

Benedictine reform under King Edgar (about 970 A.D.), and contains a list of the deceased members of the community. That the MS should have contributed to Henry's psalter in the twelfth century, is striking confirmation of how the great monasteries, even under Norman rule, continued to develop Anglo-Saxon traditions.

In style, these miniatures preserve the lively interest in lineal patterns at the expense of volume and weight, characteristic of 'insular art' both Irish and Anglo-Saxon. The Tree of Jesse miniature (fol. 9)—this is the page of the MS placed open in the permanent display at the British Museum (Grenville Library)—is more of a decorative design incorporating human figures than a representative picture. Anglo-Saxon subjects as well as style are recalled in Henry's psalter: the scenes from the life of David (fols. 6 and 7) are derived from a pre-conquest MS (BM. Cotton MS. Tiberius CVI).

If we accept that this psalter was intended for private reading, it may be placed in the context of another pre-Conquest tradition—that of providing illustrations for MSS in the vernacular, in order to help the reader to

meditate on the text. The fashionable vernacular used in this MS is French, but the Noah's ark miniature (fol. 6) and the battle scenes of fol. 9 are reminiscent of the illustrations to Bodley MS Junius II in Oxford, one of the four major codices of Old English poetry. The scenes from the Book of Genesis on fols. 2—5 are comparable with the more extended cycle of miniatures which illustrates Aelfric's translation of the Heptateuch (BM. MS. Cotton Claudius B.IV). A cycle of Biblical illustrations would not, for a medieval reader, be merely a decorative prelude to the psalter, but a continual reminder that in the psalter the prophet David had summed up all of Salvation History, including both the coming of the Messiah and his return to judge the nations.

The only lack in Professor Wormald's book is that in its meticulous examination of artistic style, the purpose of the book might be forgotten by the reader. Only one page of the psalter text is reproduced (the *Beatus* page, fol. 46). But the present work is a fitting monument to a great scholar, and a worthy addition to a great series.

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THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGION, by Andrew Greeley. *S.C.M. Press*, London 1973. 280 pp. £2.80

The basic religious needs and functions, says Andrew Greeley, have not changed very notably since the Ice Age. What he calls the conventional wisdom—that man has come of age, no longer needs religion and so on—is wrong, and he has written this book to demonstrate it in a sociological sort of way.

One way of propounding the conventional wisdom is to point to the decline in church affiliations. Against this Greeley presents some figures which give one pause for thought but can't do much more. Maybe at some point 85—90% of people in England say they believe in God, and 51% of Americans can name the first book of the bible (the same proportion apparently that knows the number of senators from their state and can spell cauliflower) but by their nature these and similar figures don't go deep enough to tell you anything interesting. They only give the tip of the iceberg, they don't tell one what the iceberg is. The continuing use of baptism and of religious ceremonies at marriages and funerals by a large number of people, to quote another of Greeley's examples, is susceptible of all sorts of explanation ranging from deep religious conviction to convenience or not wanting to offend older relatives.

Looking specifically at Christianity, even though church membership has remained high in America (this is an American book) it is

certainly on the decline in other Western countries (like England) and it is by no means clear what kind of commitment is represented by the American figures. Of course as Greeley points out, there is no reason to suppose that actual commitment to religion was any greater in the past that it is today, but in so far as the figures show anything at all, the conventional wisdom is right in pointing to a decline over the past few years in Christianity as at present organised.

But Greeley's primary concern is not with a statistical demonstration of the strength or otherwise of institutional Christianity. Or with Christianity at all. His concern is to demonstrate the continuing *need* for religion.

What he means by religion is (taking up the tradition of Weber) a system of ultimate meaning which provides an interpretative scheme for living. With this he incorporates (in the tradition of Durkheim) the community-making function of religion. He relies a good deal on other sociologists of religion here and brings these traditions together by seeing the interpretative scheme as integrating the community. People seek community with those who share their interpretations.

