

movement between Ireland and Britain means that Catholicism will gradually lose its apparent links with the working-classes.

As a study in social structure *Roman Catholics in England* no doubt gives an accurate broad picture. On the other hand, whoever supposed that five and a half million Catholics (or Protestants for that matter) *would* rise up prophetically to bring the good news to the poor? Nor is it necessarily bad news for society if the more extreme religious pressure-groups which emerge from denominational structures are going to find it more difficult in the future to whip up mass support. Religious mass movements are rarely pretty to watch. English Catholicism may have become domesticated, but at least the Catholic Church in England has been spared the disastrous history of the Church in France since 1815. On the contrary, the most important single event in the history of British Catholicism since 1850 has been the *uneventful* passing into British society of great numbers of Irish immigrants. 'Roman Catholicism', after all, is the work of priestly imagination; what is needed is for that imagination to turn in upon itself something after the manner of Gorbachovian Russians turning in anguish to look more closely at their own history. The laity cannot take the place of the priesthood at this point. Hornsby-Smith's examination of the state of the laity seems to me to tell us too little about the present and future of Roman Catholics in England just because of the absence of a close study of the state of the priestly imagination.

JOHN KENT

**LIBERATION THEOLOGY: THE ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND BEYOND** by Phillip Berryman. *I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London, 1987. Pp. 231. (no price given).*

Phillip Berryman has written detailed and extensive studies on Central America, drawing on his experience as a priest in Panama in the 1960s and early 1970s. He is no longer a priest but has maintained his interest in Latin America. There are now many books of liberation theology and not a few about it, but Berryman's latest work fills a gap and does indeed supply 'the essential facts'. It is direct and uncluttered, giving the reader access to background information not readily available. Berryman is clearly sympathetic to the movement, but points out some of its limitations and current problems.

The book opens with the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in San Salvador in 1980. This sets the tone of realism and wards off any false romantic or utopian views of the movement. A brief history of missions to Latin America leads into the immediate background; the impact of Vatican II, the episcopal conference at Medellin in 1968, the growth of the 'base communities', the emergence of liberation theology, especially in the work of Gutierrez, the conscientization programme of Paulo Freire, and the episcopal conference at Puebla in 1979. The main points are familiar, but the story is told from within and new connections are made. This is particularly true with regard to the base communities and 'popular religion', which in the nature of things are not well documented.

A distinctive contribution which Berryman makes is to add the Central American dimension. 'In my opinion the experience of the Sandinista revolution since 1979 has injected greater realism into the discussion of what "liberation" might mean for Latin American countries.' Christians actively participated in the revolution in Nicaragua in a way which they did not in Cuba. Tensions have been heightened with the conservative backlash of the 1980s, not only from outside, with the Pope's 'Polish View of Marxism' and the intervention of Cardinal Ratzinger against Leonardo Boff, but from inside, exemplified in the activities of the Columbian bishop Lopez Trujillo and the Nicaraguan Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo.

Liberation theology will continue despite these attacks, but Berryman ends with some criticisms raised for the Latin Americans by other liberation theologies throughout the world. Whether they can respond to these challenges is less clear.

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