

them as such, there would *be* no argument". It may be amazing, but blocking out the people but for whose interests and needs the discussion would never have got going in the first place is the decisive move in constituting respectable academic discourse.

Ricca Edmondson first takes an explanatory batch of sociological texts that deal with "political" subjects (inner-city racial problems, disaffected young manual workers) from openly "engaged" perspectives. She then analyses some supposedly "value-free" texts. Either way, the reader's response is constantly being invited and anticipated—which doesn't mean that it is necessarily *manipulated*. She is led to identify the "epitome" as the standard resource in sociological argument: it lies somewhere in the rhetorical spectrum between the prediction-gearred statistical "model" and anecdotal "illustration". It both relies on and changes the reader's anticipations, in order to bring the explanatory material home in an effective way. She then revives Aristotle's notion of the "enthymeme". By that he means a syllogism in which one premiss is not explicitly stated. She defines it as "a deduction set out in such a way as to heighten its argumentative impact on its recipient (this often means that it is set out incompletely, demanding audience participation in its reconstruction)". This, as she says, "is central to reasoned arguing about human behaviour". It is fascinating to follow her as she demonstrates this much wider claim in the detail of her analysis of the functioning of rhetorical deduction in sociological explanation.

This is a difficult book, but, as Anthony Heath writes in his foreword, it is "an original and important book which should change the way in which sociologists view their own work".

FERGUS KERR OP

**SEEKING GOD: The way of St Benedict, by Esther de Waal, Collins Fount Paperback, London, 1984, Pp 160. £1.75.**

Rene Dubois, in *A theology of the earth* (1969), recommends St Benedict rather than St Francis as the Christian model, because, while Franciscana represents the aspect of praise and contemplation of the beauty and greatness of God's creation, Benedictina represents the ordered administration of the earth in a fruitful coercion of its fertility. The former is passively admiring, the latter approvingly cooperative.

Well, yes. But it raises the great problem: Christian contemplation or apostolic action? Aristotle, the Plotinists and a host of monk-reformers after them opted for contemplation as the highest activity. The medieval monks and their successors today, *per contra*, have broken out of their cloistered cocoon to become educators, administrators, judges, bishops, even cardinals and popes. The agonising dilemma remains: it is rather like the one facing the Church of Silence—discretion to survive, or valour to witness. Every monk makes his own answer by his completed life. What answer did St. Benedict offer in the sixth century; and, more's the point, what answer might he have provided today?

Our present guide in this little Lenten Book of the Archbishop of Canterbury is a woman who has had a taste of it all in her life. She began in a country vicarage on the Welsh Borders, and became a research fellow and lecturer at Newnham College, Cambridge. As Dr E.A.L. Moir, Ph.D. she then met the chaplain and succentor of King's College, Cambridge, and married him, giving him four sons. In 1976, after a period as chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral, Victor de Waal became Dean of Canterbury, one of those nine edifices that before the Reformation had been a cathedral priory with Oxford study-house connections. In 1982 the two of them found themselves host in their Deanery to the present Pope; a frenetic experience for a Dean whose main recreations are pottery and fishing—ah, back to contemplation! But then, what may be Esther de Waal's recreations? Besides correcting Open University papers, they seem to include reconciling the family with the monastic tradition of study, worship and work. In 1982 she started 'Benedictine Experience', which brings a group of Americans to live

in the cathedral precincts for ten days at a time. So this is not altogether an outsider's view of the way of St Benedict.

It is already a proclaimed success. There are ten chapters of about 14 pages each, all ending with a couple of pages of 'Thoughts and Prayers', and a page of rather impressively wide-ranging notes that pick up some of the best of Benedictine scholarship. After a discussion of St Benedict, chapters are given to the invitation, listening, stability, change, balance, material things, people, authority and praying; this is a perceptive selection of subjects. It is a measure of the author's insight that, unlike most outsiders (even prelatal) and many neophytes to the monastic calling, she does not place 'a shining obedience', with its military overtone eschewed not even by Benedict himself, at the centre. After living a lifetime under forms of obedience—and who does not?—I am certain that it is an adverb and not a noun: for a monk there are two nouns that dominate: *stabilitas*, which for ever places one leg on this ground (i.e. in this characterised community), and *conversio morum*, which for ever has the other leg moving through experience and opened-capacity-for-experience (which is more important) in the following of God in himself and in his requirement of us. The rest—obedience, humility, silence, serving the brethren—are but adverbs that give a style to the nouns. Put the other way round, monastic life becomes a prison of customs and observances.

