

has been neglected because the official Church did not like what she was saying, because in her relationship with Tyrrell she was calumniated, and because she was a woman, from whom no theological knowledge or spiritual expertise were expected at that date. If she had been a man, she would have had the authority of a von Huegel. If she had become an Anglican, she would have had the influence of an Evelyn Underhill. If she had been trusted, she might have been a broadcaster as famous as Fr Cyril Charles Martindale S.J. None of this happened. She had to be rescued by the American thesis-writers. This is the best of them, though it is disconcertingly dedicated to 'all the gang at 634,—my old Kentucky home'.

- *English Catholic Modernism: Maude Petre's Way of Faith*, by Clyde F. Crews. Burns & Oates, London, & University of Notre Dame, Indiana, 1984. £12.00.

## Reviews

**RHETORIC IN SOCIOLOGY** by Ricca Edmondson. *Macmillan*, London, 1984 pp 190. £20.

In a remarkable essay (*New Blackfriars*, September 1981), Ricca Edmondson and her husband sketched an argument in favour of a rhetorical theory of communication which would counter-act the dominant view, in theology as elsewhere, that the important thing is to accumulate the correct propositions whether or not they impinge on anyone's interests or needs. Plato's hostility to the Sophists has given rhetoric a bad name, as if it were merely "a technology of manipulation". Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, on the other hand, initiates systematic "exploration of reasonable intersubjective communication in society". The immense influence of Cicero and St Augustine ensured that rhetoric was studied in the Middle Ages. Erasmus and Luther were equally aware of its importance. It seems to have been Petrus Ramus (1515—1572), that violent opponent of all things Aristotelian, who confined rhetoric to matters of mere style. From then on—"for reasons which are usually linked to the predominance of Cartesian rationalism"—the rhetorical understanding of intellectual exchange has yielded more and more ground to the beguiling myth of a purely cognitivist conception of language. It is now commonly supposed that arguments may, and should, be framed in complete independence of the protagonist's interests or needs. That "pure logic" is the most intimidating form of rhetoric in the field is usually concealed from its devotees. The grip of the cognitive/emotive dichotomy remains amazingly tight, notwithstanding the many attempts to rehabilitate rhetoric. I.A. Richards, with *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), was one of the precursors. But Dr Edmondson dates the new interest to 1958, with the publication of *The New Rhetoric* of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. She is well aware of what is in effect a reconciliation between logic and rhetoric in the work of such philosophers as J.L. Austin, Paul Feyerabend, John Searle, and Stephen Toulmin, as well as of thinkers like Gadamer and Habermas. The key passage runs as follows (page 22): "Arguments are evolved and experienced in terms of positions held by different speakers rather than in terms of facts which are directly apprehended ... If utterly certain facts and interpretations are available and everyone were able to perceive

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