

Chapter four looks at the interpretation of texts and their implicit contextual foci. Malbon develops a typology of contextual foci based on the distinction of internal/external and literary/historical. Discussing W.H. Kelber's treatment of Mark's Gospel in *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, she criticizes his exclusive focus on the internal-historical dimension on the one hand (i.e. the Gospel's genesis in its 'immediate societal' context) and the external-literary dimension on the other (i.e. the genre of the Gospel). According to Kelber, Mark's Gospel represents a fundamental critique of oral traditions and their guarantors, the disciples itself, whom he regards as failures. The genre of the Gospel thus is a direct reaction against sayings-traditions. Unlike Kelber, Malbon proposes a reading that takes into account as many different contexts and approaches as possible. Rather than searching for a 'single dominant structuring principle', she commends 'complicating readings'.

The next chapter is concerned with the role of Jewish leaders in Mark's Gospel. It begins, however, with a discussion of the study of characterisation in traditional exegetical approaches such as redaction and source criticism. This is followed by a description of the different groups of the religious establishment in the Markan narrative, their common characteristic as a unified group opposed to Jesus and their role in the deepening conflict with Jesus and its ultimate escalation. In contrast to the other Gospels, however, Mark's Gospel indicates that it is possible for Jesus' opponents to become his followers.

In Chapter six, Malbon offers a new interpretation of the story of the poor widow in six different narrative contexts, which serves as an illustration of her model of multiple readings advocated in Chapter four. The final chapter analyses the narrative function of minor characters, who can be anonymous as well as named and 'tend to present commentary on the plot more than contribute to its movement' (p. 192). According to Malbon, minor characters are defined by their lack of 'continuing or recurrent presence'. Yet, despite their limited textual presence, they help to expand the 'response continuum' in the communication from (real) author to (real) audience.

While I remain sceptical about the value of collections of previously published articles, this book is of great value for everyone interested in narrative criticism. Both the thorough textual analyses as well as the discussions of epistemological issues found throughout the book are very stimulating and have supplied me with fresh impulses for my own work.

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*The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England  
c. 1800–1870 (Oxford Historical Monographs)*

Arthur Burns

Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999, xiv + 344 pp., hb.,  
£50, ISBN 0-19-820784-0

**SUMMARY**

The book examines the ways in which diocesan reforms were introduced in the nineteenth century, including the time before Wilberforce's episcopate. Burns focuses on issues such as the revival of the office and ministry of archdeacons and rural deans, the growth of various kinds of diocesan societies, the founding of theological and teacher training institutions and the culmination of these developments in the campaign for Diocesan Assemblies. He presents positive and negative conclusions that are also of relevance for the present discussion of various levels of authority within the episcopally controlled Church of England.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Das Buch beschäftigt sich mit den Wegen, auf denen Diözesanreformen im 19. Jahrhundert (auch vor Wilberforces Bischofszeit) eingeführt wurden. Burns untersucht Aspekte wie die Wiederbelebung des Amtes und Dienstes von Erzdiakonen und Dekanen im ländlichen Raum, die Zunahme von auf Diözesen zentrierten Gesellschaften verschiedener Art, die Gründung von Ausbildungsstätten für Theologen und Lehrer, sowie die Kulmination dieser Entwicklungen in den Bestrebungen zur Bildung von Diözesanversammlungen. Es werden positive und negative Schlussfolgerungen gezogen, die auch in der gegenwärtigen Diskussion um die verschiedenen Leitungsebenen innerhalb der bischöflich kontrollierten anglikanischen Kirche relevant sind.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Ce livre traite des réformes diocésaines introduites au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, y compris avant l'épiscopat de Wilberforce. L'auteur s'intéresse au renouveau des fonctions et des ministères d'archidiacre et de doyen de canton rural, au développement de diverses sociétés diocésaines, à la fondation d'institutions de formation à la théologie et à l'enseignement, et à l'aboutissement de ces développements dans la campagne pour les assemblées diocésaines. Il propose des éléments de conclusions positifs et négatifs qui sont intéressants pour les discussions actuelles concernant l'exercice de l'autorité à différents niveaux dans l'Église d'Angleterre, dont la direction est épiscopale.

