

we are to come to grips with the Christian fact in its most primitive manifestations. Since this book deals with only one aspect of the work which is being done on the period, it may well prove bewildering if read as an introduction. But it will also be a stimulus to take a plunge into the wealth of larger and more general books now available. This is the *renouveau* at first hand.

*Mutations of Western Christianity* may be recommended to anyone with a fair knowledge of Church History who feels in need of a revision; both a good dusting and shifting of the furniture. It takes one refreshingly beyond the familiar attempts to show that religion was important in history and that the Catholic religion was especially important, and invites us to be a little more detached and critical about precisely what sort of Catholicism may be said to have flourished so far. It contains a few of those generalizations which make some (though not all) Englishmen shudder; but, and this is much more important, it provides fresh thoughts about a number of factors in the making of Western Christendom which commonly receive less attention than others. The positive contributions of Celtic monasticism, of Spanish Christianity and of the Franciscan spiritual movement, for example, are well seen.

We have been so preoccupied with replanting the Church in England that we have hardly

thought what sort of Christianity it is we want to see flourish and spread. One is never purely and simply 'a Catholic', but a Catholic of a particular kind; do we really want English people to be our sort of Catholic? In Dr Mirgeler's book German scholarship and reflection help us to make up our minds.

It is really the attitude of Mr Westow in the midst of his variety of Catholic reading that makes his book stimulating. There is, to be frank, rather too much of the sort of thing one reads in Catholic circles nowadays about the liturgical movement, individual piety, the right approach to the person, law and love and so on. The best parts are those in which Mr Westow is being most personal: his remarks about lay spirituality and about marriage, for example. The contemporary situation in England outside Catholic circles appears disappointingly little in his reflections. But this is a general fault in our writing. We conduct lively debates amongst ourselves, but *when* will we find someone capable of directing his critical intelligence at the world outside and bringing a constructively Catholic mind to bear on its miscontents?

The picture on the front of Fr Daniélou's book is striking, but Gnostic, not Christian; that on Mr Westow's is enigmatic, and, indeed, a little sinister.

Michael Richards

FÉNÉLON LETTERS, chosen and translated by John McEwen, introduction by Thomas Merton. *Harvill Press 30s.*

The late Sir John McEwen was one of those all-round scholar-statesmen whose ranks are now dwindling – the product of Eton and Cambridge, primarily a diplomat but also an amateur of the arts, a man of letters and a competent translator of French Catholic novels. The last task he set himself, and which he left practically finished

except for the actual assembling of the material, was a selection and translation from the letters of a man who was, one cannot help thinking, a kindred spirit.

'Everything was there in perfect combination', Saint Simon said of Fénelon, 'and the simultaneous presence of the most contradictory elements

produced no effect of incongruity'. Fénelon has appealed to Englishmen from the first, and the charm worked far beyond those of his own religious allegiance, from the contemporary translator of his didactic novel *Télémaque*, and his first biographer, the Scotsman, Chevalier Ramsey, right through to Landor, Lord Acton, Pater and Francis Thompson. It was perhaps precisely his all-roundness – as the humanist educator of kings, the classical scholar, the political theorist, the writer and academician, the churchman and finally the mystic – which appealed to them. There was also, though in a subtle French variation, his sense of fair play, the chivalry and courage he brought to bear on the most bitter religious controversy of his age, the conflict between rigid absolutism on the one hand and the freedom of the individual conscience on the other, between an outward show of piety and true inward observance, between Bossuet representing the establishment, and the mystical element in religion, so unfortunately represented at that particular juncture by Madame Guyon. The espousal of her cause cost him his worldly career but made him as a man of prayer, liberating the mystic in him and revealing his powers as a director of souls. 'Supremely rational as he was', Fénelon was led by Madame Guyon to recognize 'the essential part played by the irrational and the unconscious in the fully human life'. 'This was perhaps the most important message of his spirituality which can only be rightly understood in the light of his own spiritual crisis', writes Fr Thomas Merton in the perceptive essay which introduces the present volume. Poor instrument though he was, she taught him the value of failure and led him to that union of opposites so rarely achieved in the consciousness of the primarily rational Frenchman. As readers of Fr Merton's autobiography will know, this predicament is one with which he is himself not unfamiliar, and this is perhaps why the

essay places Fénelon so successfully on the psychological map.

