

THE SOURCES OF REVELATION, by Henri de Lubac, S.J. Translated by Luke O'Neill. *Herder and Herder*, New York, 60s.

The title of this book is misleading. Consisting of extracts from de Lubac's *Histoire et Esprit* and his massive *Exégèse Médiévale*, it is concerned with one precise, unfashionable and important problem: the patristic and medieval exegesis of the Old Testament in the light of the New. De Lubac's scholarship is sufficient guarantee that the methods and presuppositions of this exegesis are presented with a rare degree of lucidity and critical sympathy. His aim is neither to defend excesses in allegorical interpretation, nor to recommend a return to an exegetical method which developments in literary and historical science have rendered inevitably a thing of the past. He is, however, concerned to make us understand what it was that the Fathers were trying to do, and to insist that, whatever the methods by which we seek to acquire it, the search for a 'spiritual' understanding of the Old Testament is, for the Christian believer, permanently justified, indeed is permanently demanded of him.

So far as the first point is concerned, 'the spiritual interpretation . . . did not constitute what might be called a surplus vis-à-vis an already-existent religious capital . . . while with Christ everything . . . had, of course, been already given, the very fact of Christ still had to be expressed' (p. 6). But once the radical newness of the fact of Christ has been grasped; once the significance of Christ has been expressed in the light of the former dispensation; cannot we, who are the heirs of that achievement, reflect on the Old Testament using only the tools of the historian and the literary critic? Or, to put it another way, is it permissible for Christian belief to find, in that former history and its literary comment and interpretation, a meaning which is not apparent to the unbelieving exegete? The answer to that question depends upon the extent to which we

are still prepared to confess, with Augustine, Ambrose and Bernard: 'Semel locutus est Deus, quia unum genuit Verbum' (cf. pp. 186-7), or, with Augustine again: 'Novum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet' (cf. p. ix).

The argument of these essays is too dense to allow them to be summarized in a short review. Instead, I shall mention just two points, both of which are questions for theology raised by de Lubac's study rather than *in* it.

In the first place, the problem of the discontinuity and continuity between the two Testaments (to which he devotes considerable attention) may not be regarded as merely academic. Stress on the element of discontinuity was a principal factor in Christianity's terrifying responsibility for antisemitism; stress on the element of continuity contributed to those features of medieval Christendom which seriously obscured the newness of Christ and the freedom which he came to bring.

In the second place, if 'Scripture . . . is, we might say, expandable—or penetrable—to an infinite degree' (p. 224), and if the degree of 'penetration' is 'coextensive with the gift of the Spirit, with the progress of charity' (p. 22); then can any account of interpretation of doctrinal 'development' be adequate which limits its concern to intellectual, as distinct from moral ('sapiential') achievement? To put it another way, since 'it is not ordained by God that the most learned will inevitably be the most believing, nor the most spiritual; nor that the century which sees the greatest progress realized in scientific exegesis will, by that fact alone, be the century with the best understanding of Holy Scripture' (p. 157), is the 'history of dogma' necessarily the history of a progressively deeper 'penetration' by the Church of the 'deposit of faith'?

NICHOLAS LASH

LUTHER: AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS THOUGHT, by Gerhard Ebeling, translated by R. A. Wilson. *Collins*, London, 1970. 287 pp. 45s.

This book is made up substantially of the lectures which the author gave in the University of Zurich to members of all faculties in 1962-3. He set out to provide an introduction to Luther's theology. He uses fewer technical terms than many theologians, and writes with a clarity unusual for an existential German. His main theme is Luther the existentialist theologian—early on he quotes Luther:

Sola . . . experientia facit theologum' (p. 32). Towards the end of the book Luther's fundamental position is summarized thus: 'The concepts of *causa* and *natura*, which are appropriate in their own sphere, are inappropriate as basic concepts in theology, which is concerned with the response of man in the sight of God and the word of God to man. Thus Luther feels that in scholasticism theology is deprived of its real

seriousness and is a *theologia illusoria* in which it has ceased to be a *theologia crucis*' (p. 233). More brutally Luther is quoted: 'To seek God outside Jesus is the devil' (p. 235). But Ebeling is very sensitive to the need for a true assessment of scholasticism and feels the need to affirm that no scholastic theologian advanced 'the opinion that man became righteous in the sight of God through his righteous works' (p. 153). On grace Luther and Aquinas are not so far apart. It is the philosophical approach specified in the complementarity of grace and nature which divides them.

