

REVIEWS

MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

*William of Ockham*¹

William of Ockham has lately been attracting the attention of students. Accused of heresy in 1324, mixed up with all the controversies of the School, driven fiercely into the quarrel concerning poverty, siding with the Emperor against the Pope in the conflict of State and Church, the *Venerabilis Inceptor* was not in a position to present a systematic exposition of his main doctrines. His thought was for his contemporaries, and in a very great part remains still for us, most problematic, as the different, and even opposite, interpretations given to it clearly show. A work embodying his chief theses, the principles on which they stand and the logical conclusions which necessarily follow from them, a brief synthesis, as it were, of Ockham's teaching, would undoubtedly prove of the utmost importance and would immensely help for a perfect understanding and a true interpretation of the controverted points of doctrine. Such a work is to be found, according to L. Baudry, who has spent several years in patient researches on Ockham's writings, in the *Tractatus de Principiis Theologiae* of which he gives us here the first complete and critical edition.

Its attribution to William of Ockham rests on the authority of Peter of Candia, (who wrote about thirty years after Ockham's death), Leland and Wadding. In Baudry's opinion, however, this information is not absolutely convincing. Internal evidence points out that, although the doctrine is obviously Ockhamist, yet the author of the treatise is not Ockham himself, but rather a fourteenth century anonymous follower, presumably one who was in close contact with him, familiar with his master's works and anxious to take hold of his main ideas and teaching.

Ockham's philosophy may be summarised in two fundamental principles: The first is: God could produce all that implies no contradiction; the second, usually known as *Ockham's razor*, that beings should not be multiplied without necessity. Both principles are analysed and expanded in this treatise and 246 conclusions are inferred from them bearing with various topics of Ockhamist theology, metaphysics, logic, physics and ethics. From this hint we may easily realise the great wealth contained in it and its importance for the history of Ockhamism.

1 L. BAUDRY. *Le Tractatus de Principiis Theologiae attribué à G. d'Occam. Edition critique.* (Etudes de Phil. Méd., xxiii) Paris (J. Vrin), 1936, pp. 160 (20 Frs.)

Guillelmi de Occam Breviloquium de Potestate Papae. Edition critique. (Et. Phil. Méd., xxiv). Paris (J. Vrin), 1937 pp. xx-179 (40 Frs.)

E. MOODY. *The Logic of William of Ockham.* London (Sheed & Ward), 1935, pp. xiv-322 (12/6).

Ockham's importance in fourteenth century history does not consist only in his nominalistic teaching, but also in the prominent part taken by him in the struggle of the Empire against the Papacy. Hence the importance of having a first-class knowledge of his thought on the relations between Popes and Emperors and on the Pope's authority on the subject. R. Scholz discovered in 1928 at the Library of Ulm a manuscript (MS. lat. 6076-08. 3. D. 4) containing, among other works, a treatise of Ockham, hitherto unpublished, *Breviloquium de principatu tyrannico super divina et humana*. Ockham's name nowhere appears in the manuscript; but the relation of this treatise with his other writings, particularly with the *Dialogues* to which the author explicitly refers as his own work, dissipates any doubt about its authenticity. It was composed during the pontificate of Benedict XII (*Ille qui nunc preest in Avemione vocatus Benedictus duodecimus*), and certainly after the third part of the *Dialogue* (1338), and before April 25th, 1341, the date of Benedict XII's death. It is this treatise which L. Baudry under the abridged and somewhat arbitrary title *De Potestate Papae* here edits critically and for the first time; it throws much needed light upon this topic and makes better known to us Ockham's mind and position into the controversy. All students of fourteenth century thought should be grateful to L. Baudry for these two excellent editions, and Gilson's collection of mediæval philosophical studies is to be congratulated for the two valuable additions.

