

entirely new approaches to the subject. The purpose of introductory lectures should be, not so much the provision of information, as rather the creation of the attitudes of mind required by the subject, and its siting with regard to the students' previous academic landscape. From this point of view, Professor Bolaji Idowu must be a lecturer of considerable calibre, since what were presumably his spoken words survive the transition to cold print remarkably well, although the hammering-home of points, necessary for, and even enjoyable by, a lecture audience, can seem excessive and repetitious. Thus, a little too much space is surely given to questions of definition, and many readers will be disappointed that only one chapter is given to the substance of African religion.

A great deal of value can be found in what Professor Bolaji Idowu has to say, particularly with regard to the attitude of mind required by any student of religion. He argues forcefully against those who would generalise about African religion from evidence referring to limited areas of the continent, or who would seek to impose one model, whether ancestorship or animism or the Bantu philosophy, on Africa as a whole. Yet he seems not wholly to maintain his own 'presuppositionless' stance, and would appear to be setting up a mono-

theistic model of African traditional religion, very similar to that proposed by the Kenyan scholar, Professor J. S. Mbiti. One may certainly agree that much of the evidence for African theism has been unduly neglected in the past; but Professor Bolaji Idowu's readiness, on finding particular practices which do not fit this pattern, to condemn them as the result of 'priestcraft', which 'is quite capable of inventing spurious objects of worship' (p. 173) makes one feel very uneasy. More than this, the current of thought represented by Professors Bolaji Idowu and Mbiti, while surely right to emphasise the riches of African belief and worship, seems curiously to neglect the elements of criticism, scepticism, secularity, and even iconoclasm, which are surely just as much a part of the African tradition.

Readers outside Africa will find this book useful as helping to show how Africans see their religious heritage at the present time: but it would be fairer to see it as part of the teaching work of Professor Bolaji Idowu and his Department, and to join with the author in his hope for many studies of African traditional religion, carried out by those who are native speakers of the languages used in worship and belief.

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DURHAM PRIORY 1400-1450, by R. B. Dobson (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, third series, vol. 6). Cambridge University Press, 1973. xiii + 428 pp. £7.20.

Dr Dobson has written a pleasantly old-fashioned book. It is less of a monograph than the title suggests, since he begins with an account of the legend of St Cuthbert and the establishment of his cult at Durham, and constantly refers to the periods before and after 1400-1450. Indeed he will sometimes dip into the archives of the post-Dissolution chapter of Durham cathedral. His study of the central fifty years gives a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, account of all aspects of the life and organisation of a great Benedictine monastery. These include relations and contacts with bishops, kings, popes, lords, townsmen and tenants. The survey cannot be exhaustive because the material is too rich and so much research remains to be done, as he points out. There is still no systematic economic and social history of this northern area in the late middle ages. The Durham records are abundant and still largely unpublished. Earlier scholars have necessarily used them in a partial and uncritical way. Dr Dobson has an admirable mastery of the archives, and of medieval literary sources, as well as of the vast amount of secondary material, much of it scattered in journals on local history. This is a ripe work, solid and yet written with

enthusiasm. Pressure to publish often forces the university teacher to rush into print before he is ready. Dobson has contented himself with writing specialist articles to prepare the ground and has given his D.Phil. thesis time to grow from a sapling into a gigantic tree. It is comforting to find that this can still happen.

The theme has unity. We watch a conservative body of men passing through a period of equilibrium. The age of growth had passed. The number of monks was stabilised, of set policy, to about seventy, of whom some thirty lived temporarily or permanently in dependent houses. Economic conditions obliged the monks to turn themselves into rentier landlords; even the tithes from their appropriated churches were farmed out to collectors. They adapted their budget to a static income, seldom getting into the red and finding means to carry out an ambitious building programme of repair and reconstruction of their living quarters. Litigation to defend the rights of St Cuthbert continued, but on a less heroic scale. A good neighbour relationship, secular rather than spiritual in tone, was reached with the bishop of Durham, who had been the

convent's most serious rival previously. Developments (or lack of them) at Durham followed much the same pattern as those at other wealthy Benedictine houses in England. Dobson brings out some interesting shades of difference. The prior of St Cuthbert's kept in closer touch with his spiritual sons and was less of an autocrat than heads of houses elsewhere. John Wessington, prior 1416-1446, was an able, amiable character, whose long tenure of office justified his unanimous election in chapter.

