

themes in *The World of Late Antiquity*, are developed again and the author refers to this work and to *The Making of Late Antiquity*, so that it seems that the three books form a trilogy, in which similar topics are discussed and expanded. This means that a new and fruitful dimension is added to certain themes, but at times it also means that defence of a controversial proposal is avoided by a reference to an earlier book, where the reader may feel that it is still a case of *non placet*. For instance: 'we must remember that the Christian church had risen to prominence largely because its central ritual practices and its increasingly centralized organization and financial administration presented the pagan world with an ideal community that had claimed to modify, to redirect and even to delimit the bonds of the kin' (p 31) is, we discover from the notes, to be "remembered" because Mr Brown has said so before elsewhere; perhaps a case of 'if I say it three times it is true'.

The first chapter contains an attack upon the 'two-tiered system' of previous scholarship, in which 'the views of the potentially enlightened few are thought of as being subject to continuous upward pressure from habitual ways of thinking cur-

rent among 'the vulgar' (p 17). Mr Brown presents the changes in the understanding of sanctity in late antique society as 'the common preoccupation of all' (p 22), rather than as a dialogue between two parties. While it may be that the case is overstated and does less than justice to scholars such as Delehay, this is a welcome approach, especially as it gives a better perspective in which to regard that vital source for the historian, the records of those who were not intellectually sophisticated. The rest of the book presents various kinds of relationship between men of the world of the sixth century and the dead, especially the saints, in their role as patrons and companions of the living. There is much here that is of great value and it is presented in a beguiling manner; perhaps a final chapter with a title such as 'Alive unto God' would fill out the picture with a consideration of the theology of the saints as the icons of Christ among whom the believer is 'compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses' (Heb. 12:1), not only 'the searching and merciful presence of a fellow human being' (p 127) but the discovery of the possibility of transfiguration of men.

BENEDICTA WARD S L G

THE THIRD REICH AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES by Peter Matheson
T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1981 £2.95

Hitherto, much of the literature on the relationship between the churches and the Nazi regime has been handicapped either by its partisan apologetical nature or by its excessive concentration on the institutional aspects of the relationship. More recently, however, historians have turned their attention to the 'public opinion' reports of state and party officials at all levels in order to make a balanced assessment of the attitude of the German population towards the Nazi regime and its policies. Unfortunately, this new emphasis is not reflected in Peter Matheson's document collection.

To look on the positive side of things, almost any selection of documents in translation suitable for use by sixth-form students and undergraduates is to be welcomed. Matheson concentrates on the relationship between the institutional church — the clergy of both denominations and the national Protestant organisations and the Vatican — and the Nazi regime. His selection of documents brings out the divisions which paralysed the German

Protestant community during the early years of the Third Reich, and demonstrates the fundamental hostility of the churches towards the Weimar Republic, an hostility which was bound to compromise their capacity to resist the attempts of the Nazi regime to gain control of all areas of material, cultural and religious life. The obsessive fear of 'Bolshevism' which characterised the inter-war Catholic Church combined with its hostility towards the liberalism of the Weimar Republic to make it at least initially sympathetic towards the new regime; and the Protestant churches were hamstrung by their traditional association with the Prussian militarist authoritarian state. Positive enthusiasm for the Nazi regime on the one hand, and the attempt to secure the institutions of the church at the cost of a total withdrawal from politics on the other, were the perhaps predictable results of these attitudes.

This having been said, however, Mathe-

son fails to integrate the attitudes of German Christians into an overall sketch of their attitudes towards the regime as a whole – a significant question for the German churches after 1945. Thus, as good Catholics, veteran supporters of the Nazi party opposed the removal of crucifixes from Bavarian schools in 1941; as good Germans, Catholics were prepared to serve enthusiastically in the armies which made the Final Solution possible. It is this ambiguity which Matheson fails to document.

This weakness is partly a product of the documentary material Matheson has selected; but it also reflects more basic methodological mistakes. He has greatly reduced the value of his collection by failing to write an introduction which could have aired the controversies surrounding conformism and opposition in the Third Reich. Historians are increasingly reluctant to apply the term 'resistance' to dissident behaviour; rather, the emphasis is on examining the specific motives behind oppositional behaviour – which groups were opposing which measures, why, and with what consequences both for the regime and for the oppositional group. Groups could be both conformist and non-conformist at the same time – opposing

particular measures whilst accepting the regime as a whole.

Matheson's collection contains no index and I found his acknowledgement of sources for his documents perplexing. He appends no bibliography and consistently fails to give either dates or places of publication for the German works from which he has drawn his documents. Moreover, petty mistakes tend to cast doubt on his scholarship – for example, he refers to "... the 1938 report ..." of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, an office which was not established until September 1939.

The carelessness of Matheson's use of source material will mean that his collection of documents will be of no use to anyone with any knowledge of the period. And students approaching the subject for the first time are more likely to be confused than enlightened: they would do far better to refer to J Noakes and G Pridham (eds) *Documents on Nazism 1919-1945* (London 1974) and to move on from there to the established secondary literature on this subject.

STEPHEN SALTER



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Ref. N.B.,
Trion House, Dean St.,
Liskeard, Cornwall,
PL14 4AB.