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Contrary to the view that diocesan reform did not begin in earnest until the episcopate of Samuel Wilberforce, Burns begins by showing that there was plenty of evidence of reform before the 1830s. One area where this was readily observable was in the matter of episcopal



charges. In the 1820s, these began to have a more specifically diocesan focus. C.R. Sumner's first charge to the diocese of Llandaff, for example, was completely new in that it presented and analysed diocesan statistics and suggested necessary courses of action. By the early 1830s, bishops began to visit their dioceses with greater frequency and people began to buy and read their charges. The essential nature of episcopacy in the theology of High churchmen underpinned this revival since bishops were central to its operation.

Although the visitation of the bishop was the first major diocesan institution to undergo reform, it did not of itself succeed in creating a new diocesan consciousness. This emerged as bishops began to revive institutions at lower levels within their dioceses. The 1840s witnessed a revival of the office and ministry of archdeacons. Not only did they start to work alongside their diocesans, they began to visit within their archdeaconries and became the eyes and arms of their bishop. After 1838, for example, archdeacons began to investigate pluralities. About the same time, bishops also began to revive the office of rural dean despite the fact that some clergy were suspicious that they were becoming episcopal agents. Nevertheless, rural deans were instructed to initiate discussion among the local clergy and this enabled bishops to tap into opinion at the parish level. Burns shows clearly that the revival of rural deans was a central aspect of a growing 'diocesan consciousness'.

Alongside these developments, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the growth of specifically diocesan societies. These included church building, mission and education societies, which all resulted in a proliferation of local diocesan boards and parish auxiliaries. Significantly, when J.B. Sumner instituted his Chester Church Building Society, he saw it as a means of uniting the whole diocese. It was a network of these societies, which gave the diocese a more tangible presence. The founding of theological and teacher training institutions also enhanced the power of the bishop because it brought these areas under his control. Similarly, the building of new churches sponsored by diocesan building societies gave the patronage, in many cases, to the bishop. All of these developments culminated in the 1860s in the campaign for Diocesan Assemblies. Burns points out that these institutions 'received support from moderate evangelicals such as Charles Sumner, Joseph Wigram and Ellicott'. (Ellicott, it should be pointed out, was described by Lord Shaftesbury as 'a moderate High Churchman').

Burns concludes by indicating the ways in which the diocesan revival resulted in a developing 'diocesan consciousness'. It produced a number of positive results, enabling greater lay participation in the affairs of the church, aiding the development of the clerical profession and helping to reduce polarization between the various ecclesiastical parties. On the negative side, however, it should perhaps be pointed out that the 'professionalisation' of the clergy had the effect of distancing

them still further from those in their pews. Additionally, the diocesan revival, in effect, took away much of the autonomy, participation and involvement in the management of affairs at the local level.

This book, which arose from the author's doctoral research, is based on a very wide reading of primary sources. It is essential for all who want to understand the development of the Church of England in the nineteenth century. It is also, by the same token, the key to understanding the present dilemma in which the Church of England currently finds herself as cumbersome, distant, bureaucratic episcopally controlled machine in an age when much secular government is returning to the local town and community level.

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### *Perfect Being Theology (Reason and Religion)*

**Katherin A. Rogers**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, 166 pp., pb., £16.00, ISBN 0-7486-1012-X

#### **SUMMARY**

This is a thorough introduction to, and robust defence of, the God of classical theism. The book sets out a systematic doctrine of God, which begins from the claim that God is 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'. Such a God must be simple, exist necessarily, be immutable, impassive, timeless, omniscient, omnipotent, creator and goodness itself. Rogers has provided a superb overview of the classical doctrine and the current debate as well as a rigorous defence of this tradition in Christian theology. This is a brilliant introduction, which takes the reader beyond the superficial level of the debate.

#### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Das Buch ist eine gründliche Einleitung in die Gottesvorstellung des klassischen Theismus und eine robuste Verteidigung derselben. Eine systematische Gotteslehre wird entworfen, die auf der Behauptung basiert, Gott sei „das, über das hinaus nichts vorstellbar ist“. Ein solcher Gott muss einfach sein, notwendig existieren, unwandelbar, leidenschaftslos, zeitlos, allwissend, allmächtig sowie Schöpfer und das Gute an sich sein. Rogers gibt einen hervorragenden Überblick über die klassische Lehre und die gegenwärtige Debatte. Außerdem bietet sie eine rigorose Verteidigung dieser Tradition innerhalb der christlichen Theologie. Es handelt sich um eine brillante Einführung, die den Leser über die oberflächliche Ebene der Debatte hinausführt.

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

On a là une présentation solide et une défense vigoureuse de la doctrine théiste classique. L'auteur élabore sa doctrine systématique de Dieu à partir de la définition faisant de Dieu «l'être dont on ne