

Boekbesprekingen - Comptes rendus

Adalbero KUNZELMANN, O.S.A. *Geschichte der deutschen Augustiner-Eremiten. V. Teil : Die sächsisch-thüringische Provinz und die sächsische Reformkongregation bis zum Untergang der beiden.* (Cassiciacum XXVI, 5). Würzburg, Augustinus-Verlag, 1974, XIV-562 S.

With joy and gratitude we salute this fifth volume written by the exact, judicious and well-informed historian of the German Augustinians. The present volume was awaited with particular impatience, since the history of Martin Luther as an Augustinian is here treated. Let us say at the start that the author has turned out an admirable performance. Since the Protestant scholar Th. Kolde wrote in 1879 his valuable work *Die deutsche Augustiner-Congregation und Johann von Staupitz*, no major work had appeared to supplant it. Now, after nearly a hundred years, the German Augustinian province has turned out a history of this complicated question which unquestionably takes over the primacy. Kolde wrote indeed a lasting work, but Kunzelmann has come to this volume with an unparalleled mastery of the subject, obtained by his preparation of the four preceding volumes. Hence in many points he has been able to correct Kolde by incorporating old and new sources and studies unknown to his undeniably deserving predecessor. The tone of his corrections is serene and objective, something which is very welcome in our ecumenically-minded day.

For the benefit of our readers let us recall what Dr. Kunzelmann has previously written in his admirable history. The first volume treated of the Great Union of the Augustinian friars in the 13th century and of the development of the one German province which in 1299 was divided into four. Each of the following three volumes was devoted to the history of an individual province, all three of which lasted until the German secularization at the beginning of the 19th century. Since the material for these three provinces was so vast, a chronological limit was necessary and therefore volumes 2, 3 and 4 treated of the period from roughly 1300 until the end of the middle ages. Thus, volume 2 treated of the Rheno-Swabian province, volume 3 of the Bavarian, and volume 4 of the province of Cologne. Later volumes are slated to continue the history of these three provinces until the time of the secularization, insofar as further divisions (for example, in Poland, Bohemia, Styro-Carinthia, Austria and so forth) did not lead to the founding of new provinces, which Kunzelmann leaves for other authors to describe. Since volume 6, which treats of the Bavarian province (with the above-noted chronological restrictions) until the

time of the secularization is now in print, and volume 7 is now in preparation, we can with great enthusiasm hope for the completion of this opus magnum, which sheds credit upon its author. It is a great compliment to his province also, which realized the value of his scholarly labor.

Now to treat of the present fifth volume. As the title indicates, it deals not only with the fourth German province formed by the division of 1299, namely the Saxon-Thuringian, but of a German reform congregation also, founded in the 15th century, and which at one time or another included a few monasteries not only of the Saxon-Thuringian province but from the other three provinces also. From this reform congregation came Martin Luther, whose monastic superior was therefore not the provincial of one of the four German provinces but rather the vicar general of the reform congregation, Johann von Staupitz. Dr. Kunzelmann gives us in this way a valuable treatment of Luther against the background of his order, of which he wore the habit until 1524. But the author has wisely refrained from attempting a full history of the Protestant Reformation or a full biography of Luther, since his work would then have taken on enormous proportions, and the following volumes would have been greatly delayed.

The complicated material of the book is well and clearly divided. The first section (3-380) treats of the Saxon-Thuringian province, while the second treats (381-523) of the reform movement in the German provinces and of the Saxon reform congregation. It was the ignorance of the matter here treated which allowed some earlier writers to make the hopelessly false statement that the Augustinian *order* in Germany disappeared shortly after 1517. What actually disappeared — and even in these cases not completely — was the Saxon reform congregation by about 1550 and the Saxon-Thuringian province about 1590. This was by no means due exclusively to the voluntary abandonment of their monasteries by the Augustinians but rather to the steady protestantization of the regions in which the convents were located and from which the friars were often driven by the mob or by the local lords of the land. Thus, by the middle of the 16th century only three of the 37 monasteries of the province still remained to the order. The loss was usually against the will of the friars. The three monasteries of the Saxon-Thuringian province which remained were Konitz, Münnernstadt and Würzburg. Konitz was taken over by the Polish Augustinian province in 1624, whereas the other two were occupied by the Rheno-Swabian province before the end of the 16th century and so preserved to the order even though their original province now disappeared. The Saxon congregation had less luck. By 1536, when the new vicar of the congregation, Ludwig von Kokeritz, took over his difficult task, five monasteries of the congregation still remained : Erfurt, Ehrenbreitstein, Dresden, Langensalza and Waldheim. But the last three convents were in the territory of Duke Georg of Saxony. When this loyal Catholic died in 1539, the territory was immediately

protestantized and these three monasteries were taken from the order. Ehrenbreitstein was suppressed in 1572. By 1560 the city council had refused to permit the friars of Erfurt to retain their monastery, but the Rheno-Swabian province regained this monastery for the order in 1618, and an attempt was made in 1629 to restore the Saxon-Thuringian province which thus appears in the general chapters of 1630 and 1636. But the victories of Gustavus Adolphus crushed the hopes of restoration, and so the monastery of Erfurt was definitely given back in 1661 to the Rheno-Swabian province.

While noting these serious losses of the Augustinians in Germany, we must recall that three other German provinces continued to exist until the secularization of 1803. And a clear sign that by no means all Augustinians in Germany inclined to Lutheranism is found in the simple list of Luther's opponents who belonged to his own congregation and who had studied in Wittenberg or Erfurt. A long list of German Augustinian opponents of Luther is found on pages 518-523, of whom we cite here only the most famous: Bartholomäus Arnoldi von Usingen, Arnold Cancrinus, Wolfgang Ostermair, Konrad Treger and Johannes Hoffmeister. A pleasant note is the human aspect which the author brings out in several characters, for example, Wenzel Link, who succeeded Staupitz as vicar of the Saxon congregation. Link is portrayed as a pious and conscientious man who wished to perform his duty well and had a long struggle with his conscience before breaking with his order and the church. On the other side is the fearless preacher, Luther's former teacher, Bartholomäus Arnoldi von Usingen, who brought out fourteen controversial works against his former pupil and continued to preach in behalf of the Catholic faith in spite of attempts against his life.

Hence we see that a most instructive work awaits the reader, who can now find in a single volume that which hitherto was available only to experts and at the price of long and difficult researches in manuscripts and hardly attainable historical writings. It will remain for many years the indispensable work for scholars of Luther's order in Germany and will be the valuable guide for many who wish to pursue further investigations about the large number of Augustinians here mentioned.

A few unimportant errors have crept into the text in spite of very careful proof-reading. In note 1327, seven lines from the bottom, we find 1596 for 1496. In note 2264, Dd 1 is cited instead of Dd 11. Is the date 1447 for the matriculation of Johannes von Grevenstein, cited in note 2290 from Weijenburg, a misprint? If not, it would make him an exceptionally old man to be Luther's novice master. One could expect that on page 340 Magister Johannes von Höxter would be mentioned as provincial, at least with question marks, from 1396 to 1400, as is indicated on page 345. These *quisquiliae* however in no way lessen the high niveau of an *opus aureum*.

J.-J. GAVIGAN, O.S.A.