

remarkable study *'The Carolingian Lord* which pointed to the radical innovation of using Germanic military words for theological purposes—notably the Germanic *drhyten* for God that emanated from somewhere near to Gregory. The object was to promote a new acceptance of the continuing presence of people of Germanic descent and the need to bring them into the Church. The conversion of England was part of the same policy. The means Gregory proposed to use to break with the ossified and stultified Roman traditions he inherited—and sometimes hankered after—were the monks. He proposed to take up what had been a sort of hippy movement—monasticism—and use it to cope with the new, barbaric, world he had to live in. He seems to have been the first pope to regard the monks as clergy and to appoint them as bishops and senior members of the Roman curia. The *Liber Pontificalis* obituaries underline the bitter power struggles of radicals and conservatives in Rome that ended with the temporary defeat of the radicals after the indiscretions of Honorius I. Dr Evans is poor on the monks. The Rule of St Benedict is cited in an out of date edition instead of Dom de Vogué's masterly edition. This is perhaps why she thinks the priority of the Rule of St Benedict and that of the Master is an open question. She does not cite Dom Wandsworth's important article on the interpretation of the second book of Gregory's Dialogues or the discussions to which it has given rise. Had she read Heinrich Dannenbauer's book on the foundations of the middle ages she would have seen how much Gregory receded from Roman traditions and the degree to which he was open to the needs of the barbarians. It is as if someone writing about Latin American theology ignored the Liberation theologians and contented themselves with an anthology of received ideas from conservative manuals.

ERIC JOHN

ECKHART'S WAY by Richard Woods OP. *Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1986.*

There has long been a need for a clear and comprehensive exposition of Eckhart's thought as a coherent whole, for the benefit of the English-speaking world. This book answers the need admirably. It covers the subject fully, yet in language which is simple and direct; it also avoids excessive length, since the whole book, including preface, introduction, indices, bibliography and appendices extends to only 246 pages. It thus serves as an eminently readable introduction to the Meister, and anyone who wishes to embark on a deeper and more detailed study will find here the initial directions he needs.

The author is right in presenting Eckhart's thought as an organic unity, in which both Latin and German writings, abstract speculation and concrete spiritual counsel, are meant to fit together. This is not to say that Eckhart presents us with any kind of 'system'—the great Opus Tripartitum in which he planned to do this was never completed—but neither is his work a mere random collection of disconnected aphorisms and insights. His thought has a very definite shape and architecture of its own; Richard Woods' own word for this is 'architectonics'; and he has shown very clearly the foundations on which it rests: on the one hand there is the rhythm of Emanation and Return, whereby God 'speaks Himself out' in Trinity and Creation, and whereby the created universe is drawn back into its Source through Redemption and the Birth of God in the Ground of the Soul; on the other there is the metaphysical dialectic of Being and Nothingness, the absolute and unconditioned 'Isness' of God over and against the relative, conditioned and transient being of creatures, which makes the creatures 'nothing' from God's point of view, and God Himself 'nothing' from the point of view of the creatures. This is shown to be no arbitrary grafting of Neoplatonism on to an alien Biblical stem; Neoplatonism provides only a kind of metaphysical amplification of fundamental ideas which, not only in themselves, but also largely in their development and style of expression, are clearly Biblical, having their roots in the Letters of Paul and the Gospels of John and Luke.

The book itself is very clearly structured, being divided into three parts: the first,

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entitled 'Eckhart's Way', deals with the Meister's historical background and life up to his trial at Cologne; the second, entitled 'The Spiritual Teaching', covers Eckhart's doctrine of spiritual life; and the third, entitled 'Judgement', discusses the effect this doctrine had upon his contemporaries and has had upon subsequent generations up to the present time. Each of these sections is further divided into sub-sections each with its own title and these are in their turn divided into smaller sections dealing with particular topics. This 'medieval' and 'scholastic' style of presentation is like Eckhart's own and suits his thought; it also facilitates comprehension and gives a sense of organic wholeness to a subject which has suffered in the past from presentations which are too partial, one-sided and myopic. The historical background is competently and interestingly covered. Quotations from Eckhart himself are drawn mainly from the German works, especially the excellent recent translation by Walshe; perhaps a little more use could have been made of the Latin works in the section called 'The Master's Way', which deals with Eckhart's metaphysical doctrine of Being and Nothingness. Footnotes and references are useful and exact, and there is a good bibliography for the benefit of those who wish to pursue the subject further.

Eckhart's life and doctrine bristle with points of controversy, and the present book is notable for the balance and common-sense with which these are handled; the question, for example, of the sense in which Eckhart can be called a 'mystic'; whether his doctrine is 'pantheistic'; how far he was influenced by contemporary currents such as the Béguine Movement and the Brethren of the Free Spirit; how far he is a 'revolutionary' and how far his work shows affinity with certain forms of Eastern thought such as Vedanta and Zen. On all these the author shows sound judgement and avoids making extreme or unfounded assertions, which makes a refreshing change from some recent writing on Eckhart. Nowhere does the exposition of the Meister's doctrine seem to me inexact or erroneous, though there is one small point concerning the historical context: the author speaks on page 75 of 'Eckhart's perhaps surprising but momentous choice to preach in the common language of the people'. It is commonly thought that vernacular preaching was a daring and revolutionary step taken by the Meister on his own initiative. It was not. Dominican friars in Eckhart's day were required to preach in the vernacular; it was standard practice.

In general this is an accurate and useful book, much to be recommended to anyone wanting a clear and readable introduction to Eckhart.

CYPRIAN SMITH OSB

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE: Essays in Honour of Patrick Wallace, edited by Dermot A. Lane. *The Columba Press, Dublin, 1986. Pp.172. p/b £7.95.*

Much of this *Festschrift* is not really about religious education at all, at least not as we understand the term in Britain. This book is by Catholics and, for the most part, is about the education of Catholics to be Catholics. In other words it is about Christian formation or catechesis rather than religious education in a broader and less sectarian sense. In England and Wales and Scotland religious education is a subject on the school curriculum of a secular education system where schooling in a particular faith can only take place in restricted contexts.

One contributor here who does engage in a dialogue with recognised proponents of secular liberal education is Kevin Nichols and it is no coincidence that he is the only English contributor. In 'Education a Liberation' Fr Nichols suggests that the Christian life is compatible with secular theories of liberal education but that the latter are limited by lacking a sense of commitment, engagement and social action. For this further dimension he turns to Paulo Friere who, we are told, holds to a common theme of liberation with liberal educationalists like R.S. Peters and Paul Hirst through promoting critical autonomy. Nonetheless something is missing in Peters and Hirst, namely action to change the world, which is present in Friere, and Fr Nichols suggests that we need to develop a distinctively Christian theory of education to stave off the very real threat of Catholic educational institutions doing no more than conform to a liberal pattern, a theory which would include commitment to the poor, social action, human creativity and conversion as