

and thus a dignified style has been maintained, directly related to the AV. No English reader need fear to find any idioms which he might regard as uncomfortably transatlantic. The spelling of 'labor', etc., is of course American.

Messrs Nelson gave the book wide publicity before it appeared, and nearly a million copies were ordered even before publication, and this figure has probably been well surpassed by now. The paper and printing are beyond reproach and lay-out of the type (in verse form for verse sections of the Old Testament) is pleasant to the eye. The strong cloth binding is chastely adorned and the paper jacket is of the graceful kind we have learned to expect from Nelson.



## REVIEWS

THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT IN PARISH LIFE. By the Abbé Michonneau. (Mercier Press; 12s. 6d.)

The name of the author will possibly give people the impression that this book is dealing with ingenious devices, paraliturgy and the like, for running a modern city parish. In other words, they will quite probably think it is a continuation of the well-known book, *Revolution in a City Parish*. In reality, it is a book for priests and the priestly spirit in our modern town missions. Abbé Michonneau tells us he had his fears that priests reading his earlier book may have missed the main point, and persuaded themselves it was all a question of the right method. For the earlier book was meant to treat of the spirit rather than of method. I suppose this is a common form of escapism, to console oneself for one's failures by attributing them to a wrong method, and to delude oneself that a change of method will put everything right.

The present book is an appeal to priests to face realities. If all is not right with the Church's apostolate, we priests must shoulder some of the blame. Why are the effects of our labours so limited? Do we lack priestly virtues, or do we grasp them imperfectly and fail to apply them to the right tasks? Father Michonneau recalls a saying of Cardinal Suhard: 'We have too many administrators; too many administrators and not enough priests'. Can it be that many priests are zealous and active and pray, and yet are failing to do their first priestly work?

First and foremost, we must be priestly. This is the first thing the faithful expect of us. They do not expect us to be business-men. But they do expect us to be ready any time to take a personal interest in the men and women in trouble who come to us for spiritual help or encouragement. The reason for this new book is to tackle this question realistically,

to help us to examine our consciences and see whether perhaps we may be considering the routine organisation of parish life more important than the genuine personal problems of our parishioners, of the larger community, or of the world. Nor must we mollify our consciences by simply not noticing these problems. It is part of the duty of a priest to see them.

Fr Michonneau spends a whole chapter of his book on false zeal, on the various ways in which priests busy themselves and fondly think they have found an easy way to priestly success. There are the priests with new systems, the planners, the social-reform priests, the parochially-minded priests, the pseudo-mystics, and the pseudo-angelic priests, and the priests who bandy slogans. I dare say some of the types that Fr Michonneau depicts are peculiar to France, but we have other pseudo-apostles of our own. Fr Michonneau of course purposely makes caricatures of them; but many of us will see some of our own illusions and weaknesses parodied in a salutary manner.

After entertaining us, with an occasional dig, Fr Michonneau comes to the most valuable and practical part of his book. He answers the usually unspoken objection, that the forms of spirituality recommended to priests do not fit them for the apostolic parish life, by indicating ways in which these forms can be more fully adapted. Thus, instead of seeking for mortification by penances which have no direct relation to our work, with a little ingenuity we can find plenty of self-denial in our parish work. What could be more salutary and self-denying than taking on any work which needs doing, listening patiently to any who seek our help and encouragement, being good-humoured with the unreasonable, listening gratefully to criticism, being anxious to do better, preparing sermons and services, being punctual and reverent? These are a few of the extremely practical suggestions which, though we have always known that we ought to follow, it is so easy to neglect! A book of this nature seems excellent spiritual reading because it is continually putting before us the two pictures of what we are and what we have always known we should be.

The author naturally offers us no substitute for set periods of meditation. He does however suggest the advisability of reconsidering our timetable in this matter. He and his colleagues find midday to 12.30 p.m. the best time, in the midst of their day's work. He also suggests setting apart one day each week for spiritual quiet, preferably in a religious house, where one can write sermons, do spiritual reading, and in general refresh one's soul for the coming week. They do it at Colombes, and the parish gets used to each priest being away from the parish on a certain day, and he is left undisturbed.

Fr Michonneau thinks that our weakness is frequently much deeper and graver than might appear from his earlier caricatures. Many priests at least

give the laity the impression of lacking the theological virtues. We do not always speak and act and confer the sacraments with that deep sense of faith they expect to find. Where there is too much appeal for money, Fr Michonneau senses a lack of hope or real trust in God. Needless to say, his attitude to money has been much criticised by some of his French fellow-clergy, who think it lacks prudence. But he still maintains that less appeals and less interest in money always bring their own reward, even in the material sphere. The dropping of many fees, collections and appeals at his own church has actually led to a raising of their income.

Another matter that Fr Michonneau earnestly contends for is the introduction or extension of community life among secular priests. He thinks that much of the lack of zeal and interest or knowledge comes from too much isolation. It is fear of this isolation which, so he thinks, is driving more vocations to the religious orders than to the secular priesthood, with the effect of a grave falling-off of secular vocations in France. It is hard to say how far all this applies in our own country. Not so many priests live alone in England as in France. It is, I believe, normal there for parish priest and curate to live apart. The general principle that priests should as far as possible co-operate, working in groups, is obviously a sound one. We might do well to consider whether it is possible to extend this in our own country. There are many works, e.g., courses of sermons, in which a group of priests can co-operate with great effect, if necessary by interchange of pulpits.

This is certainly a book to be read by priests engaged in parish work. If in any matter there is not full agreement, there will always be much spiritual stimulation.

H. FRANCIS DAVIS

THE RULE OF ST BENEDICT in Latin and English edited and translated by Abbot Justin McCann, Monk of Ampleforth. (Orchard Books; Burns Oates; 16s.)

The original Orchard Series, which was designed to provide an accessible text, not only of the English spiritual classics and especially of the English mystics, but also of works such as the *Imitation* and the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, which had exercised a deep influence upon English spirituality, contained no edition of the Rule of St Benedict, which had formed so many of our spiritual writers from St Bede and St Anselm and St Aelred to Bishop Hedley and Abbot Butler and Abbot Chapman. The new series of Orchard Books has repaired this omission in generous measure, in this fine piece of scholarship by Abbot Justin McCann. An eighteen-page preface gives a lucid summary of the historical background and textual history of the Rule; the Latin text is given, not in the *textus receptus*, but in a new critical text: where the 'late latinisms' of St Benedict are toned down, the authentic text is