

While we still have good popes, then, let them allow the local Churches to govern themselves, to make their own laws and work out their own discipline, to find their own bishops – why ever not? Let them severely clip the wings of their grossly inflated central organisation, the Roman curia, and recast its functions so that it becomes a series of advisory resource centres instead of a system of administrative, executive and legislative organs. And let them concentrate on preserving and communicating to other Churches both the orthodoxy and the orthopraxy of the Roman Church, i.e. the Christian community in Rome.

Otherwise, I fear, God (or history) may once more send us a scourge of bad popes.

## Reviews

**ALBERTUS MAGNUS DOCTOR UNIVERSALIS 1280-1980.** Ed. G Meyer & A Zimmermann. *Grünewald*. 1980 pp 534 DM 64.

**ALBERTUS MAGNUS AND THE SCIENCES.** Ed. J A Weisheipl. *P.I.M.S.* (Toronto). 1980. pp xiv + 658. \$35.

The seventh centenary of St Albert's death has provoked two magnificent collections of essays, which show that interest in this medieval Dominican polymath is as lively as ever,

The German *Festschrift* is the more comprehensive and varied, containing articles in German, French and English on many facets of Albert's work. As the editors point out, Albert-scholarship is not sufficiently advanced to make it possible to present an all-round and authoritative picture of the saint's achievements; accordingly they have preferred to invite scholars to contribute essays on some of the issues involved, with a view to advancing and encouraging research into his work and significance. The result, inevitably, does not make easy reading. Very different specialist fields of study come together, and it is unlikely that any one reader will find all the contributions equally rewarding. Some of the essays are primarily concerned with particular historical topics, and it is worth remarking that several of these deal not just with Albert but with the later history of his influence, and, in one case, of his

manuscripts. Albert Fries very usefully attempts to sort out the chronology of Albert's scripture commentaries, and also tries to identify some of the Sequences which might plausibly be identified as those which Albert, according to the ancient catalogues, composed (this last being a valuable pioneering effort). Zimmermann tries to determine the extent to which there really was an Averroist school in the 13th century, and Albert's relationship to it. Weisheipl sifts the evidence for the axiom *Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae*, and concludes that it is in fact Albert's own, and that it is early.

As we should expect, a great many of the articles are devoted to Albert's scientific writings, and these particularly help to clarify his method. William Wallace, in an essay specifically on his scientific methodology, claims that in important ways he is more "modern" than has sometimes been supposed, and, in particular, that he is more central to the development towards modern science than Bacon and Grosse-teste. He also argues (in two articles, one in each of the two books under review)

that "philosophers of science have much to learn from him, for his clear grasp of logic and natural philosophy enriched his scientific investigations with many insights that we can prove fruitful for understanding the science of the present day", a conclusion which is supported by Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg's essay on his psychology. These articles also help to clarify the elusive problem of exactly *how* medieval scientific writings do or do not differ from their modern counterparts (on which there are also useful comments by N. H. Steneck in the *PIMS* volume).

There are also several articles on Albert's philosophical works, and two articles which I found particularly interesting on his theology. One, by E. H. Wéber, on the commentaries on Pseudo-Denys, brings out very well the originality of Albert in insisting on the role of the mind in mystical theology – a much needed corrective to the prevailing rather anti-intellectual Dionysian corpus (Grosseteste excels here, in my opinion), but Wéber makes a strong case for seeing in him the pioneer of the typically Thomist thesis that it is precisely the intellect which ascends to the highest union with God, against the dangerously Romantic voluntarism which prevailed before and after, and which led to the absurdities of the *devotio moderna*. The point is further clarified by the essay on Albert's theological epistemology, by Walter Senner, who shows very precisely and excitingly what Albert meant by his statement that theology is a *scientia affectiva*: he in no way means to deny the truly "scientific" nature of theology; what he wants to underline is that its object is precisely the *verum beatificans* which cannot be apprehended as *verum* without also being apprehended as *bonum*, and which fulfils the whole person, by way of the mind.

It is a pity that there is no contribution, to complete this scenario, on Albert's influence on the German mystics, and, through them, on the *devotio moderna* (though this is touched on, very fleetingly, in Katherine Park's article in the *PIMS* volume).

To mention only one more article, Congar, in a brief contribution, draws our attention to the evidence, in Albert's writ-

ings, of the social nature of his work. He suggests, surely rightly, that one of the great assets of the early Dominicans was that their community life gave them a privileged opportunity in *dulcedine societatis quaerere veritatem*.

