

view that Rahner's project is basically a philosophical one, where his particular cast of philosophy renders his theology ultimately unsatisfactory as a naturalisation of the supernatural, a kind of rationalism. Instead Endean recognises that Rahner's project is in the first place a properly theological one, a recognition that could help lead to further critical reassessment of Rahner's theological achievement and its unifying principles on their own terms.

SIMON FRANCIS GAINES OP

THE VOICES OF MOREBATH: REFORMATION AND REBELLION IN AN ENGLISH VILLAGE by Eamon Duffy, *Yale University Press*, 2001. Pp. xv + 232, £16.95 hbk.

The opening sentence describes Morebath as a remote Devonshire community on the rain-swept southern edge of Exmoor, ten miles north of Tiverton, twenty-five miles north of Exeter. The photos of the 'huddle of houses round a gaunt church' evoke a sense of that setting's lonely atmosphere. There are also photos of the original accounts on which the story is based. Dr Eamon Duffy uses mainly the 1904 edition compiled by the scholarly vicar of Morebath, J. Erskine Binney, and kept in the Devon Record Office in Exeter. The accounts are the writings of one man, vicar through all the changes of Reformation and Counter-Reformation from 1520 to 1574, Sir Christopher Trychay.

According to Duffy, Sir Christopher was the most literate man in the parish, and as far as I could see his accounts looked like the evidence of that. He was writer and maths checker for the church wardens and store (religious fund) wardens. He kept accounts of his own work and records of canon law, church life and customs in Morebath as well as local expenses such as setts. These last were rates set by parish officials, as I learnt from the list of definitions explaining Tudor expressions. Although Duffy gives both Latin and English quotations in modernised forms as well as the old, local dialect forms in which they were written, this key to vocabulary was necessary to keep meanings clear. Clear enough to ask how the parish clergyman managed not just to survive but to hold office through four reigns of repeated religious changes, without falling victim to either royal or parish anger?

We are told from the start that Sir Christopher was conservative, like his parish, for which one of his first services was to establish St Sidwell of Exeter as the local saint and encourage everyone to contribute to her cult with donations of money, assorted images, devotional beads and materials, including altar-cloths for her altar next to the altar of Jesus. It is all the stranger to see that Morebath was one of the quickest parishes to abandon its saint's cult when ordered to do so by the Second Royal Injunctions in 1538. Duffy assures us that Sir Christopher did not lose his belief in the intercession of saints,

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and in times of danger seems to have reckoned that silence was the best way to preserve it. In 1549, when Edward VI's Protestant regime saw a widespread destruction of saints' images, there was a statue of St Sidwell at Morebath, which was destroyed. Sir Christopher took home for safe keeping a cloth painted with her picture and a basin in which her light had burnt, but made, led or shouted no extrovert protests. He wanted to remain in his job rather than surrender it to some outside implant and in 1553, when Catholic Queen Mary was enthroned, he brought out his Sidwell bits and pieces and had her altar rebuilt in the church. No wonder Duffy finds 'no easy accounting for' this man's enthusiastic Protestant preaching under Queen Elizabeth, presumably abandoning Sidwell. We hear no more of her. These are not sixteen years of silence in order to survive, but speech and leadership beyond the call of duty.

I kept asking myself how Sir Christopher played such an active yet inconsistent part in the parish's religious life without people distrusting him. It is hard to tell from reading Sir Christopher's minimal outline. Partly, I suppose, it suited people to have a skilful local operator in the job. Sometimes he gave them no option. Duffy explains that parish clerks, main assistants in running community services and organising house blessings, were paid by the parish but chosen by the priest. The Morebath clerk was often a relative or godson of Sir Christopher. I do not know how often this happened in other parishes or what Morebath felt about the Trychay family domination of its clerkship, but there was repeated trouble throughout the 1530s about who should pay what towards the clerk's wages, in goods (such as corn) and money, and exactly which duties could be expected in return.

