

WORLD CATHOLICISM TODAY, by Joseph Folliet, translated by Edmond Bonin; The Newman Press, \$3.25.

Language analysts as well as experts in pedagogy, political and religious orators, lovers and comedians know that the meaning of words often depends not only on their linguistic context but on the tone of voice, the enthusiasm of a conversation. This is the reason why a certain sort of foreign literature translates very badly indeed. The words and their contextual meaning are faithfully translated, but somehow the enthusiasm slips through the translator's fingers. How do you translate enthusiasm? Enthusiastic religious writing from well known French authors often proves bitterly disappointing when before us in English because the French spirit which was direct and exciting in French words comes across as a tormentor of good English prose; words are twisted in agony—out of place like corpulent businessmen digging up drains. This is what has happened to Dr Folliet's contribution to the *Editions du Cerf* series.

Enthusiasm and concern are not qualities that we can import, and it would be a mistake to try; for, as Aldermaston has shown, we have our own concern. One can think, for instance, of good English political writing that is persuasive, and I suppose untranslatable. Dr Folliet is probably right, however, in suggesting that it is hard to find this enthusiasm in English Catholic writing, and also in suggesting that there is a sort of apathy that is almost natural to a state that is successfully capitalist. After all, this is exactly what some people are saying in this country. I cannot, however, understand what he means when he suggests that our intellectual poverty is due to our lack of contact with the continent. One has only to reflect that the vast majority of our clerical students are, for instance, taught their philosophy from continental text books: that hundreds of them do their studies abroad. Indeed so thorough are we in our continental connections that students have little time to acquaint themselves with the philosophical and social concepts of their own country. If this is a problem it would be one of internal rather than continental communication.

I wish Dr Folliet had shown more interest in this problem of connections because it is another aspect of the problem of the sort of book he is trying to write; the connection between the specialised and the general. As a sociologist he must value the precision that a clearly defined social entity gives to his conclusions. But he has not worked out the connection between this specialised sociology and world catholicism. What he has done is simply to put the whole frog on the slide, and it is little wonder that his vision has become vague and has forced him to cast his writing in the most uninteresting generalities. This is the tone of polite conversation, and of course includes personalities—lists of Catholics who have made good in the world. The personality image of modern advertising is so disreputable that I cannot believe that the Catholic writers, and they are legion at the newspaper level, who are for ever indicating that some famous people are Catholics, have succumbed to the social morality of the soap powder magnates. Anyhow on Dr Folliet's marking it is only depressing: Brit-

ain collects the odd bronze medal—in the strangest events.

The sort of method Dr Folliet has chosen can only offer us general information. For example the chapter on the spirituality of contemporary catholicism does no more than mention various modern saints and trends. As I have indicated, this level of mentioning is so remote that when it is put to the test in the final chapter one feels that the denunciations are getting nowhere near the problem. You can't talk very meaningfully *in* such abstractions; you can talk *about* them but in that case you would be using one of them as a way into a problem. Religious sociologists must obviously resist the temptation to operate on this level, since there just isn't room for the jargon it manufactures.

Most of us are ill-informed about Catholics in other countries and this book for all its unwieldiness gives a fair amount of such information. Dr Folliet goes out of his way to be fair all round, sometimes enigmatically—I am still trying to work out what he meant by saying: 'Salazar is no Franco'.

CHARLES BOXER

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN PARABLES, by Franz M. Moschner; B. Herder Book Company, 36s.

WITNESSES OF THE GOSPEL, by Henry Paneel; B. Herder Book Company, 28s.

The former is a book of meditations, based on, but not tied down to, our Lord's parables. The author explicitly prefers to make no distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the Church. It is the kingdom as present in particular Christians that is the first subject of his meditations, and he makes legitimate use of the theme 'The kingdom of God is within you' to relate the teaching of the parables to the spiritual life of the individual soul. In the twenty-six parables dealt with, the thought is clear but conventional. The translation (from the German) is adequate, apart from occasional lapses into religious jargon ('*espousal*' for '*marriage*', etc.).

Rational meditations on scripture are one thing, but pious re-casting of gospel stories is quite another. The second book gives us journalistic accounts of familiar episodes, reported to us by one of the characters present on each occasion. For example, 'The Raising of Lazarus, by Martha his Sister' is the title of one episode. The effect is not so much to give us a deeper understanding of the gospel message itself, as to deflect our attention to the imaginatively obtrusive journalism of the book's author. With the advance of the biblical and liturgical revival, surely the time has come for us to refuse any longer to be diverted from the very source of Christ's message by sloppy and sterile substitutes.

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