

- [Link](#)

The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870. By Arthur Burns. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. xiv + 344 pp. \$82.00 (cloth).

Arthur Burns's masterly account of one of the main aspects of nineteenth-century Church reform has got to be among the best half-dozen books to appear on the history of the modern Church of England in the last two decades. Not since Geoffrey Best's monumental 1964 book on the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Temporal Pillars, has a historian come to grips so well with the institutional and administrative history of the modern Church. The breadth and depth of material covered here is simply breathtaking-some 700 episcopal and archidiaconal charges, a prosopographical survey of over 300 archdeacons, a considerable amount of manuscript source material, all in addition to a fearsome list of published primary and secondary sources. As with Best's book, it is simply inconceivable that historians of the modern Church of England will be able to work in the future without a copy of Burns's text to hand.

Most Popular Articles in Reference

[The importance of understanding organizational culture](#)

[Credit card attitudes and behaviors of college students](#)

[What factors attract foreign direct investment?](#)

[Libraries Need Relationship Marketing - mutual interest marketing concept, ...](#)

[How to set performance goals: employee reviews are more than annual critiques](#)

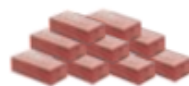
[More »](#)

[▼ Ad Feedback](#)

**What can
happen when
your dog is
carrying too
much* weight?**



**Load bricks into
basket to find out.**



*A dog is obese if it is 20% or more
above its ideal weight.

If the execution is thorough and immense, the analysis presented in the book is remarkably simple. Contrary to the impression of Tractarian-inspired historiography, the reform of the diocesan machinery of the Church of England was not predominantly the outcome of Tractarian "renewal." Samuel Wilberforce, the High Church bishop of Winchester and Oxford, conventionally described as the pioneer of diocesan reorganization, was as much a follower as a forerunner of a trend. In fact, Burns demonstrates decisively, virtually all of the leading features of diocesan reorganization and revival in the nineteenth century either predated the Oxford Movement, or can be attributed directly to non-Tractarian, reforming impulses in the Church. Foremost amongst these reforming impulses was the work of the "Orthodox High Church," the strand of Anglican belief and practice that Peter Nockles has shown to have thrived throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and against which the Tractarians consciously reacted.

As Burns shows, diocesan reform really began in the eighteenth century, albeit in dispersed and piecemeal ways, with early efforts to develop and improve episcopal visitations, to extend the responsibilities of archdeacons, and to revive the office of rural dean. By the 1830s, on the eve of the Oxford Movement, these early reforming moves had become much more extensive and systematic. The publication in 1835 of the "manifesto" of the revival of rural deans, William Dansey's *Horae decanicae rurales*, marked, not the initiation of a movement, but recognition of its existence already across the dioceses of England and Wales. These developments in the reform and administration of the major diocesan "officers" of the Church—bishops, archdeacons, and rural deans—were paralleled by the development of diocesan record-keeping and statistics, by the foundation of new diocesan societies, by attempts to reform the archaic disciplinary structure of the Church, by moves towards the creation of new dioceses and sees, and by the later appearance of diocesan representative bodies, including above all ruridecanal chapters and conferences, and diocesan assemblies. By 1870, Burns concludes, "the Anglican diocese was equipped with an effective structure binding the parochial clergy (and to some extent churchgoing laity) more tightly into the institution" (p. 260).

A number of leading features of Burns's account are worth highlighting. I have already indicated the prominence of the "Orthodox High Church," a description popularized in recent years by historians concerned to demonstrate the continuing influence of a High Church Anglicanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that shared much with Tractarianism, but also was significantly different from it. The designation "Orthodox" here, in a wider context, is perhaps rather misleading, but it has become common currency in Anglican church history and is intended to contrast with the Latitudinarian position that the Tractarians alleged was typical of the perceived laxity of the eighteenth-century Church. A second feature is the way in which the diocesan revival (which Burns, incidentally, capitalizes as "the Diocesan Revival") became to some degree self-generating, as "diocesan consciousness" developed and fuelled further institutional change. This rather imprecise concept, "diocesan consciousness," is nevertheless rooted by Burns in the general history of nineteenth-century Britain, with its development of local politics and community-consciousness. A third feature is the concept of "legitimation," drawn from social science, but used here to identify the way in which reforming clergy tended to appeal, not to the "efficient," utilitarian ethos Geoffrey Best assumed to be typical of the Ecclesiastical Commission, but to Church tradition, and so to a particular historical interpretation of the English Church. Despite the social-scientific provenance of the concept, it is actually used here in a flexible, historically sensitive way, and usefully advances our understanding of the rhetoric of Victorian church reform.

