

Great Christian Jurists in English History, **by M. Hill and R. H. Helmholz (ed.)**

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If ever there was any serious doubt concerning the separation of faith and jurisprudence in England, this volume puts that doubt to rest. It is even possible to assert that their relationship was symbiotic. The purpose of this book is to evaluate the impact of the Christian faith on the professional output of a number of selected judges and lawyers who were responsible for developments in English common law from the thirteenth until the twentieth centuries. This is a comparative study, which reaches noteworthy conclusions about the manner in which Christianity influenced the views of those under study, and how their practice in or conception of law shaped the church (mainly the Church of England), its law and the way it articulated its doctrine.

The personalities dealt with here are: Henry of Bratton, William Lyndwood, Christopher St Germain, Sir Edward Coke, Richard Hooker, John Selden (Christian jurisprudence); Matthew Hale (theological and natural law theorist); Lord Mansfield (on the reasonableness of religion); William Blackstone's Anglicanism, Lord Kenyon (a preacher from the bench); Stephen Lushington (of the Doctors' Commons); Roundell Palmer, FW Maitland and Lord Alfred Denning. Each of these in his own way demonstrated his faith through his pursuit of the law.

Denning had a passion for justice and for Christianity and this he manifested throughout his vocation as a lawyer: "It is axiomatic that love should be the predominant Christian impulse, and that the primary form of love in social organisation is justice." (p.322). This was expressed through the organisation of society. For him, law is "only the application, however imperfectly, of truth and justice in our everyday affairs" (p.327). He never viewed law as a static entity, but it was to be developed in the context of changing needs and circumstances. If only all lawyers were guided by such high



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principles. It is not simply that Christians make better lawyers, but they operate from a strict Christian code and integrity as Christians within the broader secular community which others may emulate.

This is a book that is worthy of study due to its strong historical alignment of religion and law. It has much to teach us regarding how to approach our involvement in all professions, which may also be counted as vocations, and which also has abiding relevance.