While Fr Merton sketches the resolution of this inner conflict and retells that part of the Fénelon story which has always been its most popular aspect, Sir John McEwen has tended to avoid the better known track and has concentrated, characteristically, on those letters – a most representative selection among thousands in the complete Versailles edition of 1827–29 – which show Fénelon as a warm human being with a genius for friendship, a man with a sense of humour, a fearless but affectionate teacher of the king's grandson, an urbane counsellor of the young who did not see why a little worldly wisdom in personal relationships need be despised, a skilled tactician in the art of warfare, a forthright and bold critic of absolutism. Finally, in one of the latter sections of this book amounting to nearly half the total number of letters, Fénelon is seen as the very nearly perfect spiritual guide, infinitely patient yet incisive with scrupulous women (the long series of letters to the Comtesse de Montberon), the tactful though always honest adviser of men (the letters to the Duc de Chevreuse), the helper and fellow-wayfarer of those already well advanced in the spiritual life. He has in common with François de Sales, whom he himself considered the wholly perfect director, the gift of conjuring up the personality of his correspondents. There is a similar artistry of style, though Fénelon's is lighter and less memorable; the letters are vivid and varied. The present translation is excellent, for without compromising readability, it keeps the flavour of the epoch, thus giving an accurate impression of the supple balance of the original French. This is a rare achievement, born of the translator's own feeling for style but also of his innate sense of historical perspective. This selection is a much more widely based one than the 1957 re-edition by Derek Stanford of Mrs Sidney

Lear's Victorian translation of the spiritual letters, and therefore to be preferred by any reader who wants a portrait of Fénelon as a whole, and set against the background of his age.

The actual organization of the material (one wonders if this includes the grouping of the letters into their six logically arranged sections?) and the editing, including most of the footnotes, was done by Professor J. C. Reid of the University of Auckland. This difficult task has been well done on the whole, but there are quite a few gaps where the non-historian would have liked a little more editorial help. Battles and sieges and for-

gotten personalities are conscientiously listed, but nowhere is it said what the long war in question was all about, that it was, in fact the War of the Spanish Succession, and how adversely it affected Archbishop Fénelon's diocese, indeed the whole economy of the French state. This book is a most pleasing production, a fitting memorial both to Fénelon and to his translator. It should stimulate further interest in the rich variety of Fénelon's literary and spiritual writings which, unlike his letters, are as good as unknown in England.

Elisabeth Stopp

THE AGE OF CONSENT by Ann Stafford, *Hodder and Stoughton 30s.*

FEMINISM AND FAMILY PLANNING IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND by J. A. and Olive Banks, *Liverpool University Press 25s.*

Miss Ann Stafford has shown a sound sense of history in devoting more than half of her absorbing book to the complicated story of the Victorian movements which led up to the raising of the age of consent from 13 to 16, before she deals with the famous trial in 1885 of W. T. Stead for the abduction of Eliza Armstrong. Seen in their setting, this trial, together with Mrs Josephine Butler's prolonged campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts 1867, the Salvation Army's pioneer work for the reclamation of prostitutes and Stead's use of popular journalism for the exposure of social evils, were not isolated and trivial episodes but highly significant contributions to the building of a civilization aiming at social justice. All these movements took inspiration from profound Christian belief, but had only indirect association with the new demand for conceding rights to women. Their distinguishing feature was the demand for exceptional courage in exploring squalid subjects then under a rigid

taboo. People who are critical today of the uninhibited public discussion of moral problems may profitably contemplate the horrific results of a policy of silence!

In the course of their respective campaigns, Mrs Butler and the Salvation Army workers had both come across alarming evidence of two unrecognized scandals: firstly, the traffic in young English girls who were induced to enter tolerated brothels in France and Belgium and found themselves unable to escape, secondly the fact that existing English law gave no protection to girls over 13 entrapped into leading an immoral life. Even their parents might find it impossible to reclaim these doomed children and the police could do almost nothing. It was actually a leading police official who told the sceptical Stead: 'It should raise hell, but it does not even raise the neighbours'. The journalist, emotional, headstrong, ambitious, but passionately concerned with human suffering, resolved to raise both hell and