

has made so deep an impression upon our generation and won so much love and admiration' concludes Bishop Moorman (p 1825). It is hard not to feel battered by so much adulation and react against it, especially when it extends over nearly two thousand pages. But the book itself, though reflecting the same admiration for St Francis throughout the centuries, is providing basic texts to show us the 'poor man of Assisi' as well as 'the mirror of perfection'.

This book, massive in its size and scope, is a reprint of the third edition of this omnibus of the sources for St Francis of Assisi, printed in England in 1964, in America in 1973. It is a book which has proved its worth, and to the original selection of primary sources has been added the 'New Fioretti' by Bishop Moorman, a collection of seventy four stories about St Francis taken from various writings of the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. There are other useful aids to study, such as a concordance of the *Lives of St Francis*, a comprehensive bibliography and a detailed index. The section called the *Legend of the Three Companions* has of course

been superseded, both with regard to sources and translation, by Rosalind Brooke's excellent edition, *Scripta Leonis* (Oxford, 1970) but it is still useful to have a version of this important text included in the one volume of sources.

Since this book is by various writers, the translation varies in quality considerably. The notes also vary in usefulness and allowance has to be made for a certain prejudice among this array of Friars Minor, one branch only of the Franciscan family. But it is a book which provides a convenient guide in English to the main sources for the study of St Francis. It is to be hoped that this array of scholarship will not entirely prevent anyone from meeting that Francesco, who 'would pick up a stick from the ground and putting it over his left arm would draw across it like a violin, a little bow bent by means of a string, and going through the motions of playing, he would sing in French about his Lord' (p 467) nor from pondering the mystery of this first of all the saints who 'had the image and likeness of Christ Crucified clearly imprinted in his hands and his feet and likewise in his side' (p 1451).

BENEDICTA WARD S.L.G.

THE NINE WAYS OF PRAYER OF SAINT DOMINIC, edited and translated by Simon Tugwell O P with line drawings by Sheelagh Wilsden O P. *Dominican Publications*, 1978. pp 48. £3.30.

This little book is a gem of literary production, but much more than that. It comes at a time when some seekers after a spiritual path are wearied by their explorations into such widely differing techniques as those offered by, let us say, Buddhist meditation, Indian Yoga or Japanese Zen. To them St Dominic's Nine Ways offers an answer to their questing and their questioning, more homespun than exotic oriental importations but definitely better tailored to our western way of life. Used with a fervour like St Dominic's it could lead to the mountain of God (cf. 8th Way).

When St Dominic prayed in the 13th century there was nothing new about his ways of prayer; it was in the medieval tradition, gracefully adapted to his own spiritual needs and stamped with the seal

of his strong personality. *The Nine Ways* brings us into close contact with an influential personality, yet leaves us free to pray as the Spirit leads us, untrammelled by rigid adherence to any techniques. St Dominic lived in an uncomplicated age when the business of prayer was still as simple and as profound as the Lord's Prayer: we live in a complicated age when even our prayer-life may be cluttered up with bits and pieces borrowed from incompatible sources. Perhaps there is a message from St Dominic beamed to us across the centuries, a message unexpectedly relevant to our troubled times and inviting us to try the path he trod.

There are nine milestones along that path portrayed in the exquisite miniatures with which the little book we are considering is illustrated by Sheelagh Wilsden.

What may surprise those who look askance at the behaviour of their charismatic neighbours is the use that St Dominic made of his whole body in prayer. Briefly, he proceeded like this: (1) keeping his body erect he *bowed* his head right down; (2) he prostrated, throwing himself down on his face; (3) he *took the discipline* in simplicity of heart, uninhibited by any pseudo-psychological objections to that practice; (4) he *stood* looking intently at the crucifix and then *kneeling*, standing and kneeling with an alternation that increased in rapidity as his prayer became more intense, yet his movements were orderly and never slipped control; (5) he stood before the altar, upright and without support. Then his hands became 'praying hands' indeed as he used them in accompaniment to vocal or silent prayer; (6) he stood erect and *stretched out his arms* in cruciform prayer, by no means a novelty among Christians but in Dominic's case often accompanied by levitation; (7) he *sat*, recollecting himself within himself and passing rapidly from reading to prayer, from prayer to meditation and from medi-

tation to contemplation; (8) he prayed when travelling, sometimes withdrawing from his companions and *praying as he walked* alone. On these occasions the brethren thought that he enjoyed a hidden intimacy with the Holy Spirit and emerged from prayer equipped with the courage to preach the Gospel fearlessly.

There is something fascinating about *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, and it is not the fascination sometimes attached to things of antiquity just because they are antique. On closing the book one feels the impact of a living tradition handed on by someone intensely alive and faithful to his promise to do even more after his death than in his lifetime. His fulfilment of his promise extends beyond his own spiritual family and the spiritual hunger of our generation may find satisfaction in St Dominic's Way.

Our thanks are due to the two Dominicans who have given of their best to the making of this beautiful little book. Those who are weary of uncorrected misprints and faulty typesetting will find it a feast for their eyes as much as for their minds.

STELLA TOOLE O P