

Delehaye pointed out, the 'legends' and 'inventions' of hagiography have a deep truth of their own. They may not suit the exacting demands of modern criticism, but they reflect a consciousness of the providential *unity* of human life. The stock miracles and the marvellous prophecies may have a precarious connection with the particular saint whose 'life' they adorn, but they are never idle inventions: however crudely, they proclaim a world where God's hand is seen at work in unlikely places. And a world where the language you speak may have its providential uses!

## R E V I E W S

A NEW FIORETTI. Translated with introduction and notes by John R. H. Moorman, D.D. (S.P.C.K.; 3s. 6d.)

The exquisite series of tales whose English title is *The Little Flowers of St Francis* forms but a portion of a collection known to scholars as the *Actus Beati Francisci*, itself only one of half-a-dozen similar groups of stories of equal or greater historical respectability. It has been the happy idea of Dr Moorman to 'round off and complete our collection of all that is known of the life of the Poverello' in English with a new selection from this mass of writing, and he has headed each tale with a scholarly little note indicating its origin and drift. The collection is introduced by a prefatory essay that sums up the critical problem embedded in Franciscan origins with the competence we have come to expect from this erudite student of Franciscan history. Dr Moorman has already made all workers in Franciscan origins his debtors with a very significant study of the whole problem in his *Sources for the Life of St Francis*; the introductory essay here, though necessarily much briefer, yields nothing in ability to that fine work. It is a pleasure to be able to assure lovers of Franciscan literature that this little book will make a notable addition to their Seraphic collections.

The seventy-five tales that make up this book are done into an English that aims successfully at reproducing the directness, the sincerity, and at times even the bluntness of the originals. There is nothing here, we must warn the reader, of the archaic and almost Scriptural manner that makes much of the charm of Arnold's *Fioretti*. Moorman's idiom is strictly contemporary; but the modern reader will probably prefer his strength and compactness to the more leisurely loveliness of a bygone age.

It is a pity not to be able to stop here. But the reader who has no Latin or who cannot easily come by the originals must be warned of one or two slips that mar this fine translation. The first is so strange

a one as to be almost certainly a printer's error. In the tale headed *St Francis Complains of Ill-treatment* (p. 19), the saint is not only presented as complaining bitterly at the blows of the angry countryman, but as finding it 'quite impossible to give thanks to God for his sufferings'. Dr Moorman speaks of this as a 'very human story', but he must certainly know that after his conversion Francis was never so 'human' as that, and that habitual choice of the divine will in everything that befell made the very groundwork of Francis's mind. The Darmstadt manuscript, of which this tale is a translation, has: *et nihilominus tamen Deo gratias egit pro hujusmodi dolore*, i.e., 'and he thanked God for this pain notwithstanding', I suggest that Dr Moorman wrote the word 'possible' and only a piece of typographical bad luck produced the offending 'im'.

On page 36, a Brother who for penance had to plunge fully clothed into the river is described as walking through the December day 'soaking wet and terrified of catching cold'. The original has: *tremens præ nimio frigore*, which means 'shivering with the excessive cold', i.e., of his wet garment. There is no suggestion of preoccupation with a possible future illness.

It is a pity that Dr Moorman ended the tale entitled *The Friars and the Possession of Books* (p. 41) at the point at which he did. The reader who depends solely upon Dr Moorman will be surprised to learn that the next words in the text run: 'Note here that Bro. Leo used to say that the intention of St Francis in the Rule was that we should have books only in common', etc. They are surely as relevant to the subject matter as anything in Dr Moorman's story.

In any tale that is cut out of a long context there will often be difference of opinion as to where exactly the story should begin and end. But in the tale entitled *St Francis Passes on Praise to God* (p. 49), I cannot help thinking Dr Moorman's choice of section unfortunate. The words 'these people never do anything out of respect for him they ought to worship' are extremely obscure in Dr Moorman's text because they refer to something that Bartholomew of Pisa (from whom the passage is translated) had said earlier. Quoting St Francis he says: 'Just as in pictures of our Lord and our Lady painted on wood our Lord and our Lady are honoured, while the picture keeps back nothing for itself, so the servant of God', etc. The phrase 'these people', etc., describes the universal human tendency to honour creatures more than the unseen God; if a picture, the attention may be held by the colouring or the beauty of the picture; if a person, the human charm or the wonderful heroism may rivet the attention upon the creature to the exclusion of God. (There are admirers of Francis who deserve this stricture; and they are not confined to the 13th century.) But the picture cannot keep back God's honour: the servant of God will not keep it back. The whole passage is highly theocentric. In its account of this occasion the *Speculum Perfectionis* puts the words about pictures in the middle of the incident, as constituting the essence of the story. (See *Spec. Perf.* Sabatier 1898, p. 81.)

These slight flaws notwithstanding, we have no hesitation in welcoming this painstaking and scholarly addition to Franciscan lore in English.

ETHELBERT CARDIFF, O.F.M.

AN OLD APOSTLE SPEAKS. By Vincent McNabb, O.P., with a Memoir by Fr Gerald Vann, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 1s. 6d.)

Those who knew and loved Fr Vincent will be glad to have the opportunity of sharing in these excerpts from his sermons and retreats. They will read them not only for the deep and simple truths, which were the *medulla* of Fr Vincent's life as an Apostle of Truth, but their memories will clothe them with the living voice and expression, which so often opened up unspoken visions beyond. More than anyone else one was always clearly aware that the Scriptures and the *Summa* were the sources of his life and thought. He applied the spirit of poverty all round, even in his choice of words and hence achieved on many occasions the chastened economy of the inspired word. And this arose not from any straining after literary form but from his own ascetic practice and self-discipline, so well illustrated in a family retreat: 'One very good mortification is *always* to get at the real truth—to search for it at great pains and having got it, preach it and see what happens'. That was not merely advice to his fellow-Dominicans: it was his own life-long rule—his work, as he loved to call it.

After truth comes love, and Fr Vincent's dying words: 'I have no enemies' did sum up his life, which he had spent in loving all men. Not only did he love the physically poor, but even more, the spiritually poor. 'Outside in the world there is a poor man at the door, and he doesn't know he is poor. Let us pity him, and let us ask pardon for any sin of ours that has made it more difficult for him to know he is poor and still outside the door of the great Gift of Faith which God is waiting to offer to his mind and heart'. We are grateful to Fr Vann for having stressed this all-embracing love and that mainly from quotations from Fr Vincent's own words. How necessary today are the mind and heart of an Old Apostle for a starving and spiritually sick world!

P. J. FLOOD

THE SORROW OF GOD. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Aquinas Papers No. 7, Blackfriars, Oxford; 1s.)

When any question is asked about the possibility of sorrow or suffering in God, the professional theologians are content to reply with a rather frosty, 'God is impassible'. Fr Vann, with his uncanny instinct for the problems that most afflict the contemporary mind, has decided to explore this dark and difficult matter. To our knowledge it is pioneer work for one who accepts the principles of the *philosophia perennis*, and perhaps more remains to be said.

The key to Fr Vann's treatment is the love of God. Love implies sympathy, the will-to-share, pity. As St Thomas says in a quite different context, *miser cordia*, pity, is first cousin to charity, or even