

remain thoroughly puzzled by his calling the result 'a concise translation'.

Be that as it may, he has done an extremely good job of work and he has given readers a splendid means of acquainting themselves with the *Summa Theologiae* as a whole. Aquinas was a genius. He had more philosophical and theological profundity to offer in his average page than most of his successors manage to cram into an entire book. Maybe McDermott's text might help people to see this.

BRIAN DAVIES OP

PAUL AND HIS CONVERTS by Ernst Best. *T & T Clark*. 1988.
Pp vii + 177. £11.95.

This book began life as the 1985 Sprunt Lectures in Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, delivered to an audience composed mostly of pastors. As a result the book is one that non-specialists may read with enjoyment. It is not another book about Pauline theology; though it is inevitable that aspects of this are sometimes discussed (e.g. the idea of imitation), they are strictly subordinated to the main purpose.

Any book that attempts to deduce the character of an ancient from his/her writings is taking risks. There is the risk of judging someone from another time and culture by our criteria, and the risk that what is observed tells more about the observer than about the object. There is also the difficulty of using a source for a purpose that goes against its grain. Professor Best's book is about the relationship of Paul to his converts, and inevitably therefore it becomes at times a book about the sort of human being Paul was. Does he avoid the risks? One must say that he does so remarkably well. As one of the most lively and learned New Testament scholars in these islands, he is much too old a hand to fall into the traps I have mentioned. He knows just how much he can legitimately deduce from texts that were written for purposes quite other than providing self-revelation whether as pastor or man, and he does not go beyond that.

Paul has, of course, often been heartily disliked not only on theological grounds but also on personal. The most striking recent example of this has been the section on Paul in Graham Shaw's *The Cost of Authority* (which at any rate gives the impression of dislike). Readers who conceded valid points to Shaw, but thought he showed a certain lack of proportion, tending to assume the worst of Paul's motives and character, will find a valuable corrective in Best. He does not judge, is never one-sided, always strives above all to understand, and yet is ruthlessly honest.

So, we see Paul exercising authority, being willing to receive as well as to give; we see him using parental *and* brotherly models for his ministry. He deals in one way with opponents (roughly), and in another with those he regards as his own flock (carefully and with love). We do not find him always living up to his own standards, nor always aware that sin may lie in the violence of his own reactions as much as in the activities of those whom he condemns. We see a credible human being.

For those who spend time studying Paul, but who are not at all sure they would have *liked* him, the good sense, careful scholarship, charity and balance of this book can only be welcome.

J.A. ZIESLER
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