In 1537 Sir Christopher describes the plight of one of his poorest parishioners, the Exebridge cottager, Marke. Just before the church's patronal feast day, St George's day, Marke's wife had given birth to twins, both of whom had died straight after being baptised. Sir Christopher had agreed to say Mass for them on St George's day, but when Marke arrived at the church he found it locked. He had to get hold of a former clerk and a man to fetch the chalice and the key to the church, so that the promised Mass could be said, and 'all was for lack of a clerk'. There followed communications between all parties, and Sir Christopher seems to have been as glad as his parish when he settled this one without the bishop's intervention.

The sense of isolation so valued in Morebath is well emphasised by Duffy, whose writing never fails to flow. But his commentary leaves the leading character far beyond me, or perhaps it would be more honest to admit that it leaves me feeling uncomfortable in the presence of a habitual winner.

TERESA McLEAN

CONTEMPLATION AND INCARNATION: THE THEOLOGY OF MARIE-DOMINIQUE CHENU by Christophe F.Potworowski, *McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2001.Pp. xvii + 330, £30.50*

Christophe Potworowski presents his study of M-D Chenu not as a work of history but as a contribution to systematic theology. Nonetheless, the author sets out Chenu's incarnational themes on broadly biographical lines. Going with the temporal flow of Chenu's thinking makes for readability. The book includes the first complete bibliography of Chenu's writings, most of them available only in French. Potworowski fills his text with delightful citations from dozens of hitherto untranslated articles, homilies and interviews, effectively creating an anthology of Chenu's reflections on contemplation, incarnation and the practice of Christian witness in the modern world. His less than smooth translations convey the germinal, 'thinking outloud', quality of Chenu's writings. It is not that Chenu's thought was opaque, but rather that he possessed the charisma of the teacher more than of a writer: or, as Potworowski puts it, Fr Chenu was 'sometimes more of a prophet than a systematic theologian' (p.190).

Chenu's doctoral thesis, on Aquinas's notion of contemplation, was written under the supervision of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrangé OP, last of the terrifying Thomists. The seeds of subversion were present in Chenu's motivation in producing this apparently *historico-doctrinal* work: it was, he said in 1988, to 'formulate 'scientifically' the intense experience undergone during a stay at the house of studies of Le Saulchoir [in 1913]... This was a Dominican community where the religious state, the fullness of liturgical life, and assiduous study... combined in a heady atmosphere supported by individual fervour. From this moment on I invested the word 'contemplation' with its full meaning' (p.5). Chenu's work on Aquinas's notion of contemplation was an attempt to articulate his own original, Dominican experience. In a 1934 retreat, Chenu advised his Dominican sisters: 'There are days when we have seen clearly what it is to know something, to pray, to be called by God, and our soul has been definitely marked by this—when we have... understood that God has called us to this intimacy with him, to religious life. One must not place these riches aside; it is by these that we must live... We can be excellent religious by following the rule, but that is not all, we must live in spiritual beauty... [Thus] we renew in ourselves that which makes, at the core of our soul, for Dominican optimism' (pp.20 and 36). Chenu called contemplation 'an extraordinary power of invention... to discern new apostolic forms' (p.29). Because it puts one in touch with a living force, contemplation sets the spirit free.

That was the theme of Chenu's 1936 homily for the feast of St Thomas, '*Veritas liberavit vos*', which was extended in the 1937 *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir*, a set of lessons on Thomistic spirituality which wrecked the author's reputation with the Holy Office. The principle of this text is that the theologian's faith is rooted in a 'revealed given' (*donné révélé*), defined not as 'propositions' but as

'presence, with the inexhaustible realism and silent insistence that this word implies' (pp.75-6). Theology is the expression of the *presence* of the Word of God. It is the out growth of the 'spiritual experience' of the theologian. That goes no less for Aquinas than for Bonaventure or Molina. 'In defining the structure and laws of the contemplative life', Chenu stated, 'St Thomas has given us, under the guise of the impersonal objectivism of doctrine, the secret of his personality just as if he were sharing a confidence in 'confessions' after the manner of Augustine' (p.3). It follows, for Chenu, that study of Thomas's texts puts us into direct communion with the living mind of the theologian. Study of Aquinas is mind-opening because it aims to 'rediscover' the 'state of invention' in which he wrote the *Summas*' (p.107).

