

doughty an opponent of determinism in historical science as Sir Karl Popper is in social, and for the good reason that talk of inevitability excuses the historian from the labour of close evaluation of the relative constraints imposed on agents by events. But is the Eltonian revolution to be accepted? Does it not smack a little of the administrator's own insouciance to all that is not efficiency? It has to be said that Professor Elton's sense of Realpolitik is a little less than respectable. It includes an unpleasing hardness and insensitivity to values in historical change and decision. The ferment that threw up a wealth of writing in the Stuart period on the purpose of government and furnished new, if often half-baked, ideals of social organisation disappears from view behind the concentration of interest on the continuity of various pieces of government machinery, and the common adherence of 'court' and 'country' alike to the mixed sovereign body of king-in-Parliament. His fairly brutal handling of the career and personality of Thomas More suggests an irritation with men who would turn politics into the realising of theological idea or social vision. (Note those rather contemptuous labels pinned on More — 'Henry's tame humanist', 'his intellectual courtier'.) The suggestion that More took up the cudgels against contemporary heresiarchs out of frustration at his merely decorative function at court makes nonsense of More's entire biography. R. W. Chambers' arguments in his *Thomas More* for the coherence of the More of *Utopia* and *The Dialogue Concerning Tyndale* ought at least to have been considered. Elton holds that the charges on which More went to his martyr's crown were 'false in fact' but 'true in spirit'. The ambiguity of the two pieces of evidence he uncovers to support

Thomas Cromwell's attack on More implies that he had scarcely resisted the king's second marriage 'maliciously' (the key word in the trial), for that is where a person 'giveth . . . occasion of slander, of tumult and sedition against his prince' (Harpsfield, *Life of More*, p. 186).

These essays have a hidden hero—Parliament itself. Elton commends it for its flexibility, its realism about the need to carry on the king's government, its considerable ability to represent the 'political nation', its tenacious hold on powers of complaint and protest, its willingness to take on responsibility for reforming the entire life of the realm. His account of the Reformation Parliament takes a serene view of the emergence of a properly sovereign body in John Austin's sense, a body omnicompetent in its working, habitually recognising no determinate superior. In the sixteenth century this can only mean a sovereignty after the mind of Marsiglio of Padua, unbounded by the 'law' immanent in nature or church teaching. Perhaps the historian should inquire into the effects of such an exclusive appeal to positive law in the grounding of human good and obligation. In a sparkling article on Figgis' *Divine Right of Kings* Professor Elton notes the historical existence of societies where the modern notion of sovereignty has no place, societies which acknowledge a variety of intermediate superiors and may judge their laws wanting by the transcendental laws these should reflect. It is in these ways that the final passing of the Western 'Christianitas' in the Reformation may reasonably be a matter of more than romantic regret. The problem of finding some alternative to the jungle law (and lore) of sovereign secular states remains.

AIDAN NICHOLS OP

OPEN, SPIRIT, by Ladislaus Boros. *Search Press*, London, 1974. 208 pp. £2.95.

DRUGS AND THE LIFE OF PRAYER, by Jean-Claude Barreau. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1974. 95 pp. 85p.

SILENT PILGRIMAGE TO GOD. *The Spirituality of Charles de Foucauld*, by a Little Brother. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1974. 100 pp. 90p.

LOVE, by Enersto Cardenal. *Search Press* London, 1974. 143 pp. £2.50.

Two elements in Western Christianity have not helped its 'spirituality'—a desire to categorise has separated it from the intellectual exercise of theology

with resulting damage to both, and a certain neo-platonism has tended to contrast the 'real' quality of a 'spirit' world with the 'here and now'. The

result has been to shunt spirituality into a siding where it can do no harm. This has removed religious experience from concrete situations where it could gain impetus and be of most service.

In this context, Boros's book is particularly stimulating. He offers no easy clichés but a spirituality with theological content yet based on experience. The book is a self-analysis and surveys personalities whose ideas have had an important role in Boros's development with explanatory introduction and conclusion. Each of the nine essays links a different person with a particular Christian characteristic—thus Socrates with honesty, Teilhard with unity. The selection is significantly not confined to Christian figures. Boros's Christianity is clearly linked with the best things in *human* existence, summed up in Teilhard, a man for whom the connection between the victory of Christ and the success of human endeavour are intimately linked.

In contrast, the work by Barreau is breathless and determined, summoning philosophers and Christian writers to his cause in rapid succession. He writes as drop-out turned Christian, but far from tamed. His religion is no comfortable thing. Although he criticises progress, production and revolutionary romanticism as roads to happiness he makes equally caustic remarks about institutionalised religion—'desiccated pontiffs of reason and the moralising clergy' appear in the same breath. The Existentialist thought-pattern is clear, and Barreau for one is not content to see spirituality (and prayer in particular) pushed off into 'other worldly' escapism. Prayer and drugs are linked in the search for a new dimension to life, in being about crossing new frontiers. However, in his experience drugs ultimately produce disinterest, not real commitment.

The attempt of the Little Brothers to create a contemporary 'monasticism of the street corner' has clearly been a breakthrough in contemplative life. The short, unpretentious book by a member of the Order attempts to highlight the insights of Charles de Foucauld and his motivation. The key is his simple, unintellectual faith ('to go to the limit, to push the possible to

extremes') and the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, living as poor with the poorest. The book has four parts: an analysis of de Foucauld's faith; the main themes of his spirituality; a revealing collection of extracts from his writings and a final biographical note. There is no poetic mysticism, but an active faith which while it may not have been sophisticated (as the author admits) was of passionate intensity.

Somehow, *Love* by Cardenal left me with certain misgivings. Perhaps it is simply that some of the original strength of the language has inevitably been lost in translation, or that it is so difficult to overcome the limitations of human language in communicating an essentially contemplative vision. The theme of these meditations is that the desire for love is at the centre of all activity—even cruelty and sin come from the frustration of unattained love. Cardenal obviously loves the world, but there seems to be a tension between rather neo-platonist tendencies ('human beings are not meant to enjoy this life . . .') and a very sensual vision of created beauty. However, there can be no doubt of the influence in his own culture of Cardenal's unique mixture of simple Christianity, poetic writings and involvement in politics and revolutionary theology. In the end I think what disappointed me about this book was precisely that it did not integrate the various strands in Cardenal's life—once again it was a spirituality which at times seemed at one remove from reality. Heaven knows, we need a contemplative vision in this world, but it must equally receive some impetus from the world of flesh and blood and city-streets if it is going to have anything to give back. This is not to suggest that Cardenal has nothing to say in the book—flashes of real insight and beauty break through the language barrier often enough for the book to repay meditation. The author is on the way to becoming something of a 'cult-figure' (surely something that only happens to religious and revolutionary figures out of their context?). I only hope that we do not tame him, ignoring the very different world for which he speaks.

PHILIP SHELDRAKE SJ