ALAN DE LILLE, TEXTES INEDITS, AVEC UNE INTRODUCTION SUR SA VIE ET SES OEUVRES, par Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny. pp. 382. *Paris, J. Vrin,* 1965.

Mlle d'Alverny is responsible for much of the most distinguished work in the history of medieval thought that has appeared in the last two decades. Her studies and editions of texts, many of which have appeared in the *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, have greatly enlarged our possibilities of understanding twelfth- and thirteenth-century thought. They include pioneer work on the Latin translations of the *Koran* and of other Islamic religious writings, on the influence of Scotus Eriugena's thought in the twelfth century, and on the Latin versions of Avicenna. Her work is always based on careful study of the particular, especially of unpublished writings in Latin manuscripts, but at the same time it looks beyond the particular, integrating the newly found material in a precise yet never over-simplified vision of the intellectual currents of the period.

These qualities can be seen in Mlle d'Alverny's most recent work, her book on Alan of Lille, which comprises an admirable survey of Alan's life and works and a selection from his hitherto unpublished theological writings. The evidence concerning Alan's life, including the recent rediscovery of his tomb in the course of excavations at Cîteaux, is fully collected and assessed for the first time. Then Alan's writings – in which literary, theological exegetic, homiletic and polemical groups are distinguished – are analyzed, with detailed references to the manuscripts in which they occur and meticulous discussion of questions of authenticity. Many new attributions are established with certainty, and others as possibilities.

The most brilliant of the newly discovered and edited writings of Alan is one which does not fall easily into any of the previous groups, the *Sermo de sphaera intelligibili.* Alan's discourse is a meditation on the sentence 'God is an intelligible sphere whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere'. This appears to go back to a medieval 'Hermetic' treatise (where the reading is 'infinite sphere'); Alan uses if as an axiom in his *Regulae caelestis iuris*; later it was to reappear in variant forms in, among many others, Dante and Pascal.

In a few pages Alan builds from this sentence a cosmic myth comparable to those he constructed in his most famous works, *De Planctu Naturae* and *Anticlaudianus*, but here with a marvellous conciseness that these lack. Here Alan takes to its extreme the tension between the two kinds of language – naturalistic and dualistic – which co-exist in all his work. He entertains simultaneously two seemingly incompatible images of the cosmos that can often be met separately in medieval art and literature: a picture of the world-round with God at the centre, as the focal point of all things (as in the eleventh-century tapestry of creation at Gerona); and again, a world-round that has God at the circumference, towering above all things (as in the fresco of the universe in Pisa's Campo Santo). The first is basically an affirmation of nature – it stresses the divine as present in the physical, in Alan's terms, it shows the union of heavenly forms with earthly subjects. The other image is basically dualistic – it exalts the transcendental and belittles the physical, exalts form and belittles matter.

Alan's myth seems at first somewhat weighted towards dualism: he evokes four distinct spheres, of which only the first 'celebrates the nuptials of Nature and her child, of Form and the child of Form', a palace in which 'Form kisses subject with the godlike kiss of inherence'. The other three spheres show forms lamenting the contagion of matter, forms rejoicing in their freedom from material taint, forms radiant with the purity of light. This last and highest is the intelligible sphere, the divine mind, and Alan's images elaborate the soul's ascent to it, leaving the other spheres behind.

But then Alan overcomes the tension he has evoked: the climax of his argument is a reaffirmation of the physical at the centre of the divine:

> What is the centre of this intelligible sphere if not the handiwork creation, that is the whole universe? . . . All the lines that are drawn from this circumference into the centre are equal. For all things that have come from the immensity of God through creation into the world are equally good (p. 305.)

By a number of geometrical conceits Alan concludes by making of his sphere a *coincidentia oppositorum* – he sees in it the Trinity as well as the beauty and order of the natural world, it contains motion and rest, tempest and calm. In all the paradoxes of the sphere whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere Alan glimpses his personal reconciliation of the language of naturalism and the language of dualism.

We are grateful to Mlle d'Alverny that by her book she has laid the scholarly foundations

for all future work on Alan of Lille, that she has done so much to establish the complete canon of his writings, and in particular that she has discovered this remarkable *sermo* and edited it in exemplary fashion.

PETER DRONKE

REFORM AND REACTION: THE POLITICO-RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, by José M. Sánchez. *University of North Carolina Press,* 1964, 6 *dollars.*

THE SPANISH INQUISITION by Henry Kamen. *Weidenfeld and Nicolson,* 1965. 45*s.*

They are all here, the things other people detest about Spain and the Catholic Church, and which every post-Conciliar Catholic must confront: the bigotry, the censorship and the secrecy, the close links with reactionary governments, the clerical interference in politics, the blindness to reform and to education, the tendency to live in the past. It would have been easy for Dr Sánchez, writing in the United States from within the Catholic tradition, or for Mr Kamen, writing in England from outside it, to fall back on the liberal-democratic complacency of pluralist societies. That they hardly ever do so is greatly to their credit. Their two accounts, which deplore without too much bitterness and explain without too great condemnation, are therefore all the more telling and disquieting.

Dr Sánchez's book is a case-study of church-state relations written from a moderate Catholic angle. His main theme is how the Left in Spain threw away its chance of achieving economic and social reform by following the Spanish (and indeed, European) 'liberal' tradition of attacking the Church and religious education – thereby offending the religious sensibilities of the Spaniards and provoking reaction. He points out that the army was a much greater danger to the Republic, and concludes that Church reform could have waited. He is equally good on all that fomented anti-clericalism: clericalism of the worst kind, papal and episcopal intervention in politics (from Pius X's *Inter Catholicos Hispanae* onwards), the dependence on established governments of the state-salaried clergy, the absence of any uniform Church lead in socio-economic matters (despite noble exceptions) and the consequent apostasy of the town workers. Anti-clericalism and clericalism formed a vicious spiral which forced the Church further to the Right. 'Neutrality (p. 69) offered only hope with no assurances, and support of republicanism was suicide.' Yet even this course was not simple: open support of the Right led to church-burnings!

His second theme is the failure of the Right (with its sometimes reluctant appendage, the Church) to put through even minor political and social reforms when it had the power; he blames them, in fact, for making the same mistake as the Left – overestimating the *priority* of the religious problems in politics. The analysis is convincing, and the remedies, in the light of cool reason, would seem simple: that liberals should be patiently educative with clerical obscurantists; that the Church should learn the difference between its rights and its privileges, and should care for the poor and the illiterate. But the atmosphere was far from cool. It was Azaña who wrote:

> Although it was not democratic to prohibit religious education, the public 'mental health' had to be preserved, for the Church taught everything contrary to the basis of the modern democratic State. (p. 126.)

And Dr Sánchez's casual comment must give us all cause to think:

> Like most of his anti-clerical colleagues, he (Azaña) had been educated in church schools . . . and had developed a strong antipathy towards the Church.

The whole atmosphere of the struggle demonstrates yet once more the 'out-of-phase' development of Spain: it is strongly reminiscent of France at the turn of the nineteenth century, with the bitterness and fanaticism on both sides. Though Dr Sánchez quotes with apparent approval papal remarks about disestablishment not being in itself a panacea, it is difficult in the light of both these books and of recent events in Spain not to think that it must come, and come soon, if the whole vicious pattern is not to be repeated in one form or another. Fortunately, a part of the Spanish church is coming to see this.

Research on Spanish history is only now becoming popular either inside or outside Spain, so that both these books are doubly welcome. Breaking newish ground is in one sense easier for the non-Spaniard historian who has been trained in the exacting disciplines of