

but God, if we study how to saturate ourselves with his truths, making them the groundwork of our lives, how to fix our minds on God, how to acquire the knowledge and practice of all virtues, in fact to drag all that is of self across that true stone which is Christ. The more we advance in these dispositions, the more the Holy Spirit will give himself to us in a surpassing way and the more gloriously and sublimely shall we receive him.

It now remains to speak of the second part of our text; but we have already treated of that at length in the preceding sermon on the same subject—*Estote prudentes*. Be prudent. And now, as I have repeated to you many times today, watch, my dear children, seek God purely and interiorly, in a true abstraction, under the inspiration and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs, in all ages, the same glory and power as to the Father and the Holy Ghost. Amen.



CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Sir,—Your current issue carries a review of Canon Trochu's *The Curé d'Ars*, which will, I believe, cause some disquiet to those of us in the pastoral clergy. After noting the two general methods in biographical writing, i.e. the historical and the critical, and that here Trochu adopts the former, your reviewer asserts that at the end of the life we have a 'quite fantastic picture of the saint', etc. If your reviewer, Fr Tanner, concedes that the facts narrated by Trochu are accurate, then the resulting fantastic picture is clearly a criticism of the Saint, and not of Trochu's work. If however it is suggested that the fantastic picture results from facts not accurately and correctly narrated, then we have criticism of the work, and not of the Saint; and such criticism must impugn the veracity of the author, at least objectively if not formally. (A rash charge to make against a work crowned by the French Academy; presented for a Doctorate's thesis; which is now in its ninth edition, and of which 80,000 copies of the French text have already been sold.)

The purpose of Trochu's writing here (though not so in his later *L'admirable vie du Curé d'Ars*) is clearly historical (vide Mgr Convert to the author—'*Votre livre est une Histoire*'). Spiritual edification or theological criticism or appreciation are not in his purview. There can therefore be only one criticism of the book, i.e. historical; and that Father Tanner does not attempt. To want to see the work 'stimulating' the pastoral clergy and written 'in a style best suited to a popular Life' is not the aim of the author; and because it is not, your reviewer quite unreasonably castigates him.

Fr. Tanner, having called at the wrong address, proceeds to upbraid the householder for not being the person he wants to see. Had he been reviewing the works of Monnin, Septier, Convert or even Joseph Vianney he might have found there the spirit of appreciation and valuation which he might have desired to discredit.

On a slightly different but allied issue may I, Dear Reverend Editor, put a point to you? Do you really think it is doing a service to the spiritual life to permit in print the suggestion that the manner of life of the Curé is not such as one would think himself capable of imitating today? It is surely the desire and not the capability that is usually lacking. The inspirations and gifts of the Holy Ghost together with human reasoning gave that manner of life its birth at Dardilly, and sustained it through Ecully and Ars to the end. A theological view which harps on a 'new asceticism' at the expense of the old seems to posit without warrant a change in God's dealings with souls, depriving them now of spiritual gifts made to other generations. To what extent the Curé may be said to be an example must surely be decided for each soul according to those gifts and human reasoning. But the truth does remain that canonisation has set up the life of this saint as a safe and prudent model; and in declaring him Patron first of the French clergy and later of the pastoral clergy of the universal Church it appears to have been the desire of the Popes to emphasise that significance. Cardinal Gasparri, writing on behalf of Pope Pius XI to Canon Trochu, expressed the hope that 'this model of all priestly virtues should be imitated as much as possible'; and one recalls the words engraved under the body of the Saint at Ars and expressing the feelings of the French clergy—'*Clari Exempli Patrono Galliarum sacerdotum*'.—Yours, etc.,

F. BRANNEY.



REVIEWS

TWO IN ONE FLESH. *Vol. I: Introduction to Sex and Marriage; Vol. II: The Mystery of Sex and Marriage in Catholic Theology; Vol. III: The Practice of Sex and Marriage.* By Rev. E. C. Messenger, Ph.D. Preface by Rev. J. Leycester King, S.J. (Sands; 6s., 10s.6d., 6s. respectively.)

Except possibly in Germany, the Catholic attitude to sex has seldom been discussed so thoroughly as in these three volumes. Dr Messenger's main concern, so simple that it has constantly been overlooked, is to show that sex is as much a part of creation as all other things and as worthy of the rest of nature to be perfected by grace: it is therefore *good*.