

## RECENT GERMAN BOOKS

The first large-scale attempt on the part of a Catholic to appraise the work of Karl Barth comes most appropriately from Hans Urs von Balthasar, who for many years has been studying Barth's thought. His *Karl Barth* (Verlag Jakob Hegner in Köln) is divided into four parts: the first is an illuminating discussion of how our different modes of thought should be confronted if we are to understand one another; the second part expounds Barth's own main concerns, with particular stress upon the latest developments in the *Dogmatik*; thirdly, Balthasar shows how Catholics approach the same problems of nature and grace, whilst his conclusion points to the kernel of the problem in the relationship of the *analogia entis* and the *analogia fidei*. Balthasar's *Barth* will undoubtedly play a great part in future inter-confessional discussions. The same author is now editing a second series of the well-known *Christ Heute* volumes (Johannes-Verlag Einsiedeln), the third volume, ninety-six pages on 'Fear and the Christian', being written by himself; he deals with fear, not, as is common nowadays, from the psychological, but from a theological, standpoint, and, equally unusual, gives a very positive interpretation of fear.

Another large work recently published, *Menschwerdung*, by Leopold Ziegler (Summa-Verlag zu Olten; 2 vols.) has been described by Reinholdt Schneider as the most important German book for a century. Some of this importance is likely to escape the English reader who scarcely feels at home in the atmosphere of Boehme and Baader, etc., but the book is tremendously stimulating in many parts. It is simply a vast commentary on the *Our Father*, dealing at great length with each petition, Ziegler illuminating each one of them by the light of almost every great writer in the human tradition, as well as by his own prayerful reverence for the creation.

Still in the realm of large works we have Professor Siegmund's sustained restatement of the teleological argument for the existence of God. (*Naturordnung als Quelle der Gotteserkenntnis*; Verlag Herder.) The main support for this clearly-stated argument is derived from the field of biology, and here it is worth while drawing the reader's attention to the wealth of recent German literature on evolutionary themes which seems to be unknown in this country. The greatest stimulus to a fundamental revision of biological concepts was that given by Adolf Portmann in his *Biologische Fragmente zu einer Lehre vom Menschen* (Benno Schwabe Verlag, Basel, 1944), which has been followed by a more ambitious work of A. Gehlen, *Der Mensch* (Atheneum Verlag,

Bonn; 4th Ed. 1950). Gehlen's study contains references to most of this re-thinking of biological premisses, and contains an interesting vindication of St Thomas' view of man's status amongst the animals. The most radical divergence from contemporary orthodoxy on these matters is to be found in Oskar Kuhn's *Die Deszendenztheorie* (Kösel Verlag, 1951), which contains many objections to current evolutionary theory. Kuhn is a well-known palaeontologist. Anyone concerned with the philosophical issues of evolutionary theory would do well to read *Stimmen der Zeit* regularly; last year's November and December numbers each published up-to-date and sober articles on the subject by P. Overhage. The relations between natural science and religion have also been dealt with by the famous physicist, Pascual Jordan, in the December 1951 *Hochland*, where he calls for the elimination of metaphysics, the barrier between science and religion. Jordan is a Protestant.

Turning to what for most of us are more immediate concerns, we have the second and third volumes of P. Stratmann's series on the attitude of the saints towards the state (*Die Heiligen und der Staat*. Verlag Josef Knecht, Frankfurt-a.-M.). In them he discusses SS. Peter, Paul, the Martyrs, Helena, Athanasius, Ambrose, Chrysostom and Augustine. The section on St Helena is most attractive, whilst that on St Augustine proves how strongly the saint opposed capital punishment, and how St Thomas came to misunderstand him!

The house of Josef Knecht have honoured the memory of the late Theodore Steinbuchel by producing his last lectures in book form. *Zerfall des christlichen Ethos im XIX. Jahrhundert* and *Christliche Lebenshaltungen in der Krisis der Zeit und des Menschen* both present interpretations of the crisis confronting our civilisation and offer a way through, as that way was seen by a profoundly sympathetic and understanding priest. Even more attractive, perhaps, is Steinbuchel's study of the poetess, Annette von Droste-Hulshoff, who is another witness to the shadow side of the self-confident nineteenth century. The other side of the bumptious 1920s is revealed in the diaries of a great Catholic priest who was for many a light amidst the darkness of Germany in those days, Carl Sonnenschein. (*Notizen*, Josef Knecht, 2 vols.)

Finally, the threatening shadow of Eastern Germany is outlined for us in an informative series of pamphlets on the legal, economic and cultural developments within the Soviet Zone since 1945. These valuable sources of information are issued by the *Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen*, Bonn.

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