Luther's passionate and personal theology must lead not to the harmonies of grace and nature but to the polarities of law and gospel; letter and spirit; person and work; faith and love; kingdom of Christ and kingdom of this world; freedom and bondage. These provide the method and the content for this book which is undoubtedly a very competent and enlightening introduction to Luther's thought. Ebeling expounds the thought, and largely ignores the theoretical and practical difficulties, such for instance as were raised in Pelikan's *Spirit versus Structure*. The debate, partly with Erasmus, about the bondage and the freedom of the will is dealt with briefly but very well. Erasmus is

shown, I think rightly, not entirely to have understood Luther's proposition, but, again rightly, is not unduly scolded. I think the author fails to carry conviction on a central issue which recurs several times. He argues that Luther's *sola fide* is necessarily a battle on behalf of love, whilst scholastic faith, by contrast, is possibly a dead faith. Probably he is too short of space to argue this at the necessary length, and it does not seem to be really clear. But on one point, he affirms that the scholastics did transform the Aristotelean concept of *habitus*, and seems to imply that Luther had not really understood this, thinking he must attack any such psychological category in his determination to see the person, whole, in the sight of God.

The book is peppered with good quotations from Luther. Here is part of one: 'The Epistles of Paul are more of a gospel than Matthew, Mark and Luke. . . . Much more depends upon the word than upon the works and deeds of Christ. . . . Even if the miracles of Christ did not exist and we knew nothing of them, we would nevertheless have enough with the word, without which we could not have life.'

JOHN M. TODD

SYMPOSIUM ON J. L. AUSTIN, edited by K. T. Fann. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, 1969. 486 pp. £4.

Times have changed since the unfortunate Mark Antony had to choose between burying Caesar and praising him. Most of the material collected in this symposium (in fact a variety of reviews and papers published over the past decade or so) does both.

The first section of the book is devoted to biography and general considerations of Austin's philosophical style and technique. This is far and away the most rewarding part of the book, especially the piece by Stuart Hampshire, who shows a genuine and all-too-rare sensitivity to the real significance, the *subvertive* significance, of Austin's work as a philosopher and, even more, educator. His 'patient literalness', constantly recalling us to reality (which means, for Austin as for Aristotle, particulars) involved the most radical 'tampering with the beliefs of his audience'. 'The true conservatives, in philosophy as in politics, are those who accept discussion of traditional problems within the traditional terms. However heterodox the conclusions on which the supposed rebels congratulate themselves, no Church or ruling party feels itself seriously

threatened by this re-shuffling of the officially approved cards. But there are signs of official fear, and therefore of righteous anger, when the whole game of established argument and counter-argument is held up to ridicule.'

A fine specimen of such righteous anger is C. G. New's 'A Plea for Linguistics', in part II of the book, which seeks to demolish Austin's method of linguistic philosophy in the name of empirical linguistics. C. G. New's general points are perfectly sound: to rely on intuition rather than amassing evidence about how we use words very easily leads to such idiosyncratic Humpty Dumptyisms as A. J. Ayer's agonizings over the word 'know'. But a temptation does not entail a fall, and C. G. New does not make any serious attempt to show that Austin is *in fact* guilty (such attempt as he does make rests on fairly serious misrepresentation of what Austin actually taught). Now it is precisely this tendency to avoid facing actual *facts* that so much annoyed Austin. Short-cut generalizations are the curse of philosophy (and quite a few other things—perhaps they are the characteristic ailment of our civilization), and