

of the seduction of Soka Gakkai for the ordinary Japanese, and the military-type organisation it uses helps considerably. Its interference with trade union activities will win it financial support from dubious quarters; its nationalistic appeal to the historical past of Japan will give it a popular basis, and this has already been effective with Japanese youth: '... a religion that can only gather old people on the verge of dying is a weak religion—only a powerful religion can gather the youth of Japan'.

Some Western observers of post-war Japan, not particularly interested in religion other than as an object of anthropological study, have played down the religious appetite as unimportant or about to disappear. It seems clear from Mr Thomsen's book that it is far from disappearing, and some of the new developments are disquieting, as the Jesuit Fr Schiffer pointed out some years ago when discussing the new religions:

Their great number and the fervour of their believers certainly show that the interest in religious problems is by no means small. However, when one sees the solutions given to these problems, one cannot help feeling sorry for all those serious minded people who are being misled by religious quacks. For this is the saddest part of the story of the new religions in Japan: the spiritual unrest of the people has been and is being abused by unscrupulous crooks. . . the earnest longing for religious fulfilment, which is observed in a great part of the population, especially among the younger generation, . . . deserve something better.

LOUIS ALLEN

THE HARVEST OF MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY, by Heiko Augustinus Oberman; Harvard University Press Oxford University Press; 74s.

This is an extremely able and scholarly work, and I have no doubt whatsoever that it represents an important contribution to the discussion of a whole range of problems in the history of theology and philosophy. Although its central subject is the theology of late medieval nominalism, especially as exemplified in the works of Gabriel Biel (died 1495), discussion of the history of the topics involved is carried to such a generous length that the result is nothing short of encyclopaedic: a glance at the staggering seven pages of closely-printed chapter and section headings alone is sufficient to bear this out. The bibliography and indices are on the same scale, and the footnotes rarely contribute less than half to the number of words on a page. This is the book which won for its Dutch clerical author, now teaching Church History at Harvard, the valuable Robert Troup Paine prize.

There exists at present a movement, composed of many and diverse tendencies, whose theme is the reassessment of the nature and consequences of medieval nominalism. The old story was to the effect that Ockham and his followers are responsible for a decline in medieval philosophy and theology; this decline

represents a falling away from the fulness of the Thomist synthesis, and is said to have Luther as one of its consequences. Already writers such as Moody and Boehner have questioned this story at the point where it claims that Ockham represents a philosophical decline; from this it would follow that Ockham cannot represent the threat to orthodoxy which he has been supposed to exemplify and also that the blame for Luther's break must be sited elsewhere. Oberman's contention is that the blame cannot be laid at the door of late medieval nominalism, since Biel, a teacher of Luther's teachers, is clearly catholic, and is even recommended in an appendix to an edition of the Trent Index. The sort of theology which functioned as the background to the Reformation clearly cannot be neglected in the age of Vatican II, hence the appositeness of the present work. Accordingly we are led through the mazes of Justification, Predestination, Christology, Mariology, Mysticism, and the Scripture-Tradition relation with a skill which can only be described as superb: the stock opinions are weightily challenged with a wealth of quotation, balanced with appropriate qualification, thus maintaining a fine subtlety of tone.

It would therefore be clearly impossible to give a straight 'Yes' or 'No' answer to the question as to whether the work succeeds in establishing its general contention; one can only select individual points which either strike one or cause a sense of unease. Thus, while the distinction between 'transformation' mysticism and 'penitential' mysticism (ch. 10) is valid and useful, can it be said that the incompatibility between nominalism and the first has the close connection of nominalism and the second as a consequence (p. 339)? Is the footnote material on p. 355 really sufficient to support the conclusion in the text that Gerson was motivated by the nominalist ideal described? The details of the argument that late medieval nominalism prepared the ground for the Tridentine decision on Scripture and Tradition are fascinating, but can one really draw so neat a conclusion out of the vastly complex relevant sources? A list of questions of this sort could be indefinitely prolonged, and are perhaps a tribute to the wide scope of the book. It is at any rate gratifying to have the advantage of all these surveys, even though it should turn out that (as I suspect) 'nominalism' has all sorts of shades of meaning; those who have a low view of it are here being reminded of this. Once this is realised, however, then of course the general thesis of the work ceases to be extraordinarily striking: it is not nominalism (defined in fashion A) that is being reinstated, but nominalism (defined in fashion B) that is being shown to be (more or less) orthodox. And whatever one's conclusions as a historian of philosophy and theology as to the desirability or otherwise of some sort of nominalism as a background to theology, there still remains the philosophical question as to whether the central theses of nominalism are true or false. As I believe that it can be demonstrated conclusively that Ockham's criticism of Scotus' *distinctio formalis a parte rei* is misplaced, I feel that no amount of theological desirability could counter-balance this fact.

From what has already been said it will have been gathered that the book is

constructed in Germanic style. This does not, however, make its perusal too difficult. True, the opening stretches suffer from a certain loose allusiveness and lack of exact definition which make for a rather cloudy atmosphere, but this tends to disappear as the work progresses. Still it is rather disturbing to discover that an interesting-sounding separate heading, solemnly recorded and numbered in the list of contents, covers only two short sentences (p. 48). Again, I am quite at a loss to understand why the discussion on pp. 53-54 should be headed " 'Als ob' theology". On p. 255 the text leads one to expect a quotation from Aquinas in footnote 21, where in fact Scotus is cited.

DESMOND PAUL HENRY

CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT, Essays in Honour of Sir Cyril Fox, edited by I. Ll. Foster and L. Alcock; Routledge and Kegan Paul; 5 gns.

Sir Cyril Fox, for twenty-two years Director of the National Museum of Wales, has been a formative influence in many branches of study since his first book was published in 1923. It is fitting therefore as well as inevitable that the essays in his honour should be heterogeneous even though this is partly disguised by a very ingenious title. The volume consists of two distinct books each approximately of about two hundred pages and a number of articles.

The book that will appeal to the widest public is that on the development of the English and Welsh house with primary reference to the medieval period. It begins with an analysis of the Welsh platform-house in chapter ten, it finds its climax in W. A. Pantin's chapter on the Medieval English town house, it ends in chapter twenty with a very valuable glossary of the names for rooms in houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will remain indispensable for any student of domestic architecture in Britain and throughout there are sporadic influences from Sir Cyril's own work on Monmouthshire houses.

The other book is not so epoch-making but it is a significant contribution to British pre-history by specialists of the standing of Glyn Daniel, Stuart Piggott and W. F. Grimes. Six chapters once again coalesce into a unity and there are over-riding links with Sir Cyril's *Personality of Britain*. Besides these two main sections there are a number of isolated articles. Two of these are of quite outstanding value—"Pottery and Settlements in Wales and the March (AD 400-700)" by Leslie Alcock and "The Native Ecclesiastical Architecture of Wales" by C. A. Raleigh Radford. Both represent the missing book in this volume, one dealing with Medieval Wales. Its absence is the chief criticism that should be made of *Culture and Environment*. The illustrations have been chosen admirably, notably the frontispiece, and there is a characteristically felicitous preface by Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.