

form a good part of the text (not just the footnotes, which add a great deal more) of this book. Given its tortuous nature, this renders his book more or less inaccessible to those who cannot cope with Overbeck's German: a considerable constituency. The lack of any index also makes less accessible than might be the most admirable aspect of this book: its insight into the theological and historical culture of late nineteenth-century Germany. I can think of no real excuse for the latter failing. The considerable chunks of untranslated German might, however, be justified on the grounds that no serious understanding of the crisis in German theology that Overbeck illustrates so well is possible without knowledge of the German tongue: a counsel of perfection that should not be forgotten.

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BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX: BETWEEN CULT AND HISTORY by Adrian H. Bredero, Edinburgh: *T.&T. Clark*, 1996. xiv + 320 pp. £24.95.

This book does not seek to offer itself as a life of Bernard. Divided into an introduction and five subsequent chapters of very unequal length, it is concerned with three areas of enquiry, the not always apparent interconnections between which the author attempts to explain in the Introduction. The first, best and longest part deals with the earliest hagiographical evidence for Bernard's cult and the role this played in securing his canonisation. Three chapters on this are followed by an interesting, if somewhat tangential, study of historiographical views on Bernard, principally from the seventeenth century onwards. The final section, somewhat cryptically entitled 'Jerusalem Searched in the Light of Lamps: Bernard in his Monastic *Umwelt*' tries to suggest how he should be assessed in the context of his own times, in terms of both his contemplative and his active life. The book ends with two brief appendices, one providing a useful chronology of the period 1075 to 1174, and the other adding some further details on the textual arguments from the first section.

The word that comes to mind most frequently and most aptly in trying to describe this book is 'disconcerting'. At the simplest level such a feeling is engendered by the publishers' decision to print large sections throughout the book in a smaller font than that used for the rest of it. Does this imply that these paragraphs are of lesser importance or indeed may safely be skipped by readers in a hurry? Anyone experimenting with the latter would soon find out that this is not the case. No explanation is given, but it may be assumed that this represents an attempt to cram more words into fewer pages, which in the light of the reasonable price charged for the book may seem acceptable if eccentric. Rather more disconcerting than the constant change of font size is the language. The author's Dutch original of 1993 has here been translated into English by a non-native speaker, in a style that can be rather laborious and which can on occasion also be startlingly erroneous. Thus it is possible to find Pope Alexander III receiving 'the request of Bernard's canonisation' and subsequently finding that he 'had been discontent with' the role of abbot Pons of Clairvaux, while Bernard

himself can manifest 'opposition against' Abelard and enjoy a 'cumbersome' relationship with Peter the Venerable. While such stylistic surprises are not sufficiently numerous to enrage any but the most fastidious reader, the text is peppered throughout with them, and they can elicit a wry amusement that is at variance with the serious nature of the content and character of the book. It has to be asked how or why the publishers failed to catch and correct these errors at the copy-editing stage.

Perhaps the most disconcerting of all the features of the book is its author's approach to the question of Bernard's sanctity. It must be admitted that most historians are completely uninterested in what may be called the theological implications of the subjects of their work being made saints, either formally or informally. For Professor Bredero, however, this is an ever-present consideration. He is almost obsessively concerned with the problem of how to conduct a scholarly and objective historical enquiry into the life of a man, whom in his eyes was something more than that. Precisely how much more than an ordinary man Bernard should be seen to be is another not very clearly defined and disturbing feature of this book. Thus Bernard is seen here as being predestined to sanctity. Similarly, it is said of him that he 'after his death lived on in the midst' of the monks of Clairvaux 'as a saint'. He is described at another time in his life as 'still' being human. Now, such statements and the general enquiry of which they form a part can seem disconcerting because this book is in no sense a work of piety, let alone an attempt at a modern hagiography of Bernard. Professor Bredero is extremely hard-headed, even cynical at times, in his generally masterful analysis of the evidence relating to his subject's life and its relationship to the posthumous processes of canonisation. Thus, for example, he suggests very cogently that some of the more specific miracle tales of the *Vita Prima* were deliberately omitted or were deprived of their previous detail in the second version with the conscious intention of making them harder to challenge during the canonisation process. He is entirely open-eyed about the monastic rivalries and the other machinations that were responsible for securing the recognition by Rome of the sanctity of the highly controversial and combative Bernard. Yet, however flawed and manipulated the means whereby it was achieved, the author finds no difficulty in regarding the outcome as reflecting a spiritual absolute. This is not because Professor Bredero regards the papal canonisation of 1174 as having constitutive authority, and he is highly critical of the worth of the hagiographic legends on which that decision was based, which he says 'either defy credibility or are conceptually so inaccessible that the identity of Bernard as a historical person remains obscure'. Rather, he wishes to measure Bernard against a 'biblical concept of sanctity', that is not at all clearly defined here. This is thus a rather idiosyncratic study, full both of clear and penetrating judgments and of baffling ideas and approaches. It needs to be taken account of by all students of Bernard, above all for its analysis of the hagiographic sources, but few readers will leave it without more than a trace of lingering perplexity.

ROGER COLLINS