

it famous) was known in religion as Sister Marie Dosithée. Surely this is a glimpse of the back of the tapestry; the mysterious strands that make up the communion of saints. Whether scorching in the arid deserts of the sixth century or wasting among the painted glass and pressed ferns of an outmoded gentility, all are seen as at a lightning flash to be one body in Christ.

Reviews

THE SERMONS OF THE CURÉ OF ARS, translated by Una Morrissy; Mercier Press, n.p.

THE OCCASIONAL SERMONS OF RONALD KNOX, edited by Philip Caraman S.J.; Burns Oates, 42s.

These two preachers lived almost exactly one hundred years apart: John Vianney died in 1859 and Ronald Knox in 1957, and during that century both the manners of men and the life of the Church, as well as the ideas of oratory, underwent great changes. Both preachers used scripts (John in his early days only, Ronald always) and John always learned his script by heart, while Ronald always read his and would never preach without one. Both prepared their scripts most conscientiously, John seeking for adequate rhetorical expression—for he knew exactly what he wanted to say—and Ronald researching in history and letters for adequate presentation. Both were preachers whom people flocked to hear; both were holy men. And both in these volumes have been exceedingly well served by their introducers, Lancelot Sheppard and Philip Caraman.

But the two preachers could hardly be more unlike: on the one hand Ronald's urbane scholarship, polished diction, knowledge of the Bible, studied historical allusions and quiet delivery, addressing English people gathered for an occasion; and on the other hand John's peasant manner of a country priest, with his rhetoric consciously borrowed from eighteenth-century orators, his almost exclusive concern with direct moral exhortation, interspersed with anecdotes (many borrowed) and gaily imagined conversations of sinners, all addressed Sunday by Sunday to a French country audience of over a hundred years ago. Yet both preachers in their own age and in their own milieu were to their hearers a powerful source of inspiration.

John Vianney knew little theology—of the kind one finds in books—and the sermons here all belong to his first years of trying to bring the difficult parishioners of Ars to a sense of elementary Christian virtue. He came to Ars

in 1818, and by about 1832 his work in the confessional obliged him to give up his meticulous preparation of sermons. These sermons therefore show the Saint during his early struggles, still uncertain of his technique, but certain of one thing: that he wanted his people to serve God wholeheartedly. Hence his constant warnings to his flock about lukewarmness, hypocrisy, sinful habits, unrepentance and occasions of sin (dancing, taverns, etc.). And we must remember his period. Lancelot Sheppard writes (p. xi-xii): 'Doctrinally Jansenism was dead—in *practice* some of its effects lived on. But it is too easy to term Jansenistic all that strikes us nowadays as too hard for man to bear . . . That the Curé d'Ars may have used a severity in dealing with his flock that now appears foreign to our present habits is really unimportant; he was of his times, he spoke to them in their own idiom, but we should not forget that as years went on his severity diminished . . . and the burden of his sermons—copied from no one: he had not the time—welled up from a heart overflowing with the love of God'.

Thus many of his warnings in their severe details may be 'period pieces'; but there are still the lukewarm among us and the hypocrites and the sinners, and there are still occasions of sin (even if not always in taverns), and there are few of us who can shrug our shoulders and say that the Curé's strictures cannot apply to us.

The book though published in Ireland is printed in America. The translation is lively and easy, and the titles are clever, though printed large in American style. Occasionally, however, the translation fails: 'What horror!' is hardly a translation (p. 4), and worse is: 'That is a bit strong now!' (p. 177), but mercifully these are rare.

Of particular value is an Appendix—called 'Afterward'—by Mgr Trochu on M. Vianney's personal library, which is preserved intact and which shows many of his sources and his reading.

Ronald Knox's sermons are charmingly introduced by Fr Philip Caraman, S.J., who had done the same for the 'Pastoral Sermons'. In this pleasantly produced volume there are ninety-one 'Occasions': twenty-one Saints and ten English Martyrs; fifty-four 'Occasions' such as a jubilee, a centenary, a dedication; a clothing or profession, an ordination, an enthronement and many others; and finally six panegyrics. The sermons range over more than thirty years, from 1920 (St Joan of Arc, no. 13) to 1956, within a few months of his death (St Edmund, no. 10), both of these being at St Edmund's; and one is immediately struck by the consistency of approach and style throughout the years. There is no 'early' or 'late' Knox, unless one notices a greater use in the later years of the Bible, and in particular of his own version.

The editor calls attention on p. 361 (a centenary) to the re-use of previous material (on p. 292): the central part of the sermon is identical. He did sometimes use a previous script (this time five years old) for a part of a sermon, and himself said that he often re-used or usually re-modelled retreat conferences, but that for any retreat he put in at least one entirely new one. Only, he said,

when he published them were scripts put away for good. But in this series, as Fr Caraman remarks (p. vi), there is a remarkable 'uniqueness' about each sermon: every sermon is 'unlike any other in construction and content', and the centenary 'doublet' is included as an interesting exception.

But Fr Caraman also calls attention to another quality (p. vi): 'Frequently his hearers must have been surprised by the precise knowledge he showed of the history of the parish or countryside, of topographical features of the district or of the lives of the priests who had served the church in which he was preaching. His knowledge is always accurate and always has a bearing on his argument . . . In all cases of centenary or jubilee sermons he worked local history into the larger canvas of the story of the Church in England; and in that story he showed the development of God's Providence'.

Lastly one feels an astonishment at the way this man was at the beck and call of so many: a Cardinal's funeral or a bishop's enthronement—or a simple priest's ordination or a nun's profession; it might be a gathering of the British Association—or a local S.V.P.; to honour Westminster Cathedral or a provincial parish church; to societies aiding converts or prisoners; to university audiences or schoolboys.

But after all the preacher is the servant of the people, be they country parishioners of Ars or distinguished audiences gathered for the 'special sermon', and both these preachers served their people well, without counting the cost to themselves.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH O.P.

THE GENERAL COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH, by F. Dvornik; Burns and Oates, 8s. 6d. A Faith and Fact Book.

THE CHURCH IN CRISIS, by Philip Hughes; Burns and Oates, 35s.

THE CHURCH IN COUNCIL, by E. I. Watkin; Darton, Longman and Todd, 18s. 6d. (paperback edition, 6s.).

The approaching General Council has naturally attracted a number of books designed to inform Catholics and anyone else who may be interested something about the previous Councils, what they did, and why they took place. The field is led by three well-known Catholic writers: doubtless there will be others to come.

Fr Dvornik's book has, naturally, a special authority. Its author is one of the most learned of all Church historians, and in his particular field of Byzantine studies, perhaps the greatest living authority. Since the forthcoming Council is intended to be, amongst other things, an aid to the reconciliation of the eastern churches, we turn to what he has to say with expectations which are not disappointed. Fr Dvornik has written his book round the questions of the relations between East and West. He recounts the sad history of the growing divisions, the sorry tale of misunderstanding exaggerated by criminal stupidity, with remarkable lucidity, considering the complexities of the theme. The reader