

PERSONAE

3. Roland de Vaux, O.P.

SO I climb into an Arrab truck that goes to Naplus. It has no brrakes, you understand, but then it is almost all up the hill to Naplus.' Almost. Père de Vaux was for two days unconscious. We nearly lost him until the great Day of the Lord. As it is, we were privileged to have him in England this last December for the Schweich Lectures, and overjoyed to welcome him at our two northern seminaries. Overjoyed but not surprised, for he does not spare himself. Indeed, one who saw him at Qumrân compared him with a mountain-goat (not unaptly if goats live to the middle fifties and chew their beards when perplexed) though I understand that the original reference was to agility and not to appearance. It is certainly true that energy and urgency are the atmosphere he carries round with him, a layer (I should calculate) four or five yards thick; but within that, and again around it, there is an eager friendliness that abolishes awe. Oh yes, the present shrinkage of our world has its joys. Jerusalem is only half-a-dozen hours away, so is its Dominican École Biblique, so is its Prior. More than twenty years ago, William Foxwell Albright called him 'the brilliant young Dominican'—a scholar's judgment. He is not young now but neither, thank God, is he old; he is brilliant still, but now mature also and well known to the scholarly world; a Dominican he will be always by all the highest criteria of that distinguished Order—an intensely human person apt and zealous for scholarship; and penetrating, sustaining, directing this human preference is a driving enthusiasm for God's work and an anxiety for the intellectual dignity of God's Church. On this last he feels most sensitively.

Whether he likes it or not—and I suspect he does not—Père de Vaux's name will always be linked with Qumrân and the Scrolls. Rightly. In England and in France there are other names; the kingdom of Jordan knows better. Lightning appreciation, immediate action, cunning diplomacy with the Ta'amire tribe, all these saved the Qumrân situation; without Père de Vaux it would have been a shambles, with him it became a systematic and scholarly archaeological expedition. Its results all the world knows. It is well that his name should be remembered. And yet he is by inclination and ability, too, not an archaeologist but a theologian. It was religious obedience to his Superior, the great Lagrange, that turned his mind to Old Testament archaeology. Scholars can see the reward of this

obedience in the excavations at Wadi Far'a, the public can see it in the Scrolls.

But this is not the end. There is no one less likely to pose in his laurels than Père de Vaux; one feels that he has thrown them aside already, impatient to be on with other work. For there are no intervals in his continuous performance; indeed one act overlaps the next. His few days of holiday this Christmas were spent in passing the second volume of his *Institutions de l'Ancien Testament* for the press. These volumes are as near to popularization (though inevitably scholarly) as he has ever come; time and the level of his learning have kept him in the engine-room. The *Institutions*, however, is one of the *Études Annexes* to the *Bible de Jérusalem* of which he is the Old Testament editor; and in this function, too, nobly yielding to the persuasion of Père Chiffot, he has served the Catholic public immeasurably.

Nevertheless, grateful as we are for his past we are looking forward eagerly to what is to come. We trust it will be a monumental Theology of the Old Testament. Twenty-five years of the rigorous life at the *École Biblique* has left its mark on a strong but not stout frame, and yet we have good hopes and earnest prayers that he may live till ninety. Certainly his astonishing faculty of surprise will keep him young till then. Only let him take no more trucks to Naplus.

ECUMENICAL SURVEY

Prospects of the coming Council

THE chief preoccupation, from the Catholic point of view, of an ecumenical survey at the present time can hardly fail to be the effect that the coming Council will have upon the progress of Christian unity. When Pope John XXIII, very early in his pontificate, told his Cardinals of his intention to summon a General Council he connected the announcement closely with the theme of unity, as being very near his heart. The news was received in many quarters, Catholic and non-Catholic, with joyful anticipation and no little speculation. It was a new and original move which promised much.

What part would non-Catholic Christians be given in this Council? Would representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Churches be invited to sit together with the Catholic Bishops to witness to the faith of their respective Churches, as they did at Florence in the fifteenth century? What would be the place, if any, of the spokesmen of Anglicanism and the other leaders of