

topics of serfdom and tithes, both with important bearings on Cistercian development through the centuries, are unmentioned in the index although there are numerous references to these questions scattered throughout the book.

Quite a full bibliography is given, though it is a little surprising to find Dom J. Leclercq's name absent from it. His article on Geoffrey of Auxerre (*Les écrits de Geoffrey d'Auxerre Rev. Bened. Nos. 3-4 1952*) might have been used to explain Geoffrey's mysterious deposition or resignation in 1165. Dom Leclercq suggests that this happened because Geoffrey remained on good terms with Henry II of England which displeased Louis VII of France and his brother Henry, Archbishop of Reims, as Henry II had incurred papal displeasure over the murder of Becket.

Regarding the question of Cistercian exemption from diocesan control, Mr King remarks with truth that this was the result of a succession of papal privileges. Might it not also have been in some measure due to the Cistercian Constitutions themselves, by means of which the disciplinary machinery of Citeaux became far greater than that wielded by any bishop, and the abbatial elections were so elaborately safeguarded that episcopal intervention was unnecessary?

A map showing the abbeys mentioned would have been a useful addition to the text.

A. J. MEIKLE

A CHRISTOLOGY FROM THE SERMONS OF ST VINCENT FERRER. (Selected and translated by S.M.C. (Blackfriars; 12s. 6d.)

These sermons are selected from the many thousands contained in the five volumes published by the Dominicans of Valencia in 1591, sermons preached by Master Vincent during the phenomenal apostolate up and down Europe which occupied the last twenty years of his life, 1399-1419. As S.M.C. points out in the Preface, they are something unique in spiritual literature, in that they are not studied treatises, but actual notes of sermons either jotted down before delivery or taken down during and after St Vincent's discourse. In contrast to most published medieval sermons, and many modern sermons for that matter, they bring one into contact with the personality of the preacher, and one can almost picture the scene as he held spellbound the vast throngs that flocked to hear him wherever he went. That he was endowed with the gift of tongues seems the only explanation of the fact that he managed to make himself understood by so many different nationalities, since the only language he could speak was the Valencian dialect of Spanish.

S.M.C. has selected and translated some twenty-four of St Vincent's

sermons dealing with the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord. They are nearly all occasional, preached on some special Sunday or Feast, and they vary in length and style from the concise *reportatio* of the sermon for the First Sunday in Advent to the elaborate Good Friday discourse which gives a complete history of the Passion and takes up thirty pages of the present book. The style is a curious mixture of medieval and modern. There are the divisions and subdivisions of the subject-matter, and the allegorical interpretations of Scripture which will seem rather far-fetched to modern ears. 'The second water pot is Sacramental Confession' sounds slightly disrespectful. There is the preoccupation with numbers, including an ingenious interpretation of the 153 fishes caught in the net. 'A hundred signifies Christian; for as ten times ten makes a hundred, so Christians should observe the ten commandments. Fifty signifies the Jews, for, as five times ten makes fifty, so there are five books of the Law in the Old Testament. Three signifies the Saracens, for they believe three things: that Christ, born of a Virgin, is a holy Man and reigns in glory.' There is a great deal of imaginary dialogue and apocryphal detail interwoven with the Gospel text, though the preacher is careful to justify its inclusion. 'If we do not read all this in the Gospels, still it is not contrary to their teaching, and Doctors and saints have written in this fashion; so we may piously believe that matters occurred thus.' At the same time, all the sermons have a practical application to some aspect of Christian living, Mass, the sacraments, especially, as we should expect, Confession, and works of penance. Our Lady taking the child Jesus up to the Temple is an example to parents to see that their children go to Mass on Sundays; young girls especially 'have an evil custom of missing Mass; it is the cause of many misfortunes which befall them, for then they have opportunities of sin which they have not during the week when their parents are at home. Therefore, fathers and mothers, take your children to church with you.'

We must be grateful to S.M.C. for giving us this sample of medieval preaching at its greatest and most powerful and for making available so valuable a selection from the output of one of the greatest of medieval preachers. Incidentally, we might have been given a sermon on what was reputed to be St Vincent's favourite theme, the Last Judgment and its imminence. There are only passing references in these sermons, as in that on the Ascension: 'We may say definitely that it is soon, very soon.'

The translation reads well, and seem to convey much of the verve which must have characterized the original. In English it is probably better to talk of 'individual' rather than 'monastic' ethic (p. 97).

E.C.