

develops the argument for Albert's authorship of a disputed medieval commentary on Euclid.

The most startling thing to emerge from the historical studies is the very thin support for the much-loved story of Albert going to Paris in his extreme old age to defend the now dead Thomas Aquinas against his enemies. Weisheipl expresses considerable scepticism about the whole episode.

Between them, these two volumes constitute a worthy celebration of one of the

most versatile and gifted medieval thinkers; they both maintain a high level of scholarship, and many of the articles are likely to remain classic studies for some time to come. The general reader is likely to find the *PIMS* volume more immediately appealing, and as a reference book it is probably the more useful, though it deliberately leaves out many aspects of Albert's work. But for the specialist, they are both clearly works of considerable interest and importance.

SIMON TUGWELL O P

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN FAITH by Walter Kasper. *Burns & Oates*
London 1980 £8.95.

This is the second book published in the same year by Burns & Oates embodying a translation from the German by Verdant Green. In both cases the proof-reading has been inexcusably careless. In this case I have been unable to get hold of the German original, but the translation carries little conviction and I suspect it to be of the same poor standard that marks the English version of *A New Christology* by Rahner and Thusing. The two books together represent a standard of production which does no credit to those responsible.

All that is sad because the book itself clearly has considerable merits. It has grown out of lectures originally given to priests and to teachers of religion and catechetics, while also serving as an introductory course for students of systematic theology. It shirks none of the problems which the present age poses to faith, and seeks to meet them in ways which face up to the intellectual and the religious challenge alike. One characteristic of Kasper's approach is stress on 'the future ... as the essential dimension of Christian faith' (p 183). A similar emphasis on hope and the future may appropriately characterise an evaluation of his work. It tackles the right problems and does so in a direction which holds out hope for the future of theology. But serious problems remain. The author does not disguise the tensions, but at times seems able to live with them a little too easily. I am sympathetic with his anti-institutional defence of the institutional church and with his fallibilist account of

infallibility, but would want to acknowledge more strongly the changes implicit in the new emphasis. He seems to me to be more of a revisionist in doctrine than he wishes to appear. Elsewhere in rightly stressing the existential grounding and significance of a doctrine, he seems sometimes to reduce the doctrine to that and nothing more. Thus, he writes: 'All that the doctrine of the Trinity says, then, is that God has revealed himself in Christ as the one who he is' (p 105), and 'To believe in God and to decide that freedom is the ultimate value in reality is one and the same' (p 126). How are such statements to be understood? Perhaps they are intended as no more than a rhetorical way of emphasising one important aspect. If they are more than that they are proposals for modifying the way in which the doctrines should be understood and not descriptions of what has always been their intended meaning. I believe that some such revisionist approach is needed. But it should be made clear that that is what is going on, so that others can assess the appropriateness of what is being proposed.

The book cannot be recommended as an easy introduction for the theological beginner. Introductions are often more difficult to transfer into a different situation than more advanced works, because beginners begin from different religious and philosophical assumptions in different places. But for those who have some acquaintance with the background of contemporary German and Catholic scholar-

ship, it gives powerful expression to the fundamental approach of a theologian of

note. But they will be well advised to read it in German if they can.

MAURICE WILES

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY: SOURCES AND DOCUMENTS by Howard Clark Kee. *SPCK* 1980. pp xii + 270 Paperback £4.95.

Howard Kee describes his aim in this way: 'To help provide (students) with a sense in some depth of the cultural, religious and historical situation in which Christianity arose' (p ix). The material 'is arranged partly by form and partly topically, with a maximum of text (in translation) and a minimum of introduction and comment' (p ix). Occasionally small black and white photographs of places and objects illustrate the texts.

The texts are arranged in two main sections:

- 1 Historical sources;
- 2 Literary texts and folk-literary sources.

Each main section is then subdivided: political history, religious history, and meaning in history; literary texts and non-literary material from the Eastern Mediterranean. Professor Kee helps the reader to understand the texts without long introductions by careful arrangement, so that a single short introductory note serves a number of texts, which help to elucidate one another. For example, the section on meaning in history contains examples of Jewish apocalyptic (Jubilees), Jewish mystical writing (Philo), Hellenistic ethical writing (IV Maccabees), and Roman eschatological speculation (Virgil's Fourth Eclogue). Similarly, there is an extremely useful section on Jewish interpretation of Scripture with examples from the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Midrash Sifre, Mechilta on Exodus, the allegorical interpretation of Philo, non-rabbinic midrashim from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Pseudo-Philo.

Inevitably, the book invites comparison with C. K. Barrett's *The New Testament Background: selected documents*, 1956, *SPCK*. Most of the material is found in both books, and one wonders about the publishing policy of *SPCK* since Barrett's book is apparently still available in a paperback at the same price as Kee's. The structure is different in each case. Barrett's book has the following main sections: the

Roman Empire, the papyri, inscriptions, the philosophers, the Hermetic literature, mystery religions, Jewish history, Rabbinic literature, Philo, Josephus, the Septuagint, and Apocalyptic, with an appendix of Jewish sectarian documents. There is something of a biographical interest, since the 'Roman Empire' consists of accounts about each emperor from Augustus to Domitian, the 'philosophers' consists of accounts about Heraclitus, Plato, Zeno and the earlier Stoics, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Epicurus, and the philosophic missionary; 'Jewish history' consists of accounts of the Maccabees, the High Priests, Herod the Great and the procurators (as well as accounts of Jewish sects and of the two wars against the Romans and their aftermath); 'Rabbinic literature and Rabbinic Judaism' includes accounts about particular rabbis, and the long section on Josephus includes an account of his life. Kee does not share this biographical interest. His divisions are made on the basis of the subject and form and this means that a fuller picture emerges from each section than is possible with Barrett's arrangement. For example, Kee juxtaposes Jewish history and Roman policy in the eastern provinces so that one throws light on the other. Similarly, the section on religious history juxtaposes Jewish religious institutions and practices with an account of the imperial cult in the east, and accounts of popular religion (the mysteries, saviour cults and magic), and this section is brought to a close with a long extract from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* on the church in the apostolic age. Only under the heading 'popular tales and biographical narratives' does Kee bring together popular lives of philosophers, miracle stories from Rabbinic and Hellenistic sources and Talmudic parables.

Barrett's treatment of Rabbinic Judaism and of the philosophers is more detailed than Kee's. Kee's treatment of revelat-