The Canadian Festschrift, as the title indicates, concentrates on Albert's scientific work. A rather apocalyptic Preface reminds us that Pius XII declared St Albert the patron saint of scientists at just the time when it became known that an atomic bomb was a realistic possibility, and suggests that more recent developments in science and technology make it even more appropriate for us to review *sub specie aeternitatis* just what science is all about. Benedict Ashley takes up a similar theme in his essay on "The Nature of Natural Science"; departing from the conventional tactic of measuring medieval science against the yardstick of modern science, he presents Albert's view of natural science as a distinct view, which, he suggests, may deserve once again to be heard in our own age, alarmed as we are by what we have learned to do by means of our modern science.

The essays in this collection are on the whole intended to be more informative and less speculative than those in the German volume; they therefore constitute a much better introduction to the scientific achievement of Albert. In fact, this book is a mine of information about medieval knowledge and beliefs about nature, with very valuable bibliographical support. Some of the articles inevitably overlap with articles in the German Festschrift, but the range of Albert's scientific interests is much more fully covered here. Everything from falcons to astrology is here, clearly and thoroughly presented. And the importance of Albert's influence is indicated, especially in two articles on his psychology.

By way of introduction, there is a careful survey of the evidence for Albert's life, by Weisheipl, who also contributes a chronological list of the scientific writings. There is also a useful study by Jeremiah Hackett of the exact nature of Roger Bacon's quarrel with Albert. Paul Tummers also contributes an article in which he

develops the argument for Albert's authorship of a disputed medieval commentary on Euclid.

The most startling thing to emerge from the historical studies is the very thin support for the much-loved story of Albert going to Paris in his extreme old age to defend the now dead Thomas Aquinas against his enemies. Weisheipl expresses considerable scepticism about the whole episode.

Between them, these two volumes constitute a worthy celebration of one of the

most versatile and gifted medieval thinkers; they both maintain a high level of scholarship, and many of the articles are likely to remain classic studies for some time to come. The general reader is likely to find the *PIMS* volume more immediately appealing, and as a reference book it is probably the more useful, though it deliberately leaves out many aspects of Albert's work. But for the specialist, they are both clearly works of considerable interest and importance.

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**AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN FAITH** by Walter Kasper. *Burns & Oates*  
London 1980 £8.95.

This is the second book published in the same year by Burns & Oates embodying a translation from the German by Verdant Green. In both cases the proof-reading has been inexcusably careless. In this case I have been unable to get hold of the German original, but the translation carries little conviction and I suspect it to be of the same poor standard that marks the English version of *A New Christology* by Rahner and Thusing. The two books together represent a standard of production which does no credit to those responsible.

All that is sad because the book itself clearly has considerable merits. It has grown out of lectures originally given to priests and to teachers of religion and catechetics, while also serving as an introductory course for students of systematic theology. It shirks none of the problems which the present age poses to faith, and seeks to meet them in ways which face up to the intellectual and the religious challenge alike. One characteristic of Kasper's approach is stress on 'the future ... as the essential dimension of Christian faith' (p 183). A similar emphasis on hope and the future may appropriately characterise an evaluation of his work. It tackles the right problems and does so in a direction which holds out hope for the future of theology. But serious problems remain. The author does not disguise the tensions, but at times seems able to live with them a little too easily. I am sympathetic with his anti-institutional defence of the institutional church and with his fallibilist account of

infallibility, but would want to acknowledge more strongly the changes implicit in the new emphasis. He seems to me to be more of a revisionist in doctrine than he wishes to appear. Elsewhere in rightly stressing the existential grounding and significance of a doctrine, he seems sometimes to reduce the doctrine to that and nothing more. Thus, he writes: 'All that the doctrine of the Trinity says, then, is that God has revealed himself in Christ as the one who he is' (p 105), and 'To believe in God and to decide that freedom is the ultimate value in reality is one and the same' (p 126). How are such statements to be understood? Perhaps they are intended as no more than a rhetorical way of emphasising one important aspect. If they are more than that they are proposals for modifying the way in which the doctrines should be understood and not descriptions of what has always been their intended meaning. I believe that some such revisionist approach is needed. But it should be made clear that that is what is going on, so that others can assess the appropriateness of what is being proposed.

The book cannot be recommended as an easy introduction for the theological beginner. Introductions are often more difficult to transfer into a different situation than more advanced works, because beginners begin from different religious and philosophical assumptions in different places. But for those who have some acquaintance with the background of contemporary German and Catholic scholar-