crammed on to each page. Footnotes to the text provide comment on the reading of the manuscript as well as any peculiarities; footnotes to the translation deal with issues of interpretation. This format is very digestible and allows ready comparison to be made between text and translation. For scholarly purposes alone, this is of enormous benefit, not to mention the gratification the amateur might gain from so easily being able to test their Old English! Commentary follows each edition and translation, and is as wide-ranging as the content of the laws themselves. Depending on the law code, such issues are canvassed as the monetary system, the king, fines and wergild payments, oath support, rank and status, women, children, slaves and manumission, theft, killing, personal injury, hospitality, unlawful matrimony, the rights of the church and church law. Appendices provide a full diplomatic transcription of the law codes as they are in the manuscript, as well as tables of the restitution payable in Æthelberht’s code according to amount and status, and of payments to the king for disturbance of the peace, compared across the three codes.

In a book entitled The Beginnings of English Law it is not unreasonable to have found a focus on Kent, and in particular Æthelberht. However, I would like to have seen the law code of Ine of Wessex included in this collection. His is the only other pre-Alfredian code to have survived, and it was promulgated at a similar time to the later two Kentish codes. Ine’s laws are used as point of comparison throughout the book, so a full treatment would not have been out of place. The book also ends somewhat abruptly with a perfunctory conclusion placed at the end of chapter 4 on Wihtred. A more extensive summing up would have offered a more satisfying ending. Nevertheless, in The Beginnings of English Law, Oliver offers a welcome contribution to our understanding of early Anglo-Saxon law, as well as a very useable work of reference.

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Russell, Jeffrey Barton and Douglas W Lumsden, A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy & Order

A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy & Order is an ‘updated’ version by Douglas Lumsden of Jeffrey Burton Russell’s book of the same name originally published in 1968. This slim volume is a general history of medieval Christianity, however it offers more than a compendium: it is a thoughtfully constructed and written text that goes beyond the narrative it presents.
Russell and Lumsden examine the nature of the development of medieval Christianity rather than the history of the medieval church. Their underlying thesis is that the tension between the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of order were major contributors to the evolving nature of medieval Christianity. The spirit of prophecy was the declaration of religious truths: St Francis of Assisi was the height of this spirit. ‘Francis was the perfect manifestation of the prophetic spirit, who loved the world with a burning intensity and devotion that compelled him to go out and bring it to a recognition of its true nature’ (136). Popular heresy, monasticism and contemplative spirituality were representations of the prophetic spirit that were perceived to be a refusal to compromise the religious spirit in the name of order. The spirit of order was the embodiment of the institution of medieval Christianity. Although there was gradual development in medieval Christianity, the spirit of order retained the practices of the Christian community within the bounds of tradition. While these two forms of spirit were often at variance, the end result of this tension was the unique entity of medieval Christianity. ‘Medieval Christianity had failings, like any other manifestation of the human spirit, but as a whole it was a most creative and impressive contribution to the history of religion and to the history of western civilization’ (184).

The book begins with the Christianity of late antiquity; it unveils its failings, its successes and its reforms in a logical manner with an emphasis on early medieval Christianity. It gives an excellent overview of the development of early medieval Christianity. Over half the book is dedicated to the period before 1050.

Both the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of order drove reform in medieval Christianity: two variations of reform. The reform of the spirit of order resulted in political revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries creating an ordered ecclesiastical corporation under the leadership of the papacy. This reform made the papacy the single most powerful authority in Europe from the mid-eleventh to the fourteen centuries. The prophetic spirit looked with indifference upon the struggles of secular and papal control of Christian society. The reform of the prophetic spirit came from educators, intellectual achievement, and missionaries that had a burning desire to bring to Christianity a ‘recognition of its true nature’.

The struggles of the papacy with secular and temporal powers for supremacy are well documented and although none of these struggles are considered in any detail, the reader is given a good account of the rise and fall of the papal and secular powers along with their chronological development. Importantly, the book demonstrates how religious values were affected by secular prejudices and the fact that the medieval church could not be isolated from its social environment.
However, there are some notable absences. Firstly, the lack of any footnotes is a downfall. Secondly, and more importantly, where are the women? With the exception of Margery Kempe, mentioned at the very end of the book, medieval Christianity appears to be completely devoid of women. Despite this, *A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy & Order* is an interesting and thoughtful book, well worth reading.

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**Scoville, Chester N, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama***

(Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004) hardback; 140 pages; RRP US$50.00; ISBN 0802089445

By examining the language and rhetoric of saintly characters in medieval biblical drama, Scoville differs from other scholars who tend to focus on the sinful characters. This approach, Scoville argues, focuses analysis on the interaction between the divine realm and the human realm. In this context, the interaction is between good and evil and the audience. *Saints and the Audience* begins by establishing the different views that the devil and Christ have of the audience. The devil holds the audience in contempt, disregarding their individuality and their community, and views the audience as his victims. Christ, on the other hand, acknowledges the moral capacity of each individual and the community as a whole. Unlike the devil, Christ believes that by imitating him, the audience has the capacity to resist evil and to behave both ethically and decently. After establishing this opposition between the devil’s and Christ’s perception of the audience, Scoville identifies the basic issues surrounding the good characters in medieval drama and how the saints, as imitators of Christ, act as role models for the audience.

In terms of the interaction between the divine and human realms, the saints occupy a space in between. A considerable amount of scholarship has focused on the interaction between good and evil from Augustine’s thought in the *City of God* and *Confessions*, to Prudentius’s personified poem *Psychomachia* to the early medieval saints’ Lives. However, what is most interesting in *Saints and the Audience* is how medieval biblical plays act as aspects of devotion and community for the audience, epitomising the concept of *imitatio Christi* and developing it through rhetoric. Scoville argues that the main contention of the playwrights in writing these plays was not empathy or conformity, but sympathy; that is, through rhetoric the playwrights implied ‘a parallel set of feelings and experiences between two distinct individuals’ (6). In order to support this claim, Scoville assesses the