware of trends on the continent of Europe' . . . 'Coming altogether within the covers of a single paperback, Tillich, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer made an explosion which could be heard'. He speaks of himself 'as one whose theology had been almost entirely "historical" in discipline', and largely within the stream of 'Biblical theology'. But he had always been aware of the limitations of this, and at Lincoln and later has done his best to supplement them. He was aware of the philosophical context of Bultmann, and of Bonhoeffer's relation to Lutheran 'religion'. He knew that the latter's 'religionless' Christianity had more to do with Barth and with F. D. Maurice, indeed with Father Kelly of Kelham, whose methods Bonhoeffer admired, than with the reaction against religion in the theological schools which so curiously coincided with a renewed interest in religious phenomena elsewhere in the same English universities. He knew about the mystical way out of Manchester as he was aware later of Jesus movements and Pentecostalism. But a natural tenderness for his old colleagues prevented him from exposing the roots of the odd philosophical innocence of John Robinson in an approach to the study of Christian theology so entirely centred on the problem of historical origins.

In the other crisis of his primacy I wholly agree with him that 'the failure of the Church of England to accept in 1972 the proposals for full communion with the Methodists, which the Methodists had twice endorsed, robbed the Church of England of credible initiative', not only 'in relation to the Free Churches'. I think he was right, in his speech in Convocation on the critical occasion (pp. 99-105), to appeal to the judgements of Catholic theologians who saw in the Services of Reconciliation a possible

way through some of the obstacles to Christian unity in this country. But I am sure that the failure to get a sufficient majority was due to the unease of different kinds of Anglicans, at the centre as well as on the wings, about Anglican identity, 'a Church that is definable (*sic*) Anglican and not one which might decide at will to be Calvinist or Lutheran or Roman Catholic'. The Archbishop himself uses this language on page 180 in reference to privileges, in this place to establishment, but the problem of 'privileges to one particular Church' would be more acute without it, for instance in the use of buildings regarded as national possessions—a more critical question in England than in Ireland or Wales. He says that 'the place of the Prayer Book as a *visible* standard, which may be used when it is asked for, is a mark of the Church's identity'. But he complains elsewhere (p. 10) of 'some confusion in sacrificial language (due to a strange reversion to Sixteenth-Century concepts)' in the eucharistic rite of Series three. I believe that the motive for this reversion was to preserve the Protestant and Catholic identity of the Anglican eucharist.

In trying for many years to break this particular impasse in theology and liturgy I owe much to the support and sympathy of Michael Ramsey. When in 1957 he reviewed in his *York Quarterly* a little book of mine called *Lamb to the Slaughter*, neither of us imagined that in the next decade the impasse would be resolved in a new Roman rite. Twenty years before that some of the brethren from Kelham used to meet some Dominicans at Laxton. Just before the war Michael Ramsey joined us, and Christopher Butler. I remember forboding that the war would make a great difference to the empire and to the Anglican communion, but it might also change the Latin face of Rome. Michael Ramsey shared the concern for the Christian East which I had learnt at the feet of Christopher Dawson, with cares about tension between experimental and institutional religion. We still want theology to pay attention to the mystical and the pentecostal, and know that this is difficult for academics in establishments. The difference between us is that to me the idea of a national Church, in the sense of Hooker, Coleridge, and F. D. Maurice, was the justification for the existence of the Church of England. The Archbishop does not want disestablishment, but several of these addresses are directed to Anglicans overseas, and more are concerned with their problems. In his time the Church of England has become more like an Episcopal denomination, and less concerned with movements on her fringes, but I follow the tambourines and find them on and then over the edges of Rome, where they look for care and find help as well as criticism.

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