BRIDGES:
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Theology, Philosophy,
History, and Science
11.3/4 (2004): 314-18.

BOOK and FILM REVIEWS

Tod E. Jones. *The Broad Church: A Biography of a Movement.* Lanham, Md.: Lexington Book, 2003. *xi* + 347 pp. ISBN 0-7391-0611-2; LC# PR468.R44J66 2003

Recently, struggles between Sunni and Shiite Muslims have been a part of the media attention focused on Iraq. Whatever these struggles tell us about Islam, they are also a reminder to us that in the major religions of the world there is intra-sect conflict and disagreement that spills over into the general culture. These intra-sect divisions mark Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism as well as Islam.

Of equal interest to the disagreements within religions are larger questions. Does each of the major world religions have a faith that manifests itself in specific teachings and doctrines? If so, how does each of these religions maintain its identity when there is diversity of opinion within its ranks? How does a religion measure whether divergence from certain teachings and doctrines is destructive or constructive? How do religions solve divergence within their ranks?

***The Broad Church* is an intriguing and well-researched examination of a period in English cultural and religious history in which conflicts within the English Anglican Church about teachings and doctrines, ways of living and ways of believing, reached a fever pitch. It is a book, then, that could be used to help us learn something about the nature of such disagreements and diversity of belief within a religious tradition.** Also, the beliefs and disagreements within the Broad Church tradition spilled over into the culture of 19th-century England, and so have something to tell us about the relationship between religion and culture. Even more importantly, these disagreements were actually productive of enlarged cultural understandings. This book allows us to see the disagreements and the spillovers from a remarkable vantage point. It speaks from a specific point of view, but it does so engagingly.

Tod Jones teaches British literature at the University of Maryland. He has deep roots in the preaching of the Christian vocation. Jones is, then, not a secularist. Religious faith and critical study are not antithetical forces that need to be kept separate from each other. He has

had difficulties with various teachings of the tradition in which he was formed, but feels a soul-deep tie to religious faith. It is unabashedly from this posture that he comes to examine the 19th-century English phenomenon called The Broad Church. The Broad Church may not be a part of the active vocabulary of educated Americans, but the names of those who were involved in it are a part of the vocabulary of persons that should be available to anyone who has had even minimally decent schooling: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, Thomas Arnold, and Thomas Carlyle are names we should be able to recognize as important to our cultural heritage.

Taking his cue from the human tendency to identify with persons, Jones sets out to "write a biography of the Broad Church movement. After all, biography is not only the form by which the Christian Church has traditionally received its instruction; it is also the form by which the Victorians preferred to know the minds and hearts of those who had passed through their midst" (p. 2). This biography begins with a brief but serious glance at the controversy between Erasmus and Luther. For Jones feels that the Broad Church movement, and Anglicanism in general, have antecedents in Erasmus' thought rather than Luther's. He sees Erasmus' prolonged shadow in the Broad Church's concern to be moderate, in its desire to think carefully and with great discrimination, in its faithfulness to the great ideal of an Established Church and in the care taken not to give offence to other believers (p. 5). For Jones, the Broad Church is a church in which Christian humanism is a major force.

Jones admits that he does not write dispassionately about the Broad Church. There are clearly ways of thinking and believing in that Church which set the bar for his own thought and faith. Most simply put, the Broad Church figure whom Jones admires is one who believes vibrantly in a God who truly exists. This God palpably reveals Himself to the "rational and moral sense" (p. 6). This same God is deeply felt in human reasonings and in human seeking to be moral and exemplary human beings. Jones and the Broad Church are distrustful of a God defined in dogma. For these believers, God defined in dogma gets in the way of the evolutionary nature of humankind's understanding. In setting out the biography of the Broad Church, Jones is telling us of the deep wells of his own religious faith and belief. In this, and in its hidden structure as a spiritual autobiography, the book is an extraordinarily rich achievement.

Those who see dogma as playing a rich, vital, and productive role in understanding God will find things to argue with in this book. In truth,

the book does not deal kindly with one of the Christian tradition's great thinkers about the efficacy and beauty of dogma, John Henry Newman. It often pictures him as something of a villain and, in his own passionate involvement with Broad Church figures, Jones sometimes displays a visceral dislike of Newman. This, despite the fact that Newman wrote a spiritual autobiography of the same sensitivity and truthfulness that Jones has written in this volume. Empathetic understanding of most of Newman's argument on behalf of dogma is not a part of this book although Newman's greatness is acknowledged, as indicated below, in Jones' evaluation of Matthew Arnold.