- [1](#)
- [2](#)
- [3](#)
- [Next »](#)

- [Link](#)

[<< Page 1](#) **Continued from page 1.** [Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Standing back from the specific content of the book, two final comments from this reviewer might be in order. One is that Burns triumphantly demonstrates the merits of the patient, sensitive study of Church institutions, contrary to the tendency to see institutions as, at best, dull, mechanical and ultimately marginal aspects of historical religious experience. Through Burns's work, as well as that of some other recent church historians, we can begin to see how different the practice of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Anglicanism really was from the historical mythologies that have fed the ecclesial identities of the different "parties" within Anglicanism. The other comment is that Burns's work, taking its place as it does alongside that of Peter Nockles, Stephen Taylor, Cohn Haydon, Nigel Yates, Frances Knight and other historians working broadly on the same period, demands in turn the production of a new synthesis on Victorian Anglicanism, a new version of the great two-volume history by Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (1966 and 1970), that would inevitably now describe a narrative remarkably different from that offered by Chadwick. Without such a synthesis, I suspect that students, ordinands and others will continue to parade the exaggerations and simplifications that Burns has helped so effectively to demolish.

Most Popular Articles in Reference

[The importance of understanding organizational culture](#)

[Credit card attitudes and behaviors of college students](#)

[What factors attract foreign direct investment?](#)

[Libraries Need Relationship Marketing - mutual interest marketing concept, ...](#)

[How to set performance goals: employee reviews are more than annual critiques](#)

[More](#) »

▼ [Ad Feedback](#)



Bibliography for "Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870, The"

View more issues: [Spring 2001](#), [Winter 2001](#), [Fall 2001](#)

Morris, Jeremy "[Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870, The](#)". Anglican Theological Review. Summer 2001. FindArticles.com. 15 May. 2008.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3818/is_200107/ai_n8982980

Continued from page 2. [Previous](#) - 2 - 3

Articles in Summer 2001 issue of Anglican Theological Review

- [A Prayer to the Paraclete](#)
by Finlay, John
- [Adam, Eve, and Seth: Pneumatological reflections on an unusual image in Gregory of Nazianzus's "Fifth Theological Oration"](#)
by Golitzin, Alexander
- ["The Spirite searcheth the botome of Goddes secretes"](#)
by Cooper, Robert M
- [Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation](#)
by Long, D Stephen
- [Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999, The](#)

- by Gregory, Alan P R
- [Jesus the Meek King](#)
by Wainwright, Elaine
- [Credo](#)
by Slocum, Sheryl
- [An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians / A Dictionary for Episcopalians](#)
by Gray, Patrick Terrell
- [Thomas Merton: Essential Writings](#)
by Vivian, Tim
- [Holy Spirit: Source of unity in the liturgy, The](#)
by Weil, Louis
- [Justification and the Holy Spirit](#)
by Fuller, Reginald H
- [Jayber Crow: The Life Story of Jayber Crow, Barber, of the Port William Membership, as Written by Himself](#)
by Camenisch, Paul F
- [Education, Religion, and the Common Good: Advancing a Distinctly American Conversation About Religion's Role in Our Shared Life](#)
by Waggoner, Michael D
- [Starting over: The Holy Spirit as subject and locus of spiritual theology](#)
by Hughes, Robert D III
- [When Jesus Became God: The Struggle to Define Christianity During the Last Days of Rome](#)
by Vivian, Tim
- [Religion and the Powers of the Common Life](#)
by Kater, John L Jr
- [Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God](#)
by Kenneson, Philip D
- [Citizenship: Re-minded by the Holy Spirit](#)
by Hughson, Thomas
- [Ecumenical documents on ministry \(1973-1999\)](#)
by Plater, Ormonde
- [Living the Truth](#)
by Horine, Robert B
- [Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion](#)
by Taliaferro, Charles
- [Boredom and the Religious Imagination](#)
by Countryman, L William
- [Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ](#)
by Levy, Sandra M
- [Second Opinions: Stories of Intuition and Choice in a Changing World of Medicine](#)
by Urion, David K
- [Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit](#)
by Weil, Louis
- [Fingerprints of God: Tracking the Divine Suspect through a History of Images, The](#)
by Cunningham, Lawrence S
- [Desiring Life: Benedict on Wisdom and the Good Life](#)
by Holder, Arthur G
- [Bread of Life: A Cookbook for Body and Soul / Art of the Inner Meal: Eating as a Spiritual Path / Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia, The](#)
by Hemert, Katherine Amato-von
- [Art of the Cross: Medieval and Renaissance Piety, The](#)
by Hefling, Charles
- [Some notes on filioque](#)
by Price, Charles P
- [A Life Pleasing to God: The Spirituality of the Rules of St Basil](#)
by Vivian, Tim
- [Gathering the NeXt Generation: Essays on the Formation and Ministry of GenX Priests](#)
by Isaacs, Barbara R I
- [Religion and Community](#)
by Avis, Paul

