

the Rule of St Benedict accompanied by 'explanations for monks and lay people today'. The translation reads well, and it can certainly be referred to as an alternative to that of Dom Justin McCann, whose edition of the Rule is the only serious competitor to it currently on general offer. But the rest of the book is less satisfactory. It dodges the major questions about the Rule's contemporary usefulness and validity, and its assertions are often simplistic, condescending and questionable. A lot of the trouble comes from Abbot Parry's determination to present the Rule largely (though not, admittedly, exclusively) in isolation from its historical and literary tradition and as a guide for twentieth-century man. But there is also the theology of Abbot Parry to reckon with, and that, to put it mildly, is less than discriminating.

David Lunn's book belongs to an altogether different genre. It is a scholarly accumulation of historical detail which began as a doctoral thesis supervised by David Knowles. Its origins are somewhat obvious, but it reads well and is the first major modern history of the English Benedictine Congregation from 1540 to 1688. Clearly it must be taken as a standard work. Bernard Green's little book covers the period dealt with by Lunn, but, though it carries the English Benedictine story up to present times, and though it succeeds in giving the reader a compact view of English Benedictine Congregation history, it cannot compete with Lunn's book in terms of information. Its narrative also lacks sparkle, and, as the reader of Lunn will quickly realize, it is in danger of verging on the hagiographical. English Benedictine skeletons, which Lunn is not afraid to unearth, are decently left undisturbed, and the illustrations offered are also misleading. There is, for example, a photograph of the newly altered church at Belmont Abbey, but a photograph of the chapel at St Benet's Hall in Oxford must

have been taken years ago and is likely to create the erroneous impression that the place is now bursting with Benedictines.

More worthy of comparison with Lunn's book is the one edited by David Hugh Farmer, a thoroughly delightful volume which covers a wide range of topics. There are essays on better known figures like Gregory, Anselm and Aelred, but there is also material on lesser known but fascinating people such as Godric of Finchale and Dame Gertrude More. Contributors to the collection include Aelred Sillem, Frederick Hockey, Bernard Green and Daniel Rees. The essays vary in quality and style, there are no footnotes, there is no index, and the spotlight is, unfortunately, turned mainly on the British scene. But the book as a whole is an excellent introduction to the sort of characters who must be considered in any serious assessment of the Benedictine Order.

It remains to be said that such an assessment cannot now plausibly be made without also referring to the magisterial work of Dom Adalbert de Vogüé, who has done more than most in providing modern scholars with erudite writings on St Benedict and his sources. The material contained in *Community and Abbot in the Rule of Saint Benedict* is already well known to specialists on Benedictine history and tradition, and little needs to be said about it here except that an English translation of it is welcome. The work was written before Vatican II, and some of its emphases will not now endear themselves to all parties. But it is still an indispensable text for those engaged in detailed study of the Rule. Together with *The Rule of the Master* (Cistercian Publications, 1977) it illustrates the desirability of an English translation of the critical edition of the Rule of St Benedict (ed. A. de Vogüé and others, *Sources Chrétiennes*, Paris, 1972-7).

BRIAN DAVIES O P

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, OMNIBUS OF SOURCES ed. Marion A. Habig, London 1964. 3rd edition 1979.

'Among all the saints of post-apostolic time,' says the Foreword to this volume, 'it is generally conceded none seems to

have exercised a more profound influence upon the Church and the world . . . than the poor man of Assisi' (p v). 'St Francis

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.