

BOOK REVIEWS

THE WARBURTON LECTURES DELIVERED AT LINCOLN'S INN 1985–1994. The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, 106 pp (£15).

A Review by Chancellor Quentin Edwards QC

This slim, beautifully bound and printed book contains the ten lectures delivered in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn in the decade 1985 to 1994. William Warburton (1698–1779), Bishop of Gloucester and sometime Preacher of Lincoln's Inn, founded the lectures, to be delivered annually in the form of a sermon:

'to prove the truth of revealed religion in general and of the Christian in particular from the completion of those prophecies in the Old and New Testament which relate to the Christian Church especially to the apostasy of papal Rome.'

Although to the modern mind this seems an impossible task to perform, many, famous in their day, delivered the lectures, including in recent times Bishop Henson and Bishop Wand, Dean Inge and Dean Matthews, and, in the middle of the last century, F. D. Maurice. Whether they adhered closely to the terms of the trust this volume does not reveal.

The trust fell into abeyance between 1970 and 1985, and was revived by the Preacher and Benchers of Lincoln's Inn, with added terms authorising the lecturer to include 'if thought fit, the relationship between the concepts and practice of law and the principles and practice of religion'.

The ten lectures in this work justify the enterprise of those who restored the lectureship. The first in the decade was delivered by the Revd Felix Boyse, the Preacher of Lincoln's Inn, and is an enthralling account of Cyprian, the fashionable silk of Carthage who was converted to Christianity, became a bishop and suffered martyrdom. Only one of the following nine came from Lincoln's Inn: Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone. The other eight are Owen Chadwick, Lord Coggan, Enoch Powell, Dr Polkinghorne, Dr Anthony Kenny, the late Bishop Worlock, Chief Rabbi Sacks and Bishop John Baker.

What emerges is a collection of essays in religious and philosophical thought of great interest. Surprisingly, that of Enoch Powell is the shortest and slightest: little more than a textual analysis and criticism of two parables in the New Testament. That of Lord Hailsham is, on the contrary, a most compelling and fascinating argument directed, as a sound lawyer should, to the issues raised by the revised trust deed. Can the truth of religion be proved? The world of science, says Hailsham, is not the only world we know:

'There is another world universally recognised by experience which is not a world of the verifiable, the observed, the measured, the calculated and the exactly repeatable. It is the world of values.'

And he concluded:

'Now we see through a glass darkly. But the Scriptures, Hebrew and Christian, the personality of the crucified and risen Lord, the sacraments, tradition and fellowship of the Church, illumine our path and give a clue to living which we can only try by experience, in confiding trust that the faith so engendered may prove indeed the substance of things hoped for, the evidence (or, to use Warburton's word, "proof" or the making plain to the spiritual eye) of things not seen.'

In his lecture entitled 'Scientific Reason and Christian Revelation', the Revd Dr Polkinghorne examines the path of a scientist into the fields of religious experience,

and in his lecture 'The Ineffable Godhead' Dr Anthony Kenny, as a philosopher, asks how we can describe and so encompass the idea of God. These are two lectures which cannot be summarised but are learned and distinguished contributions towards the solution of that contemporary problem: how can we Christians explain ourselves and our faith in a sceptical world?

Dr Sacks, Bishop Baker and Lord Coggan examine from differing points of view the interaction of law, morality and religious belief.

So widely have these ten lecturers interpreted the terms of the trust that this reviewer cannot find a theme common to all. What can be said of them is that together they form a collection of learned, readable and, in the main, penetrating dissertations on topics which occur to lawyers who believe in, or are searching after, God.

The basis of law, morals, religious language, the intellectual arguments for belief, all are discussed. This book will leave any lawyer wiser and, what is more, any reader who has it on his shelves will return to it for quotations again and again.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW IN EUROPE by MALCOLM D. EVANS. Cambridge University Press, 1997. xxxi + 394pp (hard-back £45) ISBN 0-521-55021-1.

A review by Chancellor Rupert Bursell QC

'The freedom of religion is one of the oldest and most controversial of the claims that are now recognized as forming part of the corpus of human rights.'

The opening sentence of this most instructive book is reason enough for reading the whole: far too often religious freedom is taken for granted, just because we believe we have enjoyed it in the British Isles for so long. Nevertheless, that word 'believe' may have given the reader pause for thought. What is a 'religion'? For example, is Scientology a religion? And, if so, has it been accorded real freedom within the United Kingdom? Moreover, article 9(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights states:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.'

What, therefore, is the difference (if any) between a 'religion' and a 'belief'? If you are interested in legal (and political) responses to these problems, this book is for you.

Malcolm Evans, a lecturer at the University of Bristol, commences by pointing out that the idea of a state tolerating religious beliefs and practices of other communities would have appeared irrational in ancient days. However, the growth of the sovereign state in Europe led to the proposition that what takes place within the boundaries of a state is ultimately governed by domestic laws. In practice this has not proved satisfactory, as persecution, for example, of the Jews has proved. Therefore, as Evans says (at p. 2), 'In essence, the last 300 years have seen the international community attempting to resile [from this position].'

Nevertheless, interference by other states in the domestic policies of another could only be justified by force, political negotiation or the treaty obligations of the state concerned. To what extent religious freedom may now be enshrined within international law apart from treaty only time will tell. It is therefore necessary to be aware how the international protection of religious freedom arose within its historical context. That context can both inform and distort the interpretation of the various international treaties involved.