

What is clear in a wider context is the substantial change in literature for confessors that took place after the Council of Trent and the introduction of seminary education for clergy in the Roman Catholic Church. While the anti-clerical polemics of the middle ages (and some modern medievalists) cannot be taken at face value, it is nonetheless true that the portrayal of the rude, bumbling and uneducated village priest must have had enough real life parallels to make the parody recognisable. After Trent, however, works for confessors blossom into major treatises of scholarship, such as that of Alphonsus Ligouri. The papers in this collection have consciously excluded mediaeval scholarship on penance and the related canon law (such as Raymond of Pennafort's *Summa de penitentia*) as having little effect on actual practice; while that might be true in the thirteenth century (although I think we would need to look more carefully before buying into that assumption completely), it is certainly not true after Trent. From the multi-volume works of Alphonsus to the pocket manuals of writers like Prümmer, various manuals of moral theology for confessors continued to be popular well into the 1950s.

Where they all disappeared to is a great mystery. Although there are certainly still courses taught in the administration of the sacrament of penance in Catholic seminaries, the old manuals are distinctly out of favour, and no new ones have appeared to take their place. The aphorism that 'whenever a priest fails, he turns into a counsellor', like the mediaeval anti-clerical polemics, contains enough basis in reality to ring true: but counselling is not the same as pastoral care. While it is true that in some places the hearing of confessions is taught as a sub-species of counselling, there is little or no literature to fill in the gaps of preparation for modern confessors. This is all the more troubling when the words of Lateran IV's Canon 17 are brought to mind: *cura animarum est ars artium*.

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*WIDENING THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE: Access to Church Buildings for People with Disabilities* by JOHN PENTON, Church House Publishing, London, 1999, 64pp (A4 Paperback £7.95) ISBN 0-7151-7581-5.

This guidance booklet opens with a concise overview of the recent rise of concern for the rights of disabled people and its embodiment in legislation, culminating in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The implications of this Act for churches as 'service providers' are outlined by setting out its scope and requirements and the phased programme for its implementation. There follows a section outlining the legislative framework of controls over alterations to church buildings, listed and unlisted, giving a summary of the guidance issued by English Heritage where alterations to historic buildings have to be considered in order to comply with the Act and introducing the concept of 'accessibility audits'. Examples of changes of management policy, practices and procedure are given, but the bulk of the book is devoted to a comprehensive and fully illustrated guide to technical means of satisfying the physical implications of the Act. Finally, there are useful (photocopiable) check-lists for use in carrying out accessibility audits of premises where services are provided.

This is as clear, readable, comprehensive and well-illustrated a guide as could be wished for, and will be invaluable to those responsible for the inspection, management and adaptation of churches, church halls and other church property—including parsonages and manses where these are used for pastoral purposes. It represents the best current advice on the subject, and will probably remain the most helpful guide where church buildings are concerned, even after publication of the promised Code of Practice for satisfying the requirements of the Act generally.

There are, of course, unanswered questions. First and foremost of these is the interpretation of the test of reasonableness, which will inevitably have to be established by case law. The diagrams illustrating solutions in theoretical situations serve in some instances to highlight the impossibility of providing access in specific practical cases without extensive—and often costly—interference with existing and often historic fabric. No mention is made of the possible reverse effect of the Act, whereby churches—and particularly the larger churches and cathedrals frequented by tourists—might elect to close parts of their buildings to the public altogether rather than suffer the architectural or archaeological damage and financial costs of the alterations needed to avoid a charge of discrimination. The possibility that the service provider's personnel (clergy or lay assistants) may themselves be disabled is not addressed. Nor is any thought given to possible future developments in technological aids for the disabled which could render some physical modifications redundant in the foreseeable future. But for the present this excellent booklet is an essential aid to keeping churches out of trouble with the law.

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*PRAYER BOOK AND PEOPLE IN ELIZABETHAN AND EARLY STUART ENGLAND* by JUDITH MALTBY. Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. Cambridge University Press. 1998, xvii + 310pp (hardback £40) ISBN 0-521-45313-5.

In this important study Judith Maltby suggests that recent historical writing on the Tudor and Stuart period has produced many 'group portraits' of English Christianity but has left some important figures off the canvas. The attention given to groups and individuals who in various ways were dissatisfied with the character of the established Church may have produced the impression that happy acceptance of the Church of England was only to be found among those who lacked zeal or commitment. This is a study of those who were committed to the Church and its worship as a matter of sincere belief and not of political or social expediency.

We are learning that we can no longer accept the picture of late medieval English Christianity as empty of vigour and devotion, and that the Reformation must be seen as having been, for most people, a matter of obedience to authority rather than religious conversion. Many might have preferred the old ways; some were disappointed that change did not come more quickly; in the end, the majority accepted the 'Settlement' of religion with its Articles, Prayer Book and bishops; but this hardly means we should conclude that nascent Anglicanism lacked genuine supporters. Probably the most important lesson we are learning from the recent debates is to see the Reformation in terms of process rather than event: the *experience* of vernacular liturgy, for example, created and nourished a constituency no less committed than the one which would have preferred to worship in a 'strange tongue', or the one which would rather have had no liturgy at all. As Dr Maltby says, familiarity need not breed contempt: it may nurture devotion.

Dr Maltby describes and explores the world of those who might be called 'Prayer Book Protestants'—a group hitherto virtually invisible, and still difficult to trace in contemporary sources. She begins with the records of the church courts, which are not surprisingly more concerned with recusants and puritans than with conformists, but which nevertheless bring to light supporters of the settlement using the law to protest against the behaviour of their clergy and neighbours. In 1577 the parishioners of Manton in Lincolnshire objected to their parson failing to provide Evening Prayer on Wednesdays and Fridays because he was playing bowls. At Tarpoley in Cheshire in 1639 a parishioner brought a suit against the curate for refusing to wear the surplice