

DIALOGUE ET REVOLUTION, by J. Girardi. *Éditions du Cerf*, 1969. 288 pp.

MARXISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by Roger Garaudy. *Collins*, 1970. 224 pp. 36s.

While most Christians and Marxists have reservations about dialogue, young people may denounce it as the last-ditch stand of neo-capitalist conservatism. The Second Vatican Council issued a Constitution on the Church in the world of today, but could not provide an up-to-day statement of Catholic teaching. Catholics and non-Catholics need bringing up to date, but *aggiornamento* is not enough. The vital issue is the world of tomorrow. What we need is prophecy.

Garaudy jogs our conscience. 'When we ask ourselves what we must do if we are to act rightly, we are not seeking to conform to a pre-existing law or to a being that is already "given": we are asking ourselves what must be brought into existence which is not yet existing' (p. 77). 'I am not responsible only to myself but also to a society, a class, a nation' (p. 91). Girardi believes sensitivity to the problems of the Third World the touchstone of our fidelity to the requirements of dialogue (p. 257). Garaudy goes further. 'We are never free to choose between violence and non-violence. We are already committed, and our abstention, equally with our engagement, plays its part in this confrontation of forces. To condemn the violence of the slave who revolts, is to become an accessory to the permanent violence of the enslaver' (p. 151).

Like *Marxism and Christianity*, *Christianity and the Class-Struggle*, *The Value of Freedom as a Sign of Contradiction in the Post-Conciliar Church*, and his contributions to the *Encyclopedia of Atheism* of which he is editor, Girardi's *Dialogue and Revolution* augurs well for the vast, general philosophical synthesis he is now writing. It is a collection of essays, some of which have been published previously in learned journals. 'Demythologization and atheism' is particularly valuable.

Marxism in the Twentieth Century may not have the political topicality of Garaudy's *Socialism's Great Turning-Point*, but any future Marxism has, in these pages. The author quotes a Buddhist proverb: 'Point at the moon, and

the fool looks at your finger.' To discuss these books is not enough. Thinking must blossom out into action that transforms the world to provide fresh horizons stimulating ever more fruitful thinking in the dialectical expansion of the methodology of historical initiative.

Girardi's weakness, which is also his strength, is his philosophical detachment. Garaudy's flaw is a schizoid attitude to the Marxist myth. While Rahner offers hope of the absolute future, there is considerable ambivalence about Garaudy's claim to be 'always forward-looking' (p. 165). One may contrast two series of texts:

A. 'Socialism has not destroyed the dream.' 'We must dream.' 'Myth is the phase of labour in which the emergence of man asserts itself.' 'Every symbolic story calls man back to his true nature.' 'From its very beginning, myth is the language of transcendence.' 'It is a return to the fundamental: the man who stands on his own feet', 'expressing the healthy infancy of man'. 'The golden age of myth allows man to relive the dawn of the world.' 'The meaning of history was born with the first man, the first labour, the first project.' (pp. 164-67.) There is more than an echo of the pangs of child-birth here.

B. 'Myth is not participation but creation', 'what realizes the future', not 'mere reproduction or preservation of the present by a master-concept'. Man is 'defined in the first place by the future he constructs and not by the past of the species, which urges him on simply by instinct and desire'. 'In every great myth, whether poetic or religious, man regains his own transcendence in relation to every given order.' (pp. 165-66.)

Garaudy discusses Girardi's opinion that 'for Marxism, the absolute is not man but humanity' (p. 144). I have a strong feeling that only commitment to something like Rahner's absolute future can save Garaudy's claims in B from being voided of content by the regressive character of what he says in A.

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LOVING ON PRINCIPLE, by E. W. Dicken. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1969. 168 pp. 21s

Traditional theology has its defenders. E. L. Mascall demolished some current shibboleths in *The Secularization of Christianity*, and E. W. Trueman Dicken does the same in regard to the so-called 'new morality'. It is equally

well written and hard hitting (and equally, perhaps, lacking in that sympathy which is the ultimate weapon against an opponent).

