

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *HERITAGE AND RENEWAL*

#### *THE REPORT OF THE ARCHBISHOPS' COMMISSION ON CATHEDRALS*

Church House Publishing, London, 1994, x + 262 pp.

(Paperback £14.95)

071 513 760 3

A review by The Right Revd. Dr. E. W. Kemp, Bishop of Chichester

The first five chapters of the Report are an admirable acknowledgment of the manifold responsibilities of cathedral chapters and the extent to which they are on the whole carried out. It is well known that the setting up of the Commission was caused by problems that had arisen in one or two places and it is good that both the great demands made on chapters and the large extent to which they meet them should be recognised.

As the Commission rightly says, more than once, the regular round of daily worship is at the heart of a cathedral's life and a main reason for its existence. It worships on behalf of and prays for the diocese. Because in many cathedrals worship is bound up with the great English choral tradition, a major influence in the development of English music, there is inevitably a certain tension between the regular services and what is appropriate for those other services for which the building and its staff are used. This cannot be dealt with by legislation but only by common sense and good will.

I do not think that the Commission has paid enough attention to the differences that size and history make. The task of the dean and chapter of a great and ancient building such as Durham, York or Lincoln is significantly different from that of those responsible for a modern cathedral which until recently has been simply a large parish church. The Commission may be right in saying that legislation may be needed to free new dioceses from having to set up a cathedral on a particular model, but I suspect that a change of outlook and abandonment of the idea of equality are even more needed.

The Commission rightly criticises the present cumbrous procedure for revising statutes. There should be fewer statutes and more things regulated by by-law. I hope that the role of the Privy Council in this can be abolished, and indeed in the sphere of Pastoral Reorganisation as well, but I think that the Commission is too coy in what it says about Crown appointments. We must face the fact that, unlike the present procedure for the appointment of diocesan bishops, Crown appointments to cathedrals, that is deans and in some cases canons, are in the hands of two people, the Prime Minister and his or her patronage secretary. Those who have experience in the matter know how powerful the latter is and how much what is done varies with the differing outlook of the holder of the office for the time being. We have changed that situation for the appointment of bishops, can it not be done for cathedral appointments? I believe that the present arrangements can be and have been a major source of troubles such as those which led to the setting up of this Commission.

When I went to be Dean of Worcester twenty-five years ago I quickly did two things. One was to persuade the Chapter to revive the office of Steward which had lapsed in the 19th century, that is to appoint a lay administrator. The other

was to operate the clause in the statutes which provided for a finance committee with two lay members. We did not need any legislation to do either of those things; the possibility was there and only needed to be used. In the last quarter of a century I think that most chapters have done something similar, bringing lay expertise into their administration and financial care. As regards the buildings the recent Care of Cathedrals Measure requires Chapters to have a specialised committee to advise on the care of the fabric and provides external controls on what can be done. That has been an important statutory change. I believe that there is much of what the Commission would like to happen which can be done by the cathedrals themselves without the setting up of new statutory bodies such as the proposed, and I think cumbrous, Greater Council.

I agree with the desire to bring cathedrals into closer association with their dioceses, but rather than establish a new layer of control, which will have its own expense, I suggest that much could be achieved by a yearly or, if desired twice yearly, meeting of the administrative chapter with the Bishop's Council which is the standing committee of the diocesan synod.

More attention should be given to the bishop's role as visitor. Visitations are of two kinds. One is where the visitor is called in because of some dispute within the chapter or in the enforcement of the Care of Cathedrals Measure; the other is where he makes a general inspection and enquiry to see how the statutes are being observed and how the life and mission of the cathedral are being carried out. In both he needs the help of assessors. In relation to the first they will probably be experts, legal or other. In relation to the second they could be persons appointed by the Bishop's Council and this would help with the question of accountability. Where legislation might be needed would be to give more force to such directions as the Bishop with his assessors might make. The standard period for such a general visitation would be every five years.

I have heard it said that this Report provides a good check-list for what cathedrals should be doing. Some simplification of the 1963 and 1978 Cathedrals Measures and the 1978 Dioceses Measure, some requirement for consultation with the Bishop's Council, and some strengthening of the bishop's authority as visitor would, I believe, make possible all that is necessary.

*TREASURES ON EARTH*

By PETER BURMAN (ed)

Donhead (1994) 304pp (hardback £30)

ISBN 1-873394-10-1

A review by Peter H. B. Allsopp  
Chairman, Bath and Wells Diocesan Advisory Committee

The key to this excellent book lies in its subtitle – A good housekeeping guide to churches and their contents. As one would expect from a work edited and introduced by Peter Burman – formerly secretary of the Council for the Care of Churches – it is a carefully prepared and practical guide. His introduction could be usefully read by every churchwarden charged with the care of the fabric of his church.