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Review of The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England, by A.J. Frantzen

Joseph F. Kelly

John Carroll University, kelly@jcu.edu

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comments which contrast the role of "Bishops and Counts in Merovingian *Civitas*" and the "Lords and Men in the Carolingian Towns." James has many sensible things to say about "Family, Kin and Law" when explicating what the community of early Gaul/France was like. The interaction of paganism and Christianity, as well as the profound impact of monasticism, are aptly described.

The other half of the book is devoted to authority. The extensive scholarly reworking of what we know about early medieval kings, aristocrats, and the peasantry is reflected in four pithy chapters. James's passages on the confused later Carolingian era are brilliant examples of lucidity and conciseness. He justly concludes with a chapter on "Bishops and Councils," which highlights the importance of the bishop for the political development of France.

James demonstrates a thorough awareness of current scholarship. I do find, however, his statement concerning Merovingian bishops and their wives (p. 54) rather unsatisfactory in the light of how repressive the Merovingian church (and councils) were in the matter of such unions when compared to the situation previously. This matter is presented clearly by Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (1981), which appeared too late for James to use. His bibliography adheres to a cumbersome format imposed by the series of which it is a part; publications through 1980 are included. James also provides a helpful three-page chronological table of events, but one is surprised at the omission of Clovis's baptism. A serviceable index, eight plates, and six maps further enhance the value of this very fine example of historical narrative and exposition.

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado

HARRY ROSENBERG

The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England. By ALLEN J. FRANTZEN. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983. xv + 238 pp. \$27.50.

This book fills a genuine need, offering a reliable and insightful survey of a significant topic which is frequently overlooked or just given lip service. Early medieval penitential books are widely perceived as casuistic lists of sins and penances, compiled by monks and imposed on the rest of the church. The penitentials are usually boring, although occasionally funny. For example, what penance is fit for a monk whose carelessness permitted a weasel to get drunk and drown in a vat of liturgical wine? Some interpreters hold sinister views of the penitentials, seeing them as instruments by which the clergy exerted social control over the laity. Frantzen argues that these attitudes reflect only the surface and that the penitentials had an educative purpose: their goal was attitudinal conversion, not merely adherence to regulations.

The penitentials were used for private rather than public penance. Frantzen begins with the Irish monks, who extended the monastic practices of mortification and correction of faults by a superior to the church at large. However, because of the major role monasticism played in Ireland, penance never was separated from the monastery. The English adopted the Irish practice, but English penitential books, including that attributed to Theodore of Canterbury, were more organized, systematic, and independent of monasticism. When Irish and English monks brought their penitential books to Gaul, the Franks modified them considerably. The Carolingian church had witnessed a strong revival of public penance, and Carolingian ecclesiastics worked the penitentials into canonical handbooks which dealt with public and private confession. The penitentials retained their popularity in the British Isles, as evidenced by the composition of vernacular penitentials in tenth-century England. Two major English reformers, Aelfric and Wulfstan, contributed to their popularity.

Frantzen has shown that scholars must take the penitentials seriously by relating them to the general life of the early medieval church. On the negative side, the author mistakenly states that Cuthbert was Irish (p. 63). Also, his criticism of Ludwig Bieler's edition of the Irish penitentials requires elucidation.

John Carroll University
Cleveland, Ohio

JOSEPH F. T. KELLY

Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh-Century Debates.

By ANNE LLEWELLYN BARSTOW. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982.
ix + 275 pp. \$29.95.

Is marriage allowed for the Christian priesthood or must celebrants at the altar embrace the celibate life? Certainly recent church pronouncements on priestly celibacy have provoked renewed debate. Anne Barstow's book alludes to contemporary issues but centers on a more dramatic period when celibacy was imposed on the secular clergy, many of whom were married priests. By emphasizing the vigorous defense by partisans of clerical marriage against the papal program championing celibacy, Barstow presents material of interest to historians and background for an important current issue.

She begins with a short survey of clerical marriage before 1050. Married clerics were prevalent in the period, but the superiority of virginity and celibacy were frequent themes of religious writers, creating a tension between theory and practice. With the advent of the reforming papacy, former counsels of perfection were incorporated into canon law, thus imposing celibacy on all of the clergy.

In the most interesting section Barstow examines the tracts written in defense of clerical marriage and in defiance of the Gregorian program.