

CHURCH AND CULTURE: GERMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY, 1860–1914 by Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P. *University of Notre Dame Press*, 1991. Pp. x + 260. \$35.95.

Professor O'Meara continues the history of nineteenth-century German Catholic theology begun in his earlier book, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians*. Since he regards that century as having lasted, in intellectual terms, from the emergence of Kant's Critical writings in the 1780s right up to the First World War, this book offers an account of what was happening between the era of Michael Sailer and J.A. Mohler and the appearance of figures like Romano Guardini and Karl Adam who continued writing almost into our own times.

The book has three parts. The first part describes the historical and cultural background, including Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, and discusses the conference organized by Döllinger at Munich in 1863. At this conference there was a confrontation between the 'old theology' of Romantic Idealism, influenced especially by Schelling, and the emerging neoscholasticism, soon to be given official recognition by Leo XIII. O'Meara sees this confrontation as continuing throughout the period surveyed by him; and indeed it is a unifying theme of the book.

In the second part there are five chapters, each devoted to a single theologian: Matthias Scheeben, Alois Schmidt, Paul Schanz, Hermann Schell and Carl Braig. Then Part III returns to more general themes: the emergence of '*Reformkatholizismus*' (a term coined in 1899 and, O'Meara argues, covering various things); the relationship of this to Modernism—which O'Meara maintains was espoused by few German theologians; the reception of the condemnations of Modernism in 1907 in Germany; social and political issues; and the impact of the First World War.

O'Meara's book is a useful one, which complements not only his own previous one but also Gerald McCool's *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, which, too, charts the confrontation between home-grown German theology and neoscholasticism, with especial reference to Joseph Kleutgen, a German theologian whose professional career was spent in Rome and who was a leading early neo-Thomist. But it has a number of faults, stemming from its lack of philosophical acumen and perhaps from some unclarity about its intended readership.

The book covers a lot of writers and gives a lot of detail in its two hundred pages of text. Parts of it read like entries in an encyclopaedia: the work of Jakob Frohschammer, for example, is encapsulated in a single short paragraph, in which we are told that he 'proceeded from an identity of the real and ideal, searched for the process of unity in diversity, and preferred the category of life to matter; he was conscious of the boundaries brought by time and finitude' (p.30). Admittedly, this comes from an early chapter in which O'Meara is setting the scene by giving us a list of German neo-Thomists and Romantic Idealists. But even some of the chapters on his five main figures come over as a little stale: I cannot say that I wanted to rush out and read Scheeben after reading O'Meara's fifteen pages of

exposition and critique. His treatment fails to convey why Scheeben was a figure who attracted the attention of writers as diverse as Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Courtney Murray. O'Meara himself admits the relative unimportance of some of his major figures: he acknowledges, for instance, that Carl Braig was not a creative theologian, but a surveyor of theologies and an apologist for traditional Christianity. So for whom is O'Meara writing? There is too much fussy detail for a reader with a general interest in theology, but too wide a coverage for the expert.

The book is also philosophically weak. Part of this weakness stems from the tendency noted above to offer encyclopaedic summaries of people's positions without adequately explaining or analysing them. Thus we are told, for example, that 'Scheeben's theology did have a transcendental mode, for it began with the divine self unfolding in process and life into various organically arranged finite realizations' (p.57), but then left in the dark about what exactly all this means. One would welcome a little of the clarity of neoscholasticism here. On the whole, O'Meara seems to regard the latter as a 'Bad Thing'. He regrets, for instance, that it led apologetics to move from being a dialogue with culture to being an argument with modernity. But in the Conclusion he draws back on himself and judges that neoscholasticism's critique of modernity was needed, and that its 'defense of objective revelation tried to correct powerful philosophies of mind and text headed for the dictatorship of form and the de-emphasis of content' (p.188). Again we have a neat but cryptic summary.

O'Meara is at his best when discussing figures who really engage him, e.g. Hermann Schell, and when he is considering the underlying trends in his period. His chapter on Schell is the longest and liveliest of his individual studies. It ends with a brief discussion of ways in which Schell anticipated Vatican II, a theme which O'Meara takes up again in his conclusion, where he briefly draws some parallels between Schell's and Karl Rahner's theology, and goes on to discuss the emergence after the First World War of the creative theologies which influenced Vatican II. In the last part of the book he has an interesting discussion of the role of Catholicism in Germany after 1870, and the way in which many Catholics welcomed the First World War as a chance for their full acceptance as Germans.

There are some strange misprints and misspellings. One is surprised to learn on p.22 that under Bismarck members of religious orders were either exiled or interred (sic), and to read of 'cannon law' (p.73).

This, then, is a useful book for those wanting to know what happened in German Catholicism in the second half of the last century and the first few years of this century. But its flaws may render the extent of its readership uncertain.

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