Dr Dicken criticizes advocates of situation ethics because they take their cue from secular

standards and because they eschew the moral reasoning which even a natural ethics demands, leaving the Christian man without any real guidance. Following Paul Ramsey and others, he analyses the contradictions in Harry Williams' famous essay on 'Theology and Self-awareness' in *Soundings* (but this is an easy target and ought, now, to be given a rest), but keeps his main criticism for Joseph Fletcher's two books on situation ethics.

He points to the quotation from G. E. Moore on the flyleaf of Fletcher's first book, a text to the effect that a right act is an act which brings about a good result; does this mean that the end *always* justifies the means and nothing else *can* justify them? This is, indeed, an uncompromising departure from St Paul's moral teaching. Fletcher goes further in holding that whenever a Christian is confronted by a moral situation, he must recognize that the moral law as he knows it may not apply in this situation, and, what is more, that not only means but also ends are relative. But (Dr Dicken asks) what is the value of a rule if one can never know whether it is applicable? Fletcher holds that his teaching is a non-system, but Paul Ramsey has shown that the situationists are less unsystematic than they claim to be. Although they refuse openly to acknowledge the force of rules they do, in practice, derive rules from the basic notion of love. Rape, for example, is admitted always to be wrong because it exploits the woman in treating her as a mere thing and not as a person. They are thus inconsistent, but the greater danger in their refusal to deal adequately with moral norms is shown in Fletcher's notorious example in his later book, *Moral Responsibility* (p. 19). Here he explores a concrete situation, a resident physician's dilemma when the hospital's last unit of plasma has to be given either to an old skid-row drunk or a young mother of three. 'Love must make estimates', says Fletcher, 'it is preferential; to prefer the mother is the most loving decision, and therefore just.' But Fletcher has arrived at this opinion, though he refuses to acknowledge the fact, by using a set of moral rules which apparently read as follows: (1) Thou shalt save the mother rather than the male; (2) Thou shalt save four people rather than one; (3) Thou shalt not trouble thyself overmuch about the manifestly destitute; (4) Thou shalt care for the young adult rather than the old; (5) Thou shalt not grieve unduly over the drunkard.

As Dr Dicken says, this is a curious and unattractive set of commandments. Of course the traditional moral theologian might have recommended, in the end, that the young mother be given the plasma but he, at least, would have acknowledged that he had arrived at that decision by a process of moral reasoning and not by making an emotional evaluative judgment—a judgment which, in a less direct and obvious situation, might, indeed, lead to a grievously wrong result, whereas a person who possessed 'moral expertise' might have better understood Fletcher's reiterated principle that the distinctive character of love is that it loves the unlovable and the unloving.

Dr Dicken has, surely, put his finger on the point. Situation ethics can be dangerous because it may absolve us of the responsibility to *think*, and this may have disastrous moral consequences. To be fair to Professor Fletcher, he stresses that the Christian will use all the means at his disposal—including a type of casuistry—in arriving at his moral decision, but in allowing for the exceptional all the time he vitiates this aim. Of course, God is free-acting, and his requirements cannot be compressed into an absolutist ethic or a rigidly preceptual one, but God's freedom is most fully expressed in the historical revelation in the man Jesus Christ—and this gives man a 'shape' to his action that we can reflect on, giving us knowledge about God and also knowledge in the shape of moral awareness.

