

She was an intuitive genius with marvellous insights both in the natural and the supernatural order, but there were at the same time grave defects in her understanding, particularly of history, which often made her judgments childish and absurd. Yet Father Perrin continually emphasises the incompleteness of Simone Weil's experience. She was a soul torn by the deep conflict between her personal feelings and opinions and the tremendous demands which divine love was making upon her. The conflict was never resolved, and perhaps it is part of her significance for our age that it was not; but there can be no doubt that her conflict could only have been resolved by her becoming a saint, and it is to a 'new saintliness' that the work of Simone Weil is calling the world today.

Gustave Thibon gives us more of the personal side of Simone Weil, her awkwardness and physical unattractiveness, 'prematurely bent and old-looking', and the astonishing beauty of the soul which showed in her eyes. For him it may be said the same conflict between exterior and interior is reflected in Simone Weil's view of the Church. He emphasises the attraction which Simone Weil felt for the 'soul' of the Church and her repulsion from the 'body' so marred by human imperfection. This is a conflict which again only grace could have resolved, but Gustave Thibon, while insisting that the 'body' is necessary to a religion which is incarnate, yet points to the need of purification which is no less necessary in every generation in the Church, if souls are not to be driven away from it on account of our imperfections. Simone Weil is thus a portent challenging us to try to make the outside of the Church more worthy of the truth which it enshrines and which she sought with such an ardour of self-purification.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

SAINTS AND OURSELVES. Edited by Philip Caraman, S.J. (Hollis and Carter; 10s. 6d.)

It may appear unmannerly to complain that the authors' names appear on the dust-cover and that one has to look inside the book to discover the saints dealt with. There is a fashion at present for these collections of studies of the saints; it is to be wondered, though, whether the interest is in the saints or, as may be suspected, in the well-known authors' reaction to them. Such a pitfall is hard to avoid in a book of this sort, but having pointed it out I must add immediately that these twelve studies, which originally appeared in *The Month*, are excellent. And very largely they are so precisely because they show us personal reactions, so that although the saint is the important person in each essay it is the reaction of saint upon author that is to be sought.

Two essays stand out in particular: Robert Speaight's on St Augustine and Rosalind Murray's on St John of the Cross. The former not only paints a portrait but comes to grips with Augustine's thought. 'A nature so violent as Augustine's might easily have twisted to fanaticism, and even

today temperaments which are inclined to stress the corruptibility of human nature are sometimes described as Augustinian . . . it is no lantern-jawed Jansenist whose image is reflected in the periods of Augustine's prose. It is a man possessed through and through by the sense of glory.' Rosalind Murray's 'St John of the Cross' poses the problem of why 'his fame and influence appear more widespread outside the Church than within'. That statement requires qualification, of course, but still it is true that for most Catholics he remains a name in the calendar, whereas 'he has . . . proved for many pagans the way in, the first intelligible guide through whom the Christian mysteries can be grasped'. The reason for his success with the non-believer is that he conveys the reality of God 'in an unparalleled way'; he speaks in terms they 'find intelligible, using the medium of poetic imagery, uncomplicated by an unfamiliar devotional idiom'. Because I have picked out these two essays as important it should not be thought that the others are merely make-weights; that is true of none of them. Douglas Hyde's essay on St Francis with its reference to modern social needs (he instances Africa) and Dr Strauss's examination of the case of Maria Goretti are both extremely useful studies.

LANCELOT C. SHEPPARD

TEN SAINTS. By Eleanor Farjeon. With illustrations by Helen Sewell. (Oxford University Press; 12s. 6d.)

It is to be hoped that a number of wise aunts in search of the right book to give their nephews and nieces will come across this one, first published in America and now available here. To begin with it looks so fresh with its clear and attractive line drawings printed in three colours: St Simeon Stylites on his pillar in the sun, St Giles like an Eastern sage in the mouth of his cave. The strong point of the stories—the old ones of Christopher, Martin, Nicholas—is their well-managed dialogue, and the concrete images they call up. Each tale is followed by a singable rhyme for the saint in question. These too are simple and un sentimental.

Simeon lived
In heaven's eye
On top of a pillar
Hard and high.

It is difficult to imagine a better introduction to some of the older dreams of Christendom.

A.S.

THE ROCK OF TRUTH. By Daphne Pochin Mould. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

The author of this autobiography is a scientist whose curiosity and integrity in her search for true facts led her, despite deep prejudices and dislike of authority, to enter the Church. The scene of her search and