Esther de Waal uses her resources with a broad pallet, integrating argument and aesthetic, turning visual or aural events into symbolism. For instance, she makes good use of the great central east window of Canterbury cathedral, 'the redemption window' ever present to the old monastic community as it sung its morning Mass through the Middle Ages (about the same length of time, remember, as since the Dissolution). After some description of its iconography, she writes: 'For the first offices of the day the light of the rising sun would come streaming through that window. While this for us today may be an aesthetic experience, for the medieval onlooker it was much more. Of all the created things which to them presented the image of the Creator in varying degrees, light was the most direct manifestation of God. So not only did they stand daily in the presence of a dramatic portrayal of the paschal mystery; they also lived with the vision of the divine light transfiguring the darkness of matter. So this window is a great affirmation. It simply states in a word and scene and symbol what is at the heart of the three vows: that to enter into the mystery, the paschal mystery of dying with Christ and entering with him into the depths means also that we rise again with him...' Fine that is, and the doyen of such writing, before her, was David Knowles. But he knew its place, and warned both himself and his reader against 'the siren voice of romanticism' which had not always served him well. Ending just such a lyrical passage, once designed to conclude his great fourfold opus, he wrote: 'These emotions and experiences are indeed common to all; they are not for monks alone and have nothing to do with the deeper life of the spirit; but we are men...' *Homo sum; nihil humani alienum a me puto*, yes—but that is to fall below the life of the spirit, as does sentiment fall below principle or ideal. Dare one say it, it is a peculiarly Anglican temptation, that Church being a master indeed of social and liturgical form (as we saw at Canterbury on 19 May 1982).

The author, perhaps as a short-hand way of speech, always credits all to St Benedict. Let her and us not forget that it is the *Regula Benedicti* that is under discussion, a Rule about which we know essentially three things: that its attribution emerges in history from about 630 and cannot—despite what *Dialogues II* may (or may not) be saying—be directly anchored to the pen of Abbot Benedict of Montecassino; that it a Rule worked out over a long period in the daily lives of a whole community, many of its deans or officials probably having made precise and crucial verbal contributions (as a network of styles suggests); and that it draws enormously on the writings and Rules of former legislators, as a consummation of their work—and most particularly upon John Cassian and the Magister (one has only to inspect the footnotes of Abbot Cuthbert Butler or Dom Adalbert de Vögüé to perceive that). Undoubtedly the

hand of 'Benedict' (the same monk spoken of in *Dialogues II*) is strong upon the *Regula Benedicti*, but so are the hands of those before him and those around him. Were he to be writing today in a university setting, his preface would almost certainly have ended: '... and lastly, I owe an immeasurable debt to my fellow lecturers and students, who at every stage ...' etc.

Esther de Waal has wonderfully grasped the importance for Benedictines of reverence—reverence for material things (chap VII), for fellow people (chap VIII) and for people under one's authority or in a hierarchic relationship of cooperation (chap IX). In this flow of thought she brings in the 'non-vow' (for monks do not specifically take such a vow) of chastity—meaning consecrated celibacy, for we are all held by the law of God to chastity. Unwittingly she is invoking those words of St Paul that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, owned more by their Creator and redeemer (i.e. twice over) than by ourselves. From her own motherhood she has a marvellous insight to contribute: 'Yet how can I as a mother expect a teenage son or daughter to treat their bodies with reverence, suddenly at some point in their adolescence, unless they know this already as something experienced in their childhood world in relation to toys and food and animals?' Here one recalls the Rule's admonition that the tools of the monastery should be treated (i.e. respected) as the vessels of the altar. She goes on: 'If we have been handling their bodies with a tired and angry impatience, wrenching their clothes over their heads, dragging them in and out of the bath, trailing them with frustration around the shops, then right from the start we have been guilty of making a statement, however unconscious, about the dignity of the body'. (p. 123). That sense of reverence, begun in respect of the smallest tools, ends with paternal relationship in the common life, whose four principles she astutely gives as solidarity (what my brethren call 'keeping corpus'), plurality (which recognises the individual worth of each), authority (backing the man who has the burden) and subsidiarity (letting as many as possible share that burden).

Lastly, she has got Benedictine prayer right. I believe that book titles like *Seeking God* or *The search for God* radically miss the point. Most monks have found God: they live with him daily and love him in all things always—that is their prayer life, which permeates everything.

ALBERIC STACPOOLE OSB

**A NEW FACE OF HINDUISM: THE SWAMINARAYAN RELIGION** by Raymond Brady Williams, 1984 Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Pp. 217, Proce £7.95 (paperback).

The followers of Swaminarayan constitute a dynamic force in Gujarat society as well as among Gujaratis who have settled abroad. Professor Raymond William's book on this important and fascinating topic is based on fieldwork and research in Gujarat between 1976—81. He has divided his study into 7 chapters to provide a comprehensive picture of the entire Swaminarayan movement, encompassing the primary sect founded by Sahajanand Swami and a number of schismatic organisations which have evolved out of it. At the outset, the author has treated the entire movement as one group. As he states on p. xii, 'The work is about one group, the history, beliefs, religious specialists and way of life that constitutes the Swaminarayan Tradition'. He repeats a similar statement on p. xiii when he says, 'The aim in this work is to present a full length portrait of a specific *sampradaya* and what goes on in its fellowship as an integral whole'. Presumably the author wanted to characterise the overall distinctiveness of this tradition. In fact, as the book itself shows, the movement consists of several schismatic organisations deriving from a sectarian nucleus described in the second chapter.

In his introduction, the author argues for the significance of 'A new face of Hinduism' in regard to the Swaminarayan movement. It is not entirely clear as to what set of specific dimensions does the word 'new' refer to—especially if the word 'new' is