The most distinctive trait of St Cuthbert's was its close link with Oxford University through its cell, Durham College. This was founded and endowed as a house of study where a significant proportion of monks could follow courses in theology and proceed to degrees in some cases. Secular clerks also had rooms there; so the monk students mixed with their fellows. Perhaps their very remoteness caused the prior and chapter to prize the connection highly: Durham College was by far the most flourishing of the monastic houses of study at Oxford. Most of the monk scholars returned to fill administrative posts at home, just as Prior Wessington himself did. He showed his care for learning by rebuilding, restocking and recataloguing the Durham library. The author leans over backwards in his effort not to overrate the intellectual achievements of Durham at this time. His claims are

really too modest. Absence of originality at of personal contribution to learning is a feature of Oxford in the early fifteenth century: monastic scholars resembled friars and secular scholars in producing no men of outstanding merit. Conservatism in choice of books for the library, shown in a preference for the Latin Fathers, paradoxically put Durham monks the *avant garde*. 'Back to the Fathers in the originals' was the rallying cry of reformist academics in the fifteenth century. Wessington's own books on the history of Durham and on Black Monk foundations in England and his dossier on the priory's business interests and claims are vast, almost wholly derivative compilations; but they mark him out as a forerunner of the itinerant antiquaries of the late medieval and Tudor period.

Morally and religiously the Durham monks kept up a high standard of respectability. Their historian begs us not to judge the lapses too harshly. Readers living in a permissive and violent age might be trusted to take the odd knifing and irregularity for granted. It is strange that writers on ecclesiastical history should persist in measuring conduct by their grandparents' norms of behaviour. However, Dobson brings his elusive characters to life, and not least the unskilful bursar who contemplated suicide on being summoned to present his accounts. The book is enjoyably diversified. BERYL SMALLEY

YOUTHQUAKE: The growth of a counter-culture through two decades, by Kenneth Leech. *Sheldrake Press*, London, 1973. 246 pp. £3.50.

It is very easy to mistake the aim of this book. The lavish publicity given it by SPCK, its publishers, and the ugly but arresting title only help to convey the feeling that here we have a book rather crudely designed to be an instant money-spinner, compulsory reading for vaguely liberal headmasters of uncertain age. And at first glance it certainly looks as if what Kenneth Leech has basically done is string together all the startling headlines youth and youth's manipulators have helped to make in the last twenty years. The blurb says that we have here a 'definitive chronicle of the many movements and trends that together make up the whole youth revolution', and although only a blurb would call a book 'definitive' that attempts to say something about almost everything from Teddy Boys to Transcendental Meditation, certainly Leech has skilfully assembled an enormous amount of data into a small space. He has much more ample and direct knowledge of the 1960s than of the 1950s, there are surprising omissions, and *Youthquake* lacks the grit and virility and brightness of Christopher Booker's review of the same two decades from a slightly

different angle, *The Neophiliacs*. Leech cannot capture moods in ink. But by and large the account we have here is balanced, accurate and clear, which Booker's account was not.

All the same, anybody who thinks that this book might be a key to 'understanding modern youth' will be disappointed, for Leech is so busy describing the clothes donned by youth that he has little time to describe the wearer. And anybody who already knows a lot about youth and wants to learn more about the background of youth's raves and yearning will be frustrated by Leech's brevity. He does not attempt even to make clear how varied in extent are the impacts of the different 'movements and trends' he describes, and he does not explore their origins and interrelationships.

To whom, then, is he speaking? First and foremost, to the churches. He says himself that he is trying to describe primarily one facet of the current youth scene: 'its search for spirituality'—a search which almost totally bypasses the main Christian denominations. Why does youth find the vibes in the churches so bad? Are the vibes likely to improve