

- Michael Haren. *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the 13th Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Pp. x, 269. Cloth, \$27.50.
- Julius Kirshner and Karl F. Morrison, eds., *Medieval Europe*. Volume 4 in University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization Series. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Pp. x, 476. Cloth, \$30.00; paper, \$11.95.

Since it does not deal primarily or directly with theology, literature, law, and other intellectual endeavors, Michael Haren's book might more precisely have been titled, "Medieval Speculative Thought." Yet whatever the inadequacy of the title's main clause, its subordinate clause is right on target: the book is indeed an examination of "the western intellectual tradition from antiquity to the 13th century," and therein lie both its strength and weakness.

Its opening chapter, on Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists, sounds the author's intent to concentrate upon the classical legacy, specifically the impact of these Greek systems upon the Christian thinkers in the west. The review of their ideas is a useful prelude to the constant appeal to be made to them in discussing the Middle Ages. Thus the dominating theme of the second chapter is the transmission of Platonic ideas to the medieval west via the works of Augustine of Hippo, Boethius, and John Scotus Eriugena, while the third chapter explores the working out of Aristotelian ideas in the central Middle Ages, with emphasis upon the conceptualization of the boundaries of logic and theology. Chapter Four takes up the mediating role of Arabic thought, translations of Arabic treatises, and the emerging universities.

Over one quarter of the book is devoted to the thirteenth century, Chapter Five concentrating on the reception of Aristotle's philosophy in the west during the first half of that century, Chapter Six dealing with the contributions of Bonaventure, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas. While this organization seems chronological it is in fact heavily thematic, leading to some overlapping between chapters.

Haren notes that his "is a book for historians seeking an introduction to a subject whose technical aspects can be initially forbidding." This is certainly the case. A philosopher might well find frustrating the preoccupation with context, the emphasis upon the evolution of systems of thought relying upon movements and institutions, and the corresponding failure to summarize the essence of medieval speculative thought, not to mention the conscious refusal to evaluate ideas using modern standards. Yet historians will find the exercise admirable and useful precisely in establishing patterns of transmission and influence. Graduate students needing an entry point into medieval speculative thought will find the treatment clear and studded with telling detail and will be able to use the accompanying bibliographies (one of works in English, the other of works in other languages) to supply both orientation and further reading. But if it is useful for beginners, those who tread the territory frequently will also find much to admire and appreciate in the first as well as later readings.

Medieval Europe is the fourth in a series of nine volumes of readings in western civilization developed by University of Chicago faculty on the basis of forty years of teaching a course that originated as a counterpoint to the antihistorical, positivistic social science emphasis at Hutchins College and is now part of the intercivilizational requirement for sophomores and juniors. The faculty who have had a hand in this course include such luminaries as William H. McNeill, Eric Cochrane, and Hannah H. Gray. Neither a Great Books course nor a survey, it acquaints students with the contextual dimensions of human ideas and behaviors.

Selection of items for the volumes of readings cannot have been a simple task. The authors have been concerned to reflect the state of the historical discipline at the moment (in this case, 1982-85), to develop thematic cohesiveness and comprehensiveness, and to reflect the scholar's apprehension of the pedagogical effectiveness of the various selections.

The present volume is guided by some assumptions about the nature of that difficult and slippery beat, "The Middle Ages," i.e. that the age is defined by a pattern of disintegration and reconstitution lasting from after the collapse of Roman political authority in the West to the Black Death and peasant revolts of the fourteenth century; that the inner stresses leading to the disorganization of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were present almost from the outset of the period and more continuous than any points of consensus; and that intense Christian militance was at the root of many of these stresses. Thematic development of these assumptions begins with the foundations of medieval society, religion and empire, rural society and towns, with court and legal documents the primary resource. It then proceeds to cover the Investiture Conflict and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance via letters and individual statements. A chapter on authority, conflict and repression begins with a treatment of the rise of the mendicants and their attacks upon heresy and continues by considering the question of usury, the control of learning, and the debate on papal

monarchy. The second and fourth chapters thus constitute a chronicle of medieval dissent. The final chapter covers the decline of papal credibility in the Babylonian Captivity and the Great Schism, and the dislocation of society due to the Black Death and peasant revolts. Despite any claims that this represents the state of the historical art, it must be noted that the preponderance of the selections reflect a preoccupation with the elite culture of the High and Later Middle Ages. Indeed, the entire conceptualization of the period's distinctiveness and the mode of organization demand such a preoccupation. Those primarily or even significantly interested in exploring the social history of the period or the impact of intercultural contacts will be disappointed that so distinguished an effort by so distinguished a group is so conceptually narrow.

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Joseph M. McCarthy

C. A. Bayly. *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*. London and New York: Longman, 1989. Pp. xv, 295. Cloth, \$37.95; paper, \$19.50.

Here is a book that had the potential of being a welcome addition to the literature on imperial history. That potential is negated by a major flaw: the author's writing style.

Imperial Meridian is a volume in the *Studies in Modern History* series, which is designed to provide students with an introduction to important historical periods in works that are "stimulating and scholarly." The author, C. A. Bayly, is reader in Modern Indian History and a fellow of St. Catherine's College at the University of Cambridge. He is also joint editor of the *New Cambridge History of India*.

An increase of approximately 150 million people in the population of the British Empire is certainly a topic that can be studied with benefit. Bayly begins this study by looking at changes and problems in the Muslim World and conditions in Great Britain and its empire to 1790. He then examines the events world wide that led to the "Second British Empire," and finally discusses how that empire functioned. There may be questions about a few interpretations, but the author certainly has a thorough knowledge of the subject.

Two practical aspects of the book are particularly impressive and should serve as models for other historical works: a glossary of terms is provided at the beginning and a series of maps at the end. They are excellent guides to the material being discussed.

There is no doubt that a general survey of this type is needed. The book covers an often overlooked period in the growth of the British Empire and places that growth in the context of imperial, British, and world history.

Regretfully *Imperial Meridian* does not fulfill the primary goals of the *Studies in Modern History* series because it is extremely difficult to read. The author's writing style is unnecessarily complex and frequently requires the reader to go over a sentence several times to make sure its meaning is clear; sometimes even that is not sufficient. The following is a personal prejudice, but use of the parenthetical reference method makes comprehension more difficult; periodic parentheses that contain seemingly unrelated names and numbers interrupt the flow of words. This style becomes even more confusing when parenthetical explanations are used as well.

Graduate students and people particularly interested in this important period in British imperial development can use *Imperial Meridian* with benefit, although they too will find the work difficult. The book is not recommended for high school or undergraduate college students.

Kennesaw State College

K. Gird Romer

Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith. *Modern Latin America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Second edition. Pp. xii, 436. Cloth \$39.95; paper, \$14.95.

A course in Latin American history, unfortunately, often becomes simply a class in the individual histories of various Latin American countries. This absence of any common bonds tends to have a "centrifugal" effect upon understanding, with students holding dearly to a number of disparate facts and questioning whether it was Esteban or Luis Echeverría who was president of Mexico. Through their synthesis of both the modernization and dependency theories, Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith pull together into a "composite portrait" a history which they state