The practice of theology is conceived by analogy with the incarnation: just as Christ is fully divine and fully human, so the theologian thinks *from* faith, from the *donné révélé*, in and with a human mind. It is this thinking from participated presence in God that gives the theologian complete freedom to assume and redeem the human. According to Potworowski, Chenu progressed from painstaking efforts to situate Thomas within his own times, that is, from an apprenticeship in *history*, to the development of a theology of history proper, in which the theologian's task becomes the discerning of God's Word within the 'signs of the times'.

In a brilliant penultimate chapter, the book turns its own argument around and asks whether, for all its 'incarnationalism', Chenu's theology is actually centred on the 'singularity' of the biblical Christ. Focussing on Chenu's much debated conception of the plan of the *Summa Theologica*, Potworowski asks, 'Is the emanation-return schema ultimately an abstract conceptual structure that blocks access to a personal God? Is Chenu's commitment to historical consciousness ultimately prevented from reading the sign of the times above all signs of the times?' (p.2 ii). Potworowski acknowledges that, although Chenu recognised that the abstract conceptualism of Garrigou-Lagrange was completely incapable of dealing with the reality of history, his own thinking did not always escape the Scholastic preference for intelligibility over historical particularity.

There is a tension between Chenu's enterprise in situating Thomas's thought in its 13th-century context, and his belief that Thomas's religious experience can be reappropriated by later readers. Chenu realised that the Modernist crisis was a spur to rethinking the meaning of 'historicity': what he aimed at was neither Garrigou's atemporal 'Thomistic synthesis' nor an historical description of his subject which buried Aquinas in the past. He achieved this through his idea of tradition as 'continued incarnation'. For the resolutely positivist historian, past time is *dead*. If, as Chenu did, one approaches the study of Aquinas as a conversation with a *living theologian*, one is as little concerned with empirical historicity as was Fra Angelico when he lined up Dominic, Aquinas and Peter Martyr. Within the *tradition* in which Chenu placed himself, history

is already transformed into prophetic, if not systematic, theology. Combining the merits of history and systematics, Potworowski's top-notch book about Marie-Dominique Chenu's incarnational-contemplative theology should be on everyone's reading list.

FRANCESCA MURPHY

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MAKING OF THE MODERN FAMILY by Rosemary Radford Ruether SCM Press, London, 2001. Pp. 304, £15.99 pbk.

In its commitment to 'traditional family values', the (American) Christian Right thinks of itself as reasserting the normative model of the family which is found in the bible and in particular in the New Testament. Central to this model are the ideas of the male as the breadwinning head of the family and the female as the house-keeping, child-minding and husband-tendering subordinate. In *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family*, Rosemary Radford Ruether sets out to show that the Christian Right is mistaken not only in its claims for the biblical origins of its model of the family (after all, at first glance the New Testament seems to be antifamily!) but also in its claims for the normativity of this model. The book is a work in the history of ideas. It is informed by an impressive sociological scholarship about the history of (Western) forms of domesticity which makes much of its analysis hard to resist. And it is oriented to a conception of the proper role of the church in our domestic lives (as preparer and blessing of those covenants which aim to unify three forms of human love: *eros*, *philia* and *agape*) which deserves serious attention.

Ruether argues that the antifamily messages of the New Testament should be understood as a critique of actual social systems of the day in which the family was seen as the locus of pride, power and possessions by elites that marginalized most poor people and constructed hierarchies of men over women, masters over slaves, the old over the young, the 'clean' over the socially despised, ruling nations over conquered ones. The Christian church defined itself as a contrasting 'new family' that broke down such separations in a fellowship of all of us with Christ. She traces attempts over the new few centuries to reinsert the church into the existing patriarchal, slaveholding family ideologies, to create ascetic communities in the place of the family and to integrate asceticism into the family. In so doing she reveals just how inclusivist was the early Roman notion of *pater familias* in contrast with the late 20th century nuclear family notion of 'father'. She outlines debates about the relative status of marriage and celibacy and the subsequent efforts to celibatize the clergy and to christianize marriage. Ruether thinks that the church's failure to create a positive spirituality of sexuality can be traced back to the internal inconsistency between the first two of Augustine's three 'goods' of marriage (the production of children and the curbing of concupiscence) and the third (the sacramental imaging of the union of