

The Cure of Ars to His People. St. John Vianney. St. Meinrad, Indiana, Grail Publication, 1951. pp. ii, 139. \$1.50.

This very brief volume treats of the sermons, or as they are more popularly called, *catechisms*, of the sainted Curé of Ars. The book is divided into two parts. The first part with a rather lengthy introduction is entitled "Instructions on the Catechisms" and contains twenty sermons, dealing with the more lofty doctrines of religion such as the "Prerogatives of a Pure Soul," the "Holy Spirit" and the "Real Presence." The second part is entitled "Explanations and Exhortations" and contains sixteen catechisms, embracing the four last things and the seven capital sins. Though these sermons have been condensed, the continuity of thought has not suffered.

These catechetical instructions as they fell from the lips of the Curé achieved their purpose in the thousands of sinful souls who amended their ways and turned their attention, either anew or for the first time, towards the Catholic Church. The catechisms themselves, that is, the mere words, were not wholly responsible for the salvation of so many people. The chief factor was the man himself—his saintly character, austere life, and dynamic personality coupled with his sincere and inimitable style of preaching. Doubtless, however, it was through a simple, terse grammatical style that the sanctity of this priest of God was able to reach the hearts of all his hearers from the most literary down to the most ignorant.

It would not be wrong, nevertheless, to conjecture that the catechisms as they appear in this present form will seem to quite a few readers a bit too simple in form. For there seems to be a monotonous tempo throughout the entire work. Although the thoughts are oftentimes very telling, the sentences are too punctilious, too clipped.

At times the reader will encounter certain ideas that seem too severe, exaggerated. This is especially true of his catechism "On the Sanctification of Sunday." From the text, one immediately gets the impression that there is never an excuse to work on Sunday. The idea is further brought home to the reader by way of an incident. A woman, fearful that the weather might ruin her crop of hay, goes to her parish priest for permission. The priest refuses and that very day the woman dies. Another example will be found in the "Catechism on the Love of God" which begins with the following sentence: "Our body is a vessel of corruption; it is meant for death and for the worms, *nothing*

more!" (p. 32). It will be well, therefore, for the reader when he comes upon passages which might appear severe even to extremes, to consider the fact that Jansenism was still a strong influence among the French clergy during the Curé's ministry. The question of how much Jansenism is contained in the Curé's instructions and exhortations, if any, is still argued by his biographers. The fact remains, in spite of such possible influence, that no one since the time of the Curé has been so instrumental in winning souls for Christ.

Finally, time may be the hidden factor why these sermons have lost much of their forcefulness. Over a hundred years have passed since the Curé delivered most of them in his own, saintly nuances. Reading a condensed translation leaves one with the feeling that the net result is not what the editors hoped for. Perhaps others will disagree, but the book did not come up to previous expectations.

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Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis). Translated by Roy J. Deferrari. Cambridge, The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951. pp. xx, 486. \$5.00.

Hugh of Saint Victor was a great figure in the adolescent period of medieval philosophy and theology. He died in 1141, the year before Abelard's death. Though Hugh does not have the international fame of Abelard, he was, even in the opinion of Harnack the great Lutheran theologian, "the most influential theologian of the twelfth century." This work, *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, is his masterpiece and most extensive opus. It has been called "a dogmatic synthesis to, but more perfect than, the *Introduction ad Theologiam* of Abelard."

This work will open the field for dissertations involving comparisons with the *Summae* of St. Thomas. In fact, Hugh had in mind the writing of a *summa*. In the *Prologue of the First Book*: "I have compressed this brief *summa*, as it were, of all doctrine into one continuous work, that the mind may have something definite to which it may affix and conform its attention, lest it be carried away by various volumes of writings and a diversity of readings without order or direction," (p. 3). In contrasting these two *chefs-d'oeuvre* many might be tempted to lose sight of the circumstances in which Hugh wrote his own encyclopedia. It is a great work and St. Thomas used it in his own synthesis of Christian belief.

Dr. Deferrari has presented a good translation from a new critical text. One can be certain of understanding the thought of the au-