

While this led to endless ambiguities and unresolved discussions, it also was responsible for forming that down-to-earth pragmatism in the Chinese people for which they are justly renowned.

Betty Kelen's *Confucius* is a very simple description of this very brilliant, highly complex man and his teachings. There is no indication about the type of audience for which the book is intended, but its simplicity is such that I would guess it must be intended for the sixth-form or thereabouts. If this is so, then it has done a good job, for it should give any schoolboy a reasonable knowledge of the subject. But if it was intended for any other section of the reading public, then the book is a failure – and at times comes close to being an impertinence. For example :

The black-haired people at large were goods-and-food suppliers to this weighty feudal and fat-cat superstructure. Usually they were artisans, farmers, herds-men, peasants, servants – in fact, they were serfs. As you might guess, it was hereditary to be a serf, also. (p. 11)

Or, again :

We are accustomed to hearing that the Chinese invented just about everything in the course of their long history, and sometimes it is said that they invented the public school also. It probably was in the first public school in the world that Confucius learned his lessons. He may have paid his aged teacher as best his small means allowed, or not at all. (p. 24)

The text of the book covers 154 pages, divided between fifteen chapters – an average of some ten pages to a chapter. These are divided into three sections: *The Man*, *The Teaching*, *The Master*. The last chapter, entitled *The Years After*, is only two pages long.

Perhaps I do the author an injustice. After all, it was the famous disciple of Confucius, Mencius, who said, “The great man is one who has not lost the heart of a child,” and that the essence of self-cultivation, of preserving one’s moral character, consists merely in “finding the lost heart of the child”. If this is so, then the simplicity of the book might well be a virtue.

GEORGE PATTERSON

**The Traitor**, by Lavr Divomlikoff, Heinemann, 1974, £2.50.

Fiction can sometimes bring us closer to the heart of truth than the documentation of facts. This novel says both the first and the last word about one of the most controversial aspects of church life in Eastern

Europe : the infiltration of KGB agents into the very structure of the church itself.

A belligerent young Soviet atheist murders an Orthodox priest in an excess of zeal, and suddenly finds himself called by the communists to devote the next twenty years of his life, as Father Grigori, to the church he has been persecuting. His mission is to be a bright seminarian in post-World War II Russia and then a good priest – not a disreputable one. He has to climb to as elevated and trusted a position as possible, so that the scandal caused by his ultimate defection, when the call comes, should be the greater.

*The Traitor* is the letter renouncing the faith which Father Grigori finally wrote twenty years later, and an extended commentary on it (also by Grigori?). The man burns with hatred for everything associated with religion and is given a unique opportunity to express his feelings in action. Nothing could be more simple. Nothing could be more difficult : Grigori has not reckoned with the influence on him of the good, kind, saintly, heroic Christians, among whom he is sentenced to spend those twenty years. He has not reckoned with the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The letter of renunciation is finally written. Grigori goes to celebrate his last mass – and the Holy Spirit descends to take possession of him. These pages, and the earlier ones when he gives extreme unction, as an infidel, to a man dying in the fullness of the faith, are among the most deeply theological to have come from Russia in recent years.

There is much more to the novel than this, but the ending must not be revealed. The book's intense enigma is contained in its untranslatable original French title, the non-existent word "Le Trêtre" (prêtre – priest, traître – traitor). But from the enigma comes a clear message addressed especially to those people who repeat the slogan, "Oh ! the leaders of the Russian Church are only stooges of the Government". The message is : "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

The final enigma : is this book really fictional, as the publishers claim? Who is Lavr Divomlikoff? "The pseudonym of an author who was born in Russia and writes in French," states the publisher laconically. To this reviewer every page rings true. If the story is fictional, the spiritual reality is the more impressive. It is difficult to believe that the author has not been close to some crisis such as the one described in these pages.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX