

half the country with Leyburn, and in 1688, when a 'false summer' came to English Catholics with the accession of a Catholic sovereign, two other Vicars were appointed and Innocent XI divided the country into the London, Midland, Western and Northern Districts. The West always had a regular bishop, either a Benedictine or a Franciscan, but with the solitary exception of one Dominican as Vicar of the Northern District the other three vicariates were confided to the secular clergy.

Even in the midst of so much persecution jealousy grew up and relations were often strained between the seculars and regulars and even between the bishops, and Dom Hemphill enters into much detail in relating the difficulties which arose with the appointment of Thomas Williams, O.P., in 1726 to the Northern District. One influential priest, Dr Ingleton, agent for the English bishops at the court of the Old Pretender, commented: 'If we must have a regular I should rather wish for one of their Order (sc. the Dominican) than any other. The post will hereafter (in that event) more easily return to the Clergy.' Ingleton also prognosticated many troubles and ill consequences both for Bishop Williams and his district, but actually his episcopate was a great success and his moderation combined with his unremitting toil for souls endeared him to his people and instilled in the hearts of his priests a warm personal regard for himself. Dom Hemphill is wrong in putting Williams' age at sixty-six when he arrived in the Northern District; we know from the Bornhem profession book still preserved that the bishop was only fifty-nine. Dom Hemphill concludes his valuable contribution to our history with the words of the great Bishop Milner: 'The writer is bold to say that no Christian kingdom could during the same period boast a list of prelates more worthy to succeed to the chairs of the Apostles than Bishops Smith, Bishop, Giffard, Petre and Challoner.'

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

FATHER SIX. By Mgr Olichon. (Burns and Oates; 9s. 6d.)

In his introduction to this life of Fr Six Mr Graham Greene describes his visit early this year to Phat-Diem, which was then still in French hands, though surrounded by Viet-Minh forces. Part of the town was in flames, and the road to the cathedral was under fire from snipers, but the fabulous churches and chapels built by Fr Six still stood, thronged by the Christian community served by him for so long.

Persecution will be no new experience for the Catholics of Tonking, for the Church was founded there, a century ago, in the blood of the martyrs and the confessors. Fr Six himself confessed his faith under torture (he was horribly beaten, and his flesh torn off with pincers) before being sent into exile on the Chinese border. There he found his

younger brother Jean, then aged fifteen, who died in his arms from the tortures undergone the year before, a martyr for Christ.

Fr Six was then ordained priest and given the task of ministering to the exiled Christians at Langson (he was a deacon at the time of his confession of the faith). There, almost immediately, he had to choose, for himself and his people, between loyalty to the Emperor of Annam, persecutor of Christians, and going over to the rebel prince of Le-Phung who was friendly to them. Fr Six remained unswervingly loyal and the rebellion collapsed. He was rewarded in the next two years by peace and freedom of worship in Langson, while a terrible persecution wasted the Christian communities of the rest of Annam; hundreds died for Christ each day, many of them burnt alive.

Then in 1862 France intervened, imposing a treaty on the Emperor of Annam that gave freedom of worship to Christians. Many of the exiles returned, including Fr Six, who was made parish priest of Phat-Diem in 1865. There he worked until his death, the third parish priest of Phat-Diem, successor to two martyrs. He was the effectual ruler of the town and to him his people owe not only the magnificent churches that so astonished Lord Curzon, but also their rice-fields claimed from the sea, their flood-dykes, and their irrigation canals.

Fr Six came of peasant stock, and had all the Annamese peasant's love for the traditions of his country. He was also an educated man, learned not only in the knowledge of the Bible and the Fathers, but also in the great Chinese classics. His torturers at Hanoi, to whom he preached faith in Christ, were astonished at his learning and said of him that he should have been a mandarin. A greater honour was in store for him, for after years of quiet help in local government, and consultation on matters of national importance, he was appointed *Kham-Sai* or viceroy over three provinces during a time of upheaval in 1886. His bishop told him to accept the task for a short period, and after completing the pacification of the provinces he laid down his office and retired to Phat-Diem. There he lived quietly, acquiring ever greater prestige until his death in 1899.

This short life by Mgr Olichon is well done, though the movement of the book is often a little staccato. One is also firmly reminded at times that this is a translation. But Fr Six emerges as a person of great charm and ability, a man of great sense as well as saintliness. Why, one wonders, was he never made a bishop? And why has it recently been necessary for the Catholics of Viet-Nam to ask the foreign missionaries to leave, lest they compromise the native Catholics by their presence? One is pleased to read that at least the bishop of Phat-Diem is a fellow-countryman of Fr Six.

J.S.