The interpretative scheme is conveyed in symbols of one kind or another but most commonly in mythology. For myths, which are not empirically verifiable, graппle with the prob-

lems of life and death, with the whole human condition, in a comprehensive view of reality which also provides the ritual for maintaining contact with that reality. We will never, says Greeley, be capable of dispensing with myths.

The difficulty of all this is that in his main life of argument Greeley is simply telling people what they *need*. Having castigated the campus intellectuals for calmly informing us that modern man no longer needs religion and mythology, he calls up Eliade, Ricoeur, Levi-Strauss and the rest to inform us that on the contrary modern man does need them. One may feel he's right, but he's engaged in the same campus operation—discussing philosophy and theology with his colleagues. Whether or not people actually do have comprehensive interpretative schemes or feel the need for mythology remains unresolved.

His second line of argument is to cite the myths of the modern world—the McCarthy era, 'the Establishment', evolution, scientism. But how far are these to be called myths and equated with the ancient narratives of creation and chaos, of heroes and monsters that we more usually call mythology. There is a very real problem as to what mythology or religion is. (Greeley doesn't really distinguish between them). His definition is very wide—the transcendent is not essential to it. In fact one wonders what one would have to do to hold a view of the world and not be told it was religious. Accepting Greeley's argument here means calling Marxism a religion even though its adherents neither see it that way nor describe their experience a religious. There is a blurring here of 'religion' and 'world view' which many would find unacceptable.

Further support is obtained from the modern search for community—communes, new sects, astrology, eastern mysticism and so on. All these are lumped together because the search for community is accompanied often enough by the search for ecstatic experience—an experience of the sacred. This all fits with the community-making function of religion since the sacred is generated by the world view. How far it is *only* something generated this way is left open; and certainly any attempt to separate 'authentic religion' from religion learnt from social pressures is futile.

What the intellectuals are rediscovering however has been known all along by the church congregations. The contemporary search is not, according to Greeley, a new one. They're looking for something that is already there in the middle-class suburbs and in the ethnic neighbourhoods of the big towns where their grandparents still live. Well, it's almost the same thing: there's more spontaneity now and you can shop around for your community-making religion—it's a conscious choice. One might

further complicate things from the English point of view by pointing out that the grandparents' neighbourhood is probably being pulled down by the council; and, further, since working class congregations are declining here, the idea that the intellectual rediscovery is all part of a middle-class cop-out is a good deal more convincing in this country.

But Greeley is not analysing community but making a point against the conventional wisdom. For that says there has been a great change, a great shift, in the way we live together. Once peoples' relationships were fewer but deeper, being primarily based on community; now these are disappearing and being replaced by a greater number of shallower relationships based on contract in which only part of the person is engaged at any one time and then only for some particular purpose. Along with this can easily go the view that once man lived in a sacred world, but now, because of the change, he lives in a world without religion: and this can be biased enough—seeing man as emancipated from religion. Sometimes these two themes are lumped together as one process: at one stage man was traditional, communal and religious; at the present stage he is rational, technological and secular. There are an awful lot of assumptions here: for instance that man was once more religious than he is now and that tradition and religion are connected and opposed to the equally connected rational and secular. Greeley asks where these assumptions come from and points to the incompleteness of the conventional model of change—it's all rather more complicated than that. He points out too that what underlies the argument that man is gradually becoming non-religious is the basic assumption that this is all part of an inevitable evolutionary process.

One need not accept all Greeley's arguments to feel that his essential point has been established. That religion has no place for modern man must not be assumed but demonstrated, and this has not been done. There is a good deal of evidence for the persistence of religion. Though one fears another assumption lying behind what he attempts to demonstrate—that there is a religious element constant to man that can never disappear.

Greeley has not ostensibly written for the churches but he has his recommendations. The myths must not be abandoned but reinterpreted and explained—to those at any rate whose passion for abstract and rational thought hinders immediate understanding of them. Then the churches can satisfy the strain in us for an ultimate meaning system that is made sacred.

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