

ROMAN CATHOLICISM; by Sebastian Bullough; Penguin Books; 4s 6d.

This benign and affable survey of Roman Catholic faith, order, practice, and ethos might have been rendered just that much more *piquant* to the taste of many by a drop or two of acid flavouring here and there. But clearly it is virtually impossible for the genial author to drip gall. This estimable and unusual vice lays the author open to being misjudged.

Thus in a review in the *Guardian* some time in October his book was criticized for being out of date, hopelessly old-fashioned, even before it was published. The reviewer, an Anglican with ecumenical interests, was very disappointed; Fr Bullough, he considered, draws a picture of Roman Catholicism, which seems to leave no room for the Vatican Council, or the stirrings and rumblings and upheavals that are surely transforming the Catholic Church from within at the present day.

Now in fact the existence and the meaning of all these things within the Church today are noted in this book, and presented fairly, favourably, courteously to the reader as features of the Thing the book purports to be a description of. What then is missing? Why, the *animosity* with which it is usual to discuss these topics. The author is evidently not ecumenical, for not only is he consistently polite and sympathetic about Protestants, as is to be expected in a Catholic author, he is even polite and sympathetic about *Catholicism*, which he has no business to be; he should leave that to the Protestants. Then again, his book will not fit into the only categories we know in ecclesiastical affairs, 'Progressive' or 'Conservative'. Surely a man must be either progressive or conservative? Now Fr Bullough is clearly not progressive, because he is at pains to state the case for such noxious institutions as the Holy Office and the Index as favourably as he can; and he is not critical of the use of Latin in the liturgy, or of popular devotions, or of over-centralisation and authoritarianism. So he must be conservative. But no; here he is, interpreting the Canon Law as saying that Catholics may read any version of Scripture for purposes of study of any kind, without permission. He even adumbrates a theory of collegiality, though the French had not had time to invent this hideous word before he wrote.

His book is unclassifiable material; it is not of this world; it is too old-fashioned even to be called conservative; and its author is manifestly guilty of Contempt of Slogans. Or perhaps it is not that he wilfully refuses to think in them but that he cannot.

Allowing then for these regrettable limitations, this book does give us a remarkably thorough description of contemporary Catholicism. Certain predominant interests, philological and biblical, are manifest; we even learn a bit of Welsh from time to time. We are constantly referred to sources and authorities, by such cryptic references as 'Cyril of Jerusalem in 348 (R 819, EB 9)', and 'Innocent I in 405 (D 92, EB 19)', and we are plied with a constant stream of fascinating information, from the Welsh word for bishop to the fact that Fr Sebastian Bullough, a keen motor-cyclist, rides a Norton Dominator 99.

It should be stated that the somewhat ultramontane symbol on the cover of St Peter's Dome was chosen in the author's despite. He would have preferred, we are reliably informed, a more subtle and allegorical symbol of *Ecclesia*.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

CONTROL OR CONSENT?' by James D. Halloran; Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.

Mr Halloran originally wrote the six articles on the mass media which, with a new introductory chapter added, now constitute *Control or Consent?* for the Irish monthly journal, *Doctrine and Life*. Let me say at once—before I devote disproportionate space to adverse criticism of a particular aspect of it—that this book is a worthy addition to the enterprising new Sheed and Ward *Owlbook* series of paperbacks, and represents an important contribution to discussion on the mass media.

Though a sociologist himself, Mr Halloran rightly disclaims the label 'sociological' for his book. True, one of its chief virtues is a wide-ranging discussion of sociological evidence in this field; but no new evidence is offered, and the express aim of the book is to make a moral and social assessment of the situation. Mr Halloran's explicitly Catholic and Socialist standpoint provides a consistent basis for this assessment; his argument, though sometimes repetitive, is always lively and urgent; and, with the notable exception of the chapter on advertising (the weakest part of the book), *Control or Consent?* as a whole is commendably fair in its citation of the available data and of the data's insistent interpreters.

And yet, though Mr Halloran successfully steers a course between the extreme interpretations of the two sides in this debate, he finally falls victim to their common mistake, the belief that the mass media somehow constitute a special moral case of peculiar urgency. This leads him to various false emphases in his interpretation—to the posing of exaggerated and sometimes unreal problems, and to the consequent obscuring of other problems which, though less interesting because more ordinary, are nevertheless real and pressing.

There seem to be three distinct elements in this misplacement of emphasis. First, crucial terms are insufficiently defined. In particular, Mr Halloran's failure to define the all-important concept of 'mass medium' allows him to ignore completely at least two of the generally recognised mass media, the purely advertisement media of posters and direct mail; and to build an unnecessarily one-sided view of press mass media on the basis of an unrepresentative selection of examples (there are at least 83 newspapers and periodicals with a circulation of 200,000 or more; the index to *Control or Consent?* quotes only 16 of them, and even less are discussed in any detail).

Secondly, Mr Halloran seems to accept the validity of a utilitarian ethic whereby moral good and evil are judged as such, not from straightforward examination, but on the basis of inference from their beneficial or harmful effects. Thus, it would seem a lie is not a lie until some harmful effect (which