

BOOK REVIEWS

M.-D. Chenu, O. P. Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West. Selected, edited, and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979.

This volume is a recent reprint of a 1957 translation of selections from Fr. Chenu's La théologie au douzième siècle. True to the book's intention as a work of intellectual history, its chapters do not lay out a tightly sequential argument, but paint concentric circles, common in their focus, of larger and smaller compass. Chenu's underlying conviction is that intellectual history cannot truly be handled by segregating the disciplines or by isolating the periods or by abstracting from the culture that sustains this intellectual life. The composition of the volume clearly reflects Chenu's recognition of this interconnection.

The central concern of the collection is the history of theology, for Chenu conceives of theology as an all-embracing science, one that captures the comprehensive unity of intellectual life in Medieval culture. The surrounding and interdependent rings consist in the history of literature and of philosophy, of cultural movements and social development, of education, biblical exegesis, and even of the writing of history itself. Such a view assumes a certain timelessness for theology as reflection on the living word of God. So that historical studies of the social contexts of theology dare not lose touch with the doctrinal questions of theology itself, which the history of theology is really all about.

The temporal scope of the volume is the 12th century with all its intense theological ferment. The significance of this choice, of course, is that this century provides the immediate background to the great scholastic period of the 13th and 14th centuries. Elements of scholasticism are already present in the 12th century, and these Chenu points out, but with appropriate regard for their essentially patristic setting and its thousand-year cultural history. The continuity of actual history is quite apparent to

Chenu, with no loss of appreciation for the distinctness of each period.

The significance of individuals and their highly personalized insights for the development of systems and institutions also provokes Chenu's attention. He traces the interaction of Bernard, Gilbert de la Porree, St. Francis, and countless others with their contemporary societies, ecclesiastical and civil, and always in the context of the Church which pervades the entire social body of the 12th century.

Chenu's history is a long-recognized classic whose re-issue we are glad to note here. It synthesizes the important texts and crucial events while calling the deserved attention to cultural interconnections and patterns discernible to a master of his subject.

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Albert the Great: Commemorative Essays, edited and with an introduction by Francis J. Kovach and Robert W. Shahan. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.

The seven hundredth anniversary of the death of Albert the Great provokes this set of nine commemorative essays. The collection is well-balanced so as to reflect Albert's own interests in logic, philosophy, and the science of his day. Only Albert's work in theology is not given formal treatment here, but two historical studies are included, to address questions of Albert's sources and his own enormous influence on those who followed him.

Ralph McInerny's essay on Albert's doctrine of universals labors to show adumbrations of Thomistic teaching. By examining Albert's responses to Porphyry's famous trio of questions, McInerny paints Albert's position as wavering between the Aristotelian view that universals belong to the conceptual order and the Platonic one that they are subsistent entities. He seems eventually to choose the latter, but in passing creates some of the distinctions that Thomas will employ in his much clearer solution to the problem.

John Quinn, O.S.A., and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg contribute papers on Albert's philosophical psychology, treating respectively time and the soul. As regards time, Albert takes a staunchly physicalist view, rather

than a psychological one. it is the measurement of motion, dependent not on our awareness of change but on the occurrence of motion. Its continuity is thought to be best described as the flow of successive points of a 'now' whose meaning is as problematic for Albert as for any of the modern theorists who take this approach. The role of the soul is restricted to the recognition of time-flow and does not extend to the creation of time, except as the locus of temporal orderings along the Augustinian line of past-present-future. The second essay of this section takes Albert's commentaries on the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul and identifies a few points of Albert's originality; specifically, his views on the origin of the soul as form and the hierarchy of the forming powers.

Expressly metaphysical questions are considered in the essays by Leo Sweeney, S. J., and Francis Catania. In the first the issue is the meaning of esse in Albert's texts on creation. The significance of this locus for the question is that creation is that pure case which something not existing at all beforehand now comes to be (esse). Sweeney finds Albert's meaning to range between such parameters as 'entity', 'essence', 'intelligibility', and 'existence'. The last is the meaning needed to have a sound doctrine of creation, but the presence of the other meanings for esse indicates a lack of complete conceptual harmony in his creation-theory, especially in the metaphysical doctrine on God, the source of creation. Difficulties about creation arise for Albert as they do for any essentialist at those passages where esse means essence. Similar problems plague the other meanings. The solution to the problem thus seems to be present in Albert, albeit unrecognized as the correct solution.

Catania's essay examines Albert's commentary on the Divine Names with questions about 'knowable' and 'nameable' in mind. This essay is of interest to anyone concerned with the doctrine of analogy or with the problem of religious language. And though not emphasized by Catania, one also finds here discussion of the rather thorough-going medieval version of Frege's sense/reference distinction, along with the other sophistications of medieval logic and ontology.

In recognition of Albert's importance as scientist (his interest and success are at least on a par with his famous contemporary, Roger Bacon), suitable essays are included by Leonard Ducharme and Francis J. Kovach. The former is a paper on the relation between the universals demanded in scientific knowing and the particulars (such as particular human beings) whose impor-

tance in their own right is often lost in the concern for objectivity and the dispassionate research of science. As a Christian theologian as well as scientist, committed to the goodness of every being due to its divine source, Albert spends much time supplementing his scientific doctrines on, say, man, with discussions of the human nature found in the individual person.

Kovach's essay concerns the famous problem in physics of action at a distance. After a valuable survey of the various kinds of treatment this question has received throughout history, Kovach classifies Albert's own position as a causal contiguist (one who demands causal contact to explain the action) after an extensive review of texts. The difficulties with this position that arise from another set of texts that seem to make Albert anticipate the anti-contiguist position of Duns Scotus (the view that action at a distance is possible) are handled by showing the proper contexts of Albert's arguments. Kovach also points out significant originalities that make Albert a genuine contributor to this age-old discussion. Apparently he is the first to state explicitly the universality as well as the necessity of the contiguity principle in both physical and metaphysical contexts. He also adds novel elements to the debate over the details of the causal connections, and his influence on the thinkers of later scholasticism is shown to be enormous.

In a similar vein, the essay of William Wallace endeavors to show Albert's influence on Galileo by examining Galileo's not infrequent citation of Albert. This historical essay concludes that there is greater continuity between the science of 13th century and that of Galileo's age than might otherwise be suspected. Some of the routes of transmission are here suggested.

The other historical essay, perhaps the most significant of the entire volume, is Fr. James Weisheipl's investigation into 13th century Augustinianism, entitled "Albertus Magnus and Universal Hylomorphism: Avicbron." By keeping in mind the polemical context of 13th century philosophy (the Aristotelian invasion of an Augustinian stronghold), Weisheipl sorts out the competing voluntaristic and necessitarian positions on the questions of the unity of matter and form. For various reasons the Augustinian position had become voluntaristic and stood opposed to Avicennian determinism. Avicbron's attempt to swim against the Muslim current is not acceptable as a solution for Albert, but it provokes his response, namely, greater faithfulness to natural science. Eventually he comes to articulate

the solution he and Thomas will champion: that all creatures are composed of matter and form, but not of one universal matter and one universal form. Weisheipl thus lays a finger rather precisely on the stimulus that prods philosophical creativity in Albert and will lead, with Thomas, to the metaphysics of existence.

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