

**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