There is much else in this book on which to dwell. The argument ranges widely, and the author uses, for instance, Desmond Morris's book, *The Naked Ape*, as well as other modern works, to support his claim that there is a natural morality and an accepted machinery for evaluating ethical action. This has an apologetic motive for the 'man who reasons morally . . . is in a position to be shown and to appreciate the pattern of Christian morality ready-made . . . such a man will recognize in this a morality which reflects his own moral attitudes and which expresses a norm of moral goodness embracing but also going far beyond his own conceptions' (pp. 74-75). One can go further. To be shown that a moral system which we have independently discovered to be inherent in the universe has already been expressly set out in the name of a God who is claimed as the creator is a very strong claim for the existence of such a God. Such a belief provides that vital authority which a secular moralist like C. H. Waddington

holds is the necessary basis in ethical teaching. Hence Dr Dicken trounces Barthians for doing away with natural morality, while the situationists do the Christian cause a disservice with their vague talk of involvement, 'openness' and 'authentically free acts' (not to speak of their extraordinarily loose use of 'compassion').

It is this confidence of Dr Dicken's which worries me a little—that all comers, scientists, philosophers and their faint-hearted fellow-travellers among Christian theologians, can be taken on, and their systems shown to point to

Christ, despite themselves. Granted that the situationists reduce the dogmatic principle, and that we must begin with the Church's understanding and not secular man's, there is more in the *Zeitgeist* of the modern world, and in contemporary man's scepticism and questioning of traditional authorities, than he allows for; he protests too much. But this book is essential reading, alongside Paul Ramsey, G. F. Woods and others, to counter-balance the confidence (in an opposite direction) of the 'new morality'. IJUAN ELLIS

SACRA DOCTRINA, Reason and Revelation In Aquinas, by Per Erik Persson. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1970. 317 pp. 50s.

As the ecumenical movement develops, scholars are giving more and more attention to the great thinkers who have had a formative influence in the communions to which they belonged. Catholics have given a lot of time recently to the more important figures in Protestantism. Protestant scholars are beginning to study the great medieval theologians, and the present work of P. E. Persson has placed him among the specialists on St Thomas Aquinas. He originally published this book in Swedish in 1957, and his chapter on the plan of the *Summa Theologiae* was published in French in the *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 58 (1958), pp. 545-572. The English translation contains no new material affecting the content of his work since the original publication, though there is a little extra bibliography with useful reference to recent English translations of books on St Thomas. The type is clear but there are far too many minor errors, especially in the abundant Latin citations in the notes.

The author has a thorough acquaintance with the thought of St Thomas, and in choosing to write on *sacra doctrina* he has gone to the core of the problem of theological methodology in the Middle Ages. His three major chapters discuss the relationship of *revelatio* and *sacra doctrina*, *ratio* and *revelatio* in *sacra doctrina*, and *ratio* and *sacra doctrina*. It is a well-ordered systematic presentation. He has consulted and often found himself in agreement with the best-known exponents of Thomist thought, in particular Gilson and Chenu. His reading is very comprehensive and all the major contributors on theology as a science in St Thomas up to 1957 are carefully assessed. The well-read student of St Thomas should not expect to find much that is new in this book, but he

could not fail to appreciate and profit from its clarity. Its especial interest lies in the wealth of texts systematically presented to show why the author takes St Thomas to be a great theologian. For it is as a theologian that Persson essentially thinks of him, one who is a philosopher only that he might more effectively fulfil this primary function (p. 123).

There is a full and interesting introductory chapter on the role of Scripture in medieval theology. The author shows the importance of the literal sense for St Thomas and how original he was in accentuating this. The doctrine of the Church is formed in such a way that 'what is given in the creed for Thomas is a summary of what Scripture means when it is correctly interpreted' (p. 59). The role of reason in the understanding of revelation is carefully handled, and the anthropology of St Thomas very clearly demonstrated for its importance in the articulation of the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation and Grace. Persson writes (p. 295) that while revelation provides the content of theology for St Thomas, it is reason which provides the structure.

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it is a Protestant's scholarly, sympathetic appreciation of the theological methodology of the most influential Catholic doctor of the western world. Several of the key problems of the Reformation are serenely evoked in this historical enquiry, for example Nature and Grace, Scripture and Tradition. The author knows that St Thomas has often been misrepresented by Thomists as well as by Protestants and is aware that fears of the danger in his method have made him difficult for the Protestant tradition. To allay such