

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.

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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

an educational goal.

This latter point reflects the article by Gabriel Moran who shows that while Christian education can incorporate psychological theories of development, most theories of moral development, and particularly that of Lawrence Kohlberg, restrict moral growth in an unacceptable way by focussing on how we rationalize and learn to pass moral judgments in childhood and adolescence. A Christian education on the other hand should emphasize how morality is concerned with character formed in community, and fostered by work, study, play and physical exercise as well as using one's intellect; that within development of character, conversion can happen; that moral growth starts at birth and continues into old age, and that middle age is the crucial time for moral and religious conversion, not childhood.

Michael Warren gives a moving account of his experience with a group of young unemployed in Dublin who were painfully rediscovering something of the Christian gospel from a sense of having been rejected by their liberal-democratic EEC society. His reflections are germane to the English Catholic Church: catechesis is not primarily for the young; it is for adults and should be related to crises and turning-points in their lives; like the Third World Churches we should 'ground our work of religious transformation in slow and careful catechetical ministry or we abandon our people to oppressive systems, in this case to the marketeers'; catechesis should come out of schools to make way for religious education.

Into these many constructive suggestions, Didier Piveteau drops his 'School, Society and Catechesis: France' like a bombshell. He notes that earlier societies initiated children in the values and beliefs of traditional communities, and more recently this was boosted by some harder education from primary schooling and occasionally secondary schooling. But in the technological and pluralist societies of the last generation in the West, traditional forms of initiation have disintegrated so that 'initiation of any kind has become quasi impossible in contemporary society'. So far secular education has ignored this, but it will have to take note of it soon as British and French society in particular becomes increasingly decadent. During the past generation the Church has produced increasingly sophisticated catechetical packages for use in schools but with little success. 'Never have children and teenagers', Piveteau tells us, 'been so confused in their understanding of christianity and so erratic in their commitment.' A whole generation has been lost: 'at least for one generation, education in the faith will have to deal with adults and not with children.' He suggests that it would be vain to plough more resources into school catechetics. Young and old must be initiated into Christianity as a life-form in small communities. These cannot be schools or families or parishes in their present form. If Piveteau is correct, as I think he is, he pulls the rug from under all current developments in education and catechetics for young people in the English Catholic Church which is pushing at the moment the home-parish-school triad (and apparently assuming that they should all be doing broadly the same job—but three times over to be more effective!).

This vision of Christian education in small, free and perhaps transitory communities is not all that new. One is reminded of Karl Rahner's vision of the Future of the Church in the 1960's, but Piveteau is supporting his argument with empirical evidence from his pastoral concerns. Because Piveteau is writing from an exclusively Catholic context, he equates school education with catechetics and he does not realize that there is a valuable, if limited, task to be performed in religious education in schools. But what he says about the loss of traditional forms of initiation is surely true, and—apart from limited developments in adult education—one cannot see many signs that the Church is going to overcome this problem in the next generation.

The remaining contributions to this collection are ordinary or poor, but for the four essays mentioned here by Nichols, Moran, Warren and especially Didier Piveteau it is well worth reading—selectively.

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