

branded "blind Pharisees" who make up laws without God's command. Law and philosophy are her twin pet hates: "Philosophy can avail nothing. As Paul says to the Colossians, 'Be careful of philosophy and the lofty speech of those who are wise in the things of the world.'" The Decretals are the object of her particular obsession: "The word of God... is a treasury of salvation, not a pit for cash like the Decretals"; "You would be much readier to suffer God's word if you did not profit from the publication of the Decretal.... I have seen how my dear lord and father of blessed memory had to pay twenty gulden for a piece of advice four lines long; not that it did him a cent of good."

It is as a woman theologian that she is perhaps most interesting, and her self-presentation prefigures much of the approach of the present century. She is considerably occupied with addressing the 1 Timothy 2 text which seems to forbid women to speak on matters of theology. Her response is to cite the women prophets and heroines of the Old Testament, and texts such as Luke 10 ("Father, you have hidden these things from the wise"), Joel ("I will pour out my spirit on all flesh"), and above all Matthew 10 ("Whoever denies me before people, I will also deny before my Father"), which she sees as an absolute command to all to speak up when the Gospel is seen to be persecuted.

As Matheson points out, her withdrawal from the public scene is as interesting as her entry onto it. Her impassioned intervention failed to convince the Bavarian princes to withdraw their support from the University, and she was punished by the dismissal of her husband from public office. Her eight pamphlets cover the space of only one year, the whole extent of her publishing career, although Luther is still writing in 1528 to Spelatin of "what this most pious woman has to put up with and suffer." She was ultimately, for all her nobility and intelligence, and for all the popularity of her pamphlets, not taken seriously. The sole response the University gave her was a vicious and crude satirical poem, which sneers "Go back to your spindle", "Perhaps Arsacius excites your vagina" and ends: "If for this topic again you head/ Like all your heretic friends, you're dead." Von Grumbach printed this, with a gracious response, still trying to invite the University to a reasonable debate. But this was the only reply she was ever to receive from them.

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CONFIRMATION, SACRAMENT OF GRACE: The Theology, Practice and Law of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England by James Behrens, *Gracewing, Fowler Wright Books, Leominster, 1995. Pb xvii + 115 pp. £7.99.*

What can only be described as a renaissance of canon law is taking place in the Church of England. The Ecclesiastical Law Society, already with a large membership and its influential *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, was established in 1987, publishers are showing an increasing willingness to accept books on ecclesiastical law, and Cardiff University now offers an

LL.M. degree in canon law. James Behrens is connected with all these developments, and his pioneering book is an inspiring success.

In Britain a new genre is emerging; comparative canon law in an ecumenical context. This ought to stimulate Catholic canonists into taking a systematic interest in Anglican canon law. Reciprocity makes ecumenism flourish.

Behrens compares and contrasts the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church with that of the Church of England as it relates to most aspects of the sacrament of confirmation. The opening chapters provide an introduction to both the history and the theology of confirmation, and there is a concluding summary.

The method adopted divides the topic of confirmation into its main component parts, and then discusses the Catholic and Church of England law relevant to each part. This method brings out similarities, differences and gaps. Chapter 5 is an impressive dossier of information concerning the practice of different dioceses when it comes to the age at which in the Church of England confirmation should be received. There is no discussion, however, of confirmation and those who lack the use of reason, e.g. because of profound mental handicap (see canons 777 and 889).

On the whole, Behrens gives a restrained but accurate account of the two canonical systems. Some remarks specifically on Catholic canon law may be appropriate in this review, beginning with some broad issues.

The author avoids discussing the 'character' conferred by confirmation, although it is explicitly mentioned in canon 879, and canon 845 states that confirmation cannot be repeated because it imprints a character. The question of non-repetition surfaces in the important chapter on confirmation in ecumenical relations. Mention should have been made there of the 1993 *Directory* on ecumenism (par.101) because it applies in this country as elsewhere. It judges that, in the present state of our relations with the ecclesial communities of the Reformation, we have not yet reached agreement about the significance or sacramental nature or even the administration of the sacrament of confirmation. For this reason, those entering into full communion with the Catholic Church are to be confirmed according to its doctrine and rite before being admitted to Eucharistic communion.

Slips or imprecisions of a more limited kind are few. The obligation to participate in Mass on certain days is confused with that of receiving Holy Communion at least once a year; confirmation can be described as a 'condition' for ordination if it is understood that its absence does not affect validity; and repetition of confirmation is not so much forbidden as impossible.

Now that we have this pioneering work by Behrens on confirmation, one can only hope that the same methodology will be applied to other sacraments. Canon lawyers have a distinctive contribution to make to ecumenism.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

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