- [Ethics After Easter](#)
by Monti, Joseph
- [Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c. 1880-1939](#)
by Morris, Jeremy
- [Zacchaeus effects and ethics of the spirit](#)
by Slocum, Robert B
- [Gratia: Grace and gratitude--Fifty unmodern theses as prolegomena to pneumatology](#)
by Hefling, Charles
- [Speaking personally of you, Holy Spirit](#)
by Edwards, Tilden
- [Dancing in the Margins: Meditations for People Who Struggle with Their Churches](#)
by Hernandez, Ana
- [Feminism and Christian Tradition: An Annotated Bibliography and Critical Introduction to the literature](#)
by Kujawa, Sheryl A
- [impossible commandment, The](#)
by Wright, Rebecca Abts
- [Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics](#)
by Bunch, Wilton H
- [Reading at the Interface of Culture and Faith: Inviting the spiritual seeker](#)
by Wallace, Catherine
- [Editor's notes](#)
by Griffiss, James E
- [Solid Ground: 25 Years of Evangelical Theology](#)
by Harris, Harriet A
- [spirit in the blood, The](#)
by Zahl, Paul F M
- [A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity](#)
by Vivian, Tim
- [Heroism and the Christian Life: Reclaiming Excellence](#)
by Danford, John W
- [Religious Poetry and Prose of John Donne / John Donne: Contemporary Critical Essays](#)
by Waggoner, Rita Roberts
- [Mysteries of Faith](#)
by Compier, Don H
- [Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement](#)
by Quash, Ben
- [Pope's Body, The](#)
by Miles, Margaret R
- [Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870, The](#)
by Morris, Jeremy
- [Living with History](#)
by Jordon, Sherry
- [Transforming conflict in church](#)
by Hemert, Katherine Amato-von
- [Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies](#)
by McGowan, Andrew
- [A clarification on the filioque?](#)
by Tavard, George H
- [Changing Face of God, The](#)
by Harding, Leander S
- [Spirit: Inner witness and guardian of the soul](#)
by Priest, Travis Du
- [Falling in love: The work of the Holy Spirit](#)
by Jones, Alan
- [Flannery O'Connor and the Mystery of Love](#)
by Dally, John A
- [Home and Exile](#)
by Battle, Michael
- [By water and the Holy Spirit: Baptism and confirmation in Anglicanism](#)
by Meyers, Ruth A
- [Barn at the End of the World: The Apprenticeship of a Quaker, Buddhist Shepherd, The](#)

by Kelsey, Anne

- ["The Lord, the Giver of Life:" A reflection on the theology of the Holy Spirit in the twelfth century](#)

by Zemler-Cizewski, Wanda

- [Holy Spirit in Holy Church: From experience to doctrine](#)

by Wright, J Robert

- [Introduction and dedication: Engaging the spirit](#)

by Slocum, Robert Boak

- [Les catacombes chretiennes de Rome: Origine, developpement, decor, inscriptions / Subterranean Rome: In search of the roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City](#)

by Vivian, Miriam Raub

Sponsored Links

[The AntiChrist: Free Book](#)

Discover What the Early Church Knew About Rapture, Revelation, 666, ...

voiceofelijah.org

[All about the Holy Spirit](#)

A Bible study on how to receive the Holy Spirit and His works

www.bjnewlife.org

[The Church Jesus Built](#)

Free Book: What happened to the church Jesus began? Where's it now?

www.gnmagazine.org

[Church Supplies and Goods](#)

Save 20% Your satisfaction is our prayer

www.divinetenderness.com

[\(about\)](#)

[BNET](#)

[Site Help & Feedback](#)

[About CNET Networks](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Partnerships](#)

[Site Map](#)

[RSS Site Map](#)

Visit other CNET Networks sites: Select Site



Copyright © 2008 CNET Networks, Inc. All Rights Reserved. [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)