

Urang is too concerned to be (in an old-fashioned sort of way) 'modern' to have really grasped the point they were trying to make (always with the exception of Williams, who

probably was not trying to make much of a point anyway).

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RETHINKING THE CHURCH, ed. by M. Cuminetti and F. V. Joannes, translated by E. Burke, C.P. *Gill and Macmillan*, Dublin, 1970. 193 pp. £1.

RETHINKING THE PRIESTHOOD, ed. by F. V. Joannes, translated by Elizabeth Lovatt-Dolan. *Gill and Macmillan*, Dublin, 1970. 162 pp. £1.

The economics of religious publishing continue to mystify me. In the halcyon days during and immediately after the Council, the number of new titles which a publisher could advertise each month seemed to be taken as some indication of his standing. Then escalating overheads and decreasing liquidity put an end to a number of worthy houses and the flow diminished, but can one discern, even now, any criteria for publishing a theological work? Outstanding originality coupled with unshakable orthodoxy must be a useful recommendation; or the simple clarity of the guide who sets out the complex thought of others in ways that even I can understand. But the rest, the majority, how do they get through?

One wonders even more when it comes to collections of essays. Where these arise naturally out of a symposium with a single theme, and are carefully edited and modified in the light of discussion and criticism, the result is often excellent. But where this is not the case, and especially where translation has intervened, success is more elusive. The books under review fall into this category. Their titles describe their scope: examples of the type of study deemed necessary to carry forward the continual renewal of the Church. They are not original, except perhaps parts of 'The Priest Today', by Piet Fransen (and this has been published before), and must therefore justify themselves in terms of their exposition of the complex thought of others. So, are the essays clear and readable, is the result of the process of simplification worth the effort?

The first problem is the translation. The essays were originally published in Italian in association with IDOC in 1968, but the authors are obviously not all Italian. One gets a very distinct impression in places that a double process of translation has taken place. French to Italian to English; unfortunately it is not only nuance and style that have been abandoned.

The prize must go to an essay in *Rethinking the Church*, by Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., with the title of 'Public Opinion in the Church'.

It seems to be about the formation of public opinion in the Church, the structures of communication necessary for it and the responsibilities of the communications media towards it, but it is hard to be sure as it is very nearly incomprehensible. Really to appreciate it, it must be read in full, but the following example should establish the flavour. 'They (events, facts) must therefore be gathered in all their freshness, in the very moment of their appearance. They must be captured on the instant to seize the attention of the crowd, which is ready to devour not only the sensational but the unusual. Briefly, events are meaningful facts. In the technical jargon of the journalist, they are news. . . . Judgement fulfils its duty from the beginning of the fact and follows it through to its full development according to an immanent law of the process. Authority has no rights over news; it cannot manipulate it according to its will and pleasure.' The brief lapse into lucidity in the last sentence seems to reveal a naïveté that is truly breathtaking. But does it? Perhaps the author originally said 'should not manipulate' rather than 'cannot'—we shall never know.

The 'Priesthood as a Profession', by Emile Pin, is more easily assimilated, as indeed are most of the essays in *Rethinking the Priesthood*. By profession, the author means an occupation from which the priest earns his living as well as something to which he dedicates his life. He argues that a priest who gets his living from the parish offering or from services to individuals, e.g. mass offerings, is as open to pressures on his ministry as one who is sponsored by a wealthy patron. These pressures could especially restrict his freedom to exercise his prophetic role. A diocesan fund to which all contributions would go and from which all priests would be paid is dismissed as impracticable for some reason and the suggestion is made that if the priest were to make his living in the 'world' he would be released to exercise his true ministry and preach the real gospel. There are, of course, non-financial pressures that can be applied to any priest who

takes an unpopular, let us suppose a radical, line, but what about his secular occupation? If he confined his mission to matters of liturgy or even personal morality his employers, union or colleagues would probably not notice. But this, we are told, is precisely what he must not do. So then, if he is being truly prophetic it will not be long before he confronts the world in terms of his chosen secular environment.

I think that here we confront once more one of the more insidious modern heresies—the Church in the image of the educated middle-class. The idea that we are free to opt out of our environment—to choose the Church with the most congenial liturgy or the school with the right education or the job which sets us

free—is as foreign to the gospel as it is ludicrous to suppose that the majority of mankind are free to choose where they will live, the work, if any, that they will do or what they may eat. A choice that all can make, however, is to put on Christ. This will make us free, free to transcend our environment instead of to fly from it, free to proclaim the gospel despite the pressures of a world which will hate us. The fact that nearly all of us find it so difficult to sustain this choice indicates a continuing need to rethink the Church and the priesthood. The essays under review can offer little assistance in this matter.

MARTIN WARD

**THE VIEW FROM THE BORDER. A Social-Psychological Study of Current Catholicism**, by John L. Kotre. *Gill and Macmillan*, 1971. 268 pp. £3.50.

In writing about the symbolism that religious adherents use to convey their experience, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz has remarked that 'it makes, as Kenneth Burke once pointed out, a great deal of difference whether you call life a dream, a pilgrimage, a labyrinth, or a carnival' (*Islam Observed*, Yale, 1968, pp. 2-3). John Kotre describes at the beginning of his book how he began to see the Catholic Church as 'a macrocosmic ink blot, a completely ambiguous stimulus, like the stationary dot of light that, in a totally darkened room, appears to move in an irregular fashion' (p. 6). He was concerned in his study of 'the border around Catholicism' to discover how different groups on the fringes of Catholicism perceived the dot to move. He presents the results of a study he carried out among 100 men and women, graduates of Catholic colleges, who were at the time of the investigation graduate students, for the most part at the University of Chicago or Northwestern University. Half considered themselves inside the Church, half outside. The definitions of 'in' or 'out' were those given by the respondents themselves. Although a sampling procedure was not used, respondents passing on contacts to Kotre, he tried to match the major social characteristics of his 'ins' and 'outs' in terms of ethnic background, parental education, occupation and income, number of children in the family, etc.

Kotre relates the experiences and opinions of a number of respondents in each category, as well as presenting the analysis of material from his interviews. The replies make for

interesting reading. The documentation of the differing perceptions of the Church held by the 'ins' and 'outs' is particularly worth studying. It is hardly surprising that in general terms those who are 'in' perceived the Church as less dogmatic and more flexible than those who are 'out'. The chapter on the link between family experiences and self-definitions in relation to the Church is also notable.

This study is essentially an exploratory one, and the imagination of the writer in conceiving and executing such an investigation has to be appreciated. It is certainly an investigation which should provoke further research into some of the hypotheses generated. But Kotre does not entirely succeed in his efforts to convey understanding of the borders of membership of the Church. This is probably because he walks another border himself. He has opted for the use of some questions which are more suitable for large-scale surveys of the kind carried out with such success at Chicago by the National Opinion Research Centre's investigators, while using psychological techniques which are relevant to more detailed personality studies. The eclecticism of the writer in this regard is clearly admirable on the whole, but it does mean that there are times when he introduces more than he can apparently handle. For instance, he is clearly aware of the problem of in-put and out-put in studies of this kind, but he does not always indicate that there is not enough data from this study to back up the interpretations he suggests.

Nor does the author follow up properly what he has to say at the beginning of the book