

## BLACKFRIARS

now seem cast for the role of horses ridden by black riders, or they must go out into uncomfortable exile. No wonder Sir Roy has the appearance of a broken man and even his old adversary, Mr Frankland, feels sympathy for him.

EVERSLEY BELLFIELD

THE LATIN-AMERICAN CHURCH AND THE COUNCIL, by Francis Houtart; FERES/Newman Demographic Society; 7s. 6d.

It is perhaps unfair to criticise this little book for being what it proposes to be: a resumé. Yet one would have preferred to see a work of this scope done by a journalist rather than a sociologist. Since many of the people who *should* read the book are not sociologists and may be discouraged by the mass of data which dominates the first part of the work. Inversely, the sociologist will probably demand more than the brief synthesis here presented. In short, we feel that something along the lines of the *Dossier de la quinzaine* on Latin America in *Informations Catholiques Internationales* (Nov. 15, 1962) would be more effective in presenting the Latin-American reality to the layman.

The difficulty of constructing a sociological picture of such a varied and complex situation as that of Latin-America today is very great. Incomplete information might be preferred to the inexact. Why, for example, are we given statistics on distribution of land in Bolivia dating from 1950? Over ten years have passed since a land reform changed the picture completely, and while it is difficult if not impossible to get an accurate picture of the present situation, it is certainly not that of 1950.

In his preface the author states that 'in developing this document we have gone beyond the task of a mere observer of the social and religious situation. Orientations for pastoral and social action are suggested. These are not the work of sociology alone, but are the reflections of a member of the Church' (p. 9). In fact for most of those interested—bishops and religious superiors who are involved in the Latin-American church—these reflections constitute the most valuable part of the book. They deserve careful consideration, although the author himself would be the first to point out that they do not pretend to constitute a 'formula' for action in Latin America. Rather they are an invitation to engage in the kind of thinking demanded if the Church is to meet the challenge of this important mass of Catholics.

Some of the author's conclusions merit special attention. The fact of an evolving pluralist society (p. 57), emphasised also in the report in *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, is of particular importance, as is the insistence on the decentralisation of the apostolate and pastoral planning, the need to go beyond a policy dominated by a desire to 'plug holes' and see the real needs in function of the growth of Latin American Catholicism.

Here we encounter another of the vicious circles which abound in under-developed areas. A pastoral plan, according to Father Houtart, 'is a condition

for receiving aid in any field' (p. 67). This cannot be done without competent assistance, yet there are areas which simply do not have trained personnel for such a task. In addition, of course, one still finds ecclesiastical superiors who have yet to be convinced of the need for such work. Even where priorities are clearly established they are not always honoured in practice. The neglect of the university milieu is particularly flagrant in many areas.

The author points out another danger which is very real: '... a renewed form of clericalism which would be worse than any kind yet known. If, therefore, bishops and priests must at times play a direct role in certain temporal domains, let it always be with the desire of forming laymen who can assume these tasks as rapidly as possible' (p. 63). The danger exists not only in the domain of the temporal, but also to some extent in the ecclesial; here the problem is more delicate and limits are less easily defined. Yet the layman does have a role in the life of the Church as *layman*, and a lack of awareness of this role on the part of the clergy can deprive the Church of valuable initiatives. Rather than opposing clergy and laity in the pastoral of the Church, we need to see it as a whole, and the work of clergy and laity as a part of this whole.

This book should be read by those involved in Latin America, by bishops and religious superiors who have men in Latin America or are contemplating work in the area. If certain reservations must be made regarding this and other works in the series, this does not mean that they are not worth attention. This work in particular, because of the extreme density of its content, demands *careful* reading. Nothing could be further from the mind of Father Houtart than a naïve acceptance or a 'slogan' approach to what he has to say. The book reflects a growing realisation that there can be no valid 'a priori' approach to the pastoral of the Church in Latin America.

JORDAN BISHOP, O.P.

ENGLISH MEDIEVAL MURAL PAINTING, by A. Caiger-Smith; Clarendon Press; 45s.

There is no doubt a great deal to be said for patriotism but when one remembers the artistic wealth of medieval art in other countries, the matter of this book looks pretty thin. That, of course, is not the painters' fault nor the author's. It is pleasant to believe that the English medieval school was comparable with the French or Spanish or Italian before the Protestant destroyers and the later restorers got to work; but the evidence is indeed scanty for such faith. Most of what has survived is in small provincial churches, which is why it has survived. Mr Caiger-Smith is at a disadvantage: he can only describe lost, large-scale schemes of decoration and has no means of conveying their quality. English mural painting *may* have been important. We do not know. We have no St Savin-sur-Gartempe, no S. Angelo-in-Formis, no Simone Martini or Giotto; and when we compare the poor remnants of our fifteenth-century frescos with Masaccio, we are glad to remember that we had already had Chaucer. But