Newman aside, this volume awakens us to the greatness in the minds cited above and to their centrality as great players in the biography of the Broad Church and in Jones' own belief. Of Coleridge, he writes lovingly and admiringly: "It is Coleridge's constant premise that all religion is, necessarily, revealed, for revelation is the communication of God through the agency of Reason. Because Reason is for humans a universal witness of consubstantiality with the Divine Logos, that which is genuinely revealed should find a direct appeal to the Reason of any person who is sensitively receptive" (p. 36). Coleridge, Jones proudly reminds us, sees God in fineness of spirit everywhere. For him, "the difference between St Paul and Shakespeare is one of degree, not of kind. Although the Bible contains more revelation than any other collection of books and is fully inspired, it is nevertheless true that all literature may contain revelation, and any author who is led by Reason to faith may be actuated by the Spirit. Furthermore, the inspiration of a writer makes no claim upon the reader until his words are *received* under the actuation of the Spirit" (p. 37).

Of Thomas Arnold, the fabled schoolman, reformer, and headmaster of Rugby, Jones says that his life, when chronicled by Arthur Stanley, gave the "first and most influential hagiography of the Broad church movement" (p. 113). It should be noted that Jones sees in this same Arthur Stanley "the greatest spokesman the Broad Church has ever had among the clergy" (p. 296). Stanley and others like him have a tripartite appeal for Jones. They "add a reverence for the past and a wholesome distrust of their present lives" to their love of truth (p. 296).

Jones cites approvingly Mark Pattison's estimation of Thomas Arnold. Arnold, and others like him were of the opinion that " 'the abject deference fostered by theological discussion for authority, whether of the Fathers, or the Church, or the Primitive Ages, was incompatible with the free play of the intellect which enlarges knowledge, creates science, and

makes progress possible' " (p. 112). Newman's sense that intellect could find the same creativity, progress and enlargement in thoughtful consideration of the Fathers and the Primitive Ages is not given any sustained attention here. Still, a sense of Arnold's energy, integrity, and larger-than-life presence in English life is wondrously given in these pages.

Matthew Arnold, the son of Thomas Arnold, engages Jones in the final part of his biography of the Broad Church movement. In Matthew Arnold, a theme of the entire book, Tertullian's great question, "Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis? Quid Academiae et Ecclesiae?" finds a clear answer: "the practical lesson is that the citizen of Jerusalem and the citizen of Athens should not feel anxious if, in casual speech, they share the same God" (p. 297). Matthew Arnold's great contribution to our understanding of culture and the role that religion plays in it is given ample play by Jones. Still, Arnold's conviction that belief in miracles should disappear in reasonable persons and his inability to conceive of God as a Person raise troubling questions (p. 290).

In his treatment of Matthew Arnold's "foray into social and religious criticism," Jones does give due recognition to John Henry Newman (p.265). He acknowledges that Frederick Maurice and Newman are the two greatest English theologians of the nineteenth century and that Arnold owes a debt to Newman's idea of the development of doctrine. (*Cf.* especially pp 265-69). Jones is correctly admiring of the depth of Arnold's religious nature: "His sense and taste for the Infinite, his inner awareness of a holy presence and calling, his joyful submission or resignation to the will and workings of God—it is in these unspeakable things that we find Arnold's personal religion. . . . The logical flow of his thought leads him from literary to social to religious criticism, but it is Arnold's religion, the buried stream, that guides the flow of his life's work" (p. 280).

In addition to this book's portraits of figures whose names we recognize, Jones introduces us to other rich and rewarding figures in 19th-century Anglicanism. Two of them have been cited above: Arthur Stanley and Frederick Maurice. Others like Richard Whately, John Sterling and Julius Hare, are strong voices. Jones is right that the Broad Church movement is a movement that deserves study and reflection.

Jones appends an evaluation of the significance of the Broad Church movement to his biography of that movement (pp. 313-20). He ends the book with a coda which both describes his admiration for the

Broad Churchmen whose thought he has chronicled and also tells us something of who he is: "By faith, Coleridge through long wanderings, kept alive the heart in the head and was granted a wisdom vindicated by its children. By faith Thomas Arnold placed principles before preferment, for which service God translated his life into a sermon. . . . By faith, Stanley, having traced the development of the revelation of God within the Jewish Church, redefined what it means to have an *historical* faith. He listened for the still, small voice, and God was pleased to make him a peacemaker among his brethren" (p. 320).

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