

legal definitions and procedures can help affirm rights and remove abuses and injustices from the Church. Benefiting from American experience, the authors are strong on what might be called the constitutional aspect of ecclesial life. In future, marriage nullity cases may not comprise well over 90 per cent of judicial activity.

The questions and answers, then, do not simply depend on new theological concepts but also on new, often still tentative attempts at being a Christian today.

**CLERGY, MINISTERS AND PRIESTS** by Stewart Ranson, Alan Bryman and Bob Hinings. *Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Henley and Boston, 1977 pp. 204 £5.95.*

Two groups of readers may be attracted by this book—sociologists and clergy. To the first it will be seen as a contribution to the sociology of the professions; to the second, especially if they are ordained in the Anglican, Methodist or Roman Catholic churches, it will be a source of information of how the clergy of the three denominations view their work, ecumenical co-operation, the future, together with data about their social background, age-structure, education, time spent in the ministry, and all the rest. Whereas extensive information of this kind has been common enough in the United States, it has been virtually unknown in this country. The book therefore fills an obvious enough gap.

But what surprising results emerge from the analysis of 1,227 completed questionnaires, each of which contained about 100 questions! It all depends on where the reader stands. To the sociologist with perhaps very little first-hand knowledge of contemporary clerical life, there is probably much to be learned in every way. And if his interest is in the sociology of the professions, rather than the sociology of religion, here is another profession that can be ticked off: And the clergy? About his brother clergy in his own church, the ordained man may gain little that is new. Further, in these days of ecumenical meeting, co-operation and openness, he is more than likely fully aware of the social facts and attitudes of clergy in other denominations, not least about the Anglo-Catholic conservatives, the 'reformists', 'the radicals' and so forth.

So much of the book is *déjà vu*,

Our epoch's style of faith makes us search for adequate forms of action through such initiatives as a more moderate exercise of the Roman primacy, the pruning of excessive clericalism by the use of lay counsel, consent and ministries, the renewal of religious communities and the daily ecumenism of couples in mixed marriages. Clearly the remaking of canon law is going to be largely a matter of orthopraxis.

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propped up by statistics, (admittedly on the whole well integrated into the text) and peppered with references to obscure articles. There is a great deal of repetition and truisms of the order—'Evangelicals are far more likely to stress the role of the preacher than those who do not identify with this tradition' (p. 70). To be sure, the writers emphasize the importance of denomination as a key factor, but who in their right minds, except perhaps certain blinkered sociologists, have ever doubted this? There frequently appears the term theological cosmology which, far from relating to the universe, is taken to imply the ecclesiastical outlook of the clergy—evangelical, modernist, conservative etc.—which for Anglicans is the same as churchmanship. Employed as an important variable, found difficult to establish for Roman Catholics, it is not to be seen in the index.

No one is likely to deny the ordained ministry is 'in flux', at least compared with previous generations. However, for the early 1970s when the survey was taken, the clergy as a whole were found to be more conservative in the face of changes in society and possible reforms in their churches than was anticipated. One would have liked to have known why this was at a deeper level than was possible from the questions asked. Perhaps, as has often been said, the clergy are a group unto themselves. They constitute neither a profession nor even an occupation in the generally held sense of these words.

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