

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

misgivings he writes (p. 213) in the context of Christology: 'If we take what Thomas says in the context of the causal relationship between God and the world which he defines in his scheme of act and potency, we shall see that so far from being mere subtleties void of any genuine religious sense, his statements are rather a clear and logical consequence of a truly profound and suggestive concept: salvation as the perfection and elevation of what is human.'

The only regrets this reviewer has about this book is that it does not deal with some recent issues in Thomism, for the author's opinions would be well worth having. There is no discussion of the question whether or not there is a philosophy of religion in Thomas. It seems clear that Persson would have reserves

about introducing this modern debate into an historical study of Aquinas. In his treatment of Grace he does not refer to the work of Karl Rahner on quasi-formal causality, even though on page 186 there is cited CG III, 151. He could have benefited considerably from the detailed discussion of *scriptura sola* in the Middle Ages by Y. Congar in his two volumes on Tradition published between 1960-1963. Some of the remarks he makes about the role of authority in the Catholic Church and the meaning of this in the interpretation of Scripture are now a little dated. But in general he does not stray beyond his historical enquiry. His work will remain extremely helpful for a scholarly appreciation of the theology of St Thomas. This is excellent ecumenism.

RICHARD J. TAYLOR

POUR UNE POETIQUE DE LA FOI, ESSAI SUR LE MYSTÈRE SYMBOLIQUE, by J.-P. Manigne, O.P. *Les éditions du Cerf*, Paris, 1969. 192 pp. (no price stated).

What this difficult and methodology-cluttered book attempts is what many sensitive people are looking for: but this is not the way to go about it. Part I asks what poems say, and answers: they make reality directly evident to us ('ontophany') by creating a context where this is possible, by containing in themselves something transcending the actual moment of their utterance, and by challenging us, looking us in the face.

Part II asks what poems really are, and by isolating certain Heideggerian themes and seeing how far they are useful to the book's purpose, answers: poetic expression is the matrix of any more precise discourse.

Part III, the most important, asks in what respect theology is a Poem (author's capital). For Manigne, theology as a medieval type *scientia* has gone, and as the mere spinning out of biblical metaphor is inadequate; and its continuance even as a language is in doubt. In the latter sense, he maintains, it can continue, as *la Poétique* (as against *noétique*) *de la Foi*. What is this? 'Making no attempt to consider theology as a structured system . . . we turn our attention to a Word already uttered, asking what are the constitutive laws which permit prolongation of its utterance. The set of these laws is what we call *la Poétique de la Foi* (110-11). *Analogia entis* (Aquinas) permits discursive theology but not exegesis, *analogia fidei* (Barth) the inverse, so that will not do for a unified *Poétique de la Foi*. What makes it work he calls *analogia symboli* (twice

misprinted): 'By *analogia symboli* we mean only this: the relation between reality and its linguistic expression in secular poetry is comparable, from the point of view of one studying to read signs, with the relation between God-revealing-himself and this revelation (Scripture and Sacraments) in biblical texts' (132). This presupposes a significant analogy between 'ontophany' and 'Theophany'. The latter is like the former in producing the context (of faith) in which Theophany is possible, by containing in itself something transcending the actual occasion in which it occurs, and by challenging us, looking us in the face. Sacrament is the paradigm: a total reality given in the limits of a sign. If a man cannot be touched by ontophany, he cannot be touched by Theophany either. (Cf. the bomolochos who is excluded from the Kingdom.)

In the Bible, chronicle-historical texts are secondary to the texts where the symbolic process is more clearly at work, yet without historical facticity (e.g. the birth of Jesus at a given time) symbol would be ineffective, an empty dream, just as without symbols, historical facticity would be meaningless. Symbolic events are effective only if they can interfere with the course of secular history. Since sacramental language is the paradigm for *la Poétique de la Foi*, eucharistic language is treated in some detail. Faith alone discerns Theophany under the appearances of ontophany. Like the latter, Theophany com-