Ockham has been described as an innovator, a sceptic, a "subjectivist," and destructive critic of scholastic Aristotelianism. E. A. Moody, in a monograph on *The Logic of William of Ockham*, finds fault with this estimate in spite of the fact that there is "an almost unanimous agreement among modern authorities" about it. His aim is to make clear, in Ockham's own terms and in contrast to alternative "Aristotelianisms" which he opposed and criticised, what Ockham's interpretation of Aristotelian logic was. The conclusion reached is that Ockham was a realist in metaphysics precisely because he was a nominalist in logic. In other words, the author's task in this study is an attempt at a complete rehabilitation of Ockham. According to the notice on the dust-cover this book is a "revolutionary thesis. Ockham has been so long the villain of the piece in philosophical history—the man who introduced the degradation from which Scholasticism did not begin to recover for six centuries—that it is a shock to find it claimed (and proved) that he was on the contrary the last upholder of the true Aristotelianism, the last continuator of St. Thomas." This thesis would have been a revolutionary one indeed if only the claims *were* "proved." But for

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my part I must confess that it does not seem to me so, and I am afraid that very few mediævalists, if any, would be convinced. This does not mean that this book is devoid of any value; on the contrary, it contains many points of real value, particularly the painstaking analysis and penetrating study on Ockham's *Summa totius logicae* and *Expositio aurea super artem veterem*. However, in spite of these good qualities for which I congratulate the conscientious author, the evidence adduced, (and still more that omitted), leaves me sceptical about the legitimacy of its conclusion.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

- BURNS OATES: *The Lives of the Saints, November*, Alban Butler, corrected, amplified and edited by Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater (7s. 6d.); *The Magic Box*, D. Holmes Wilson (3s. 6d.); *In Spain with the International Brigade: A Personal Narrative* (6d.).
- COLDWELL: *First Thursday Devotion*, Clement Mercer, S.D.S., preface C. C. Martindale, S.J. (6d.).
- DESCLEE DE BROUWER (Paris-Bruges): *Saint Dominique: L'idée, l'homme et l'œuvre*, Pierre Mandonnet, O.P., augmenté de notes et d'études critiques par M.-H. Vicaire et R. Ladner, O.P. (2 vols; 60 frs.).
- EDITIONES SPES (Paris): *Mademoiselle Chaptal*, Marguerite Peltier (6 frs.).
- GABALDA (Paris): *L'Enseignement de Saint Paul*, François Amiot, pref., Card. Tisserant (*Études Bibliques*) (2 vols; 45 frs.).
- HERDER (Freiburg i.B.): *Betrachtungen über die göttliche Liturgie*, Nikolaus Gogol, übertragen von R. von Walter, Nachwort von Leo Kobilenski-Ellis (pp. 100 n.p.); *Die Einheit der Kirche und die Mannigfalt ihrer Aemter*, John Henry Kardinal Newman (pp. 73, n.p.); *Die Briefe des hl. Thomas More aus dem Gefängnisse*, übertragen u. eingeleitet von Karlheinz Schmidthüs (pp. 90, n.p.).
- HERDER (London): *Mary the Mother of Jesus*, Franz Michel Willam, tr. Frederic Eckhoff (12s.).
- ANGELICUM (Rome): *De Justitia (Praelectiones in Secundam Partem D. Thomae, X.)*, P. Lumbreras, O.P. (pp. xvi, 456, n.p.).
- LIBRI CATHOLICI: *Higher Realms: Religious Poems*, Paul Falvury (2s.).
- LONGMANS: *Spain's Ordeal*, Robert Sencourt (10s. 6d.); *The Faith in Practice*, Philip Hughes (5s.).
- MACMILLAN: *The New Testament*, translated into English from the Original Greek by the Very Rev. Francis Aloysius Spencer, O.P., ed. Charles J. Callan, O.P., and John A. McHugh, O.P. (20s.); *Three Theories of Society*, Paul Hanly Furfey, Ph.D. (7s. 6d.).
- OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS: *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, ed. Claude Colleer Abbot (16s.); *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, G. F. Lahey (cheap edn. 3s. 6d.); *Kierkegaard*, Walter Lowrie D.D. (25s.).
- SANDS: *The Mission of Austria*, Edward Quinn (5s.); *An Introduction to the Study of Eastern Liturgies*, Severien Salaville, A.A., adapted with preface and notes by Mgr. John M. T. Barton, D.D. (8s. 6d.).
- SHEED & WARD: *The Necessity of Freedom*, Douglas Jerrold (7s. 6d.); *Saint Peter Camisius*, James Brodrick, S.J. (cheap edn. 10s. 6d.).

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