

which is based upon recent critical literature, does not pretend to exhaust a subject where he himself says, *unusquisque suo sensu abundat*. But devotion to St Dominic and love of the Order stand out unmistakably in all of them.

Though the absence of footnote references from Fr Wilms's biography will not raise any doubts about his scholarship it clearly indicates the wide public he has chosen to address. Yet even the wider public which finds such notes distracting would hardly lose the thread of this story, so skilfully and excitingly is it recounted. More important than any proposed solution of the 'Rosary question' (which the author deals with non-committally in a dozen lines) is the proportion in which Fr Wilms sets each aspect of St Dominic's work. Love of poverty, for instance, is proved to be no after-thought, a kind of supplementary to the Dominican apostolate, but an essential condition which was present from the moment the saint sold his books for the poor. One learns to appreciate how little the saint sympathised with the forcible measures against heretics, how different his spirit from that of Simon de Montfort. And above all, the convent at Prouille fills the place in these pages that it filled in the labours of the friars. One is grateful to the author for demonstrating how *unusquisque suo sensu abundat*.

We cannot think of any more appropriate way of welcoming this admirably produced series, in fact, than by saying that it is faithful to the ideal of St Albert quoted by one writer in *Der Gottesfreund*: *in dulcedine societas quaerere veritatem*.

DONALD NICHOLL.

FATHER MICHAEL BROWNE, S.J. By Fr Thomas Hurley, S.J. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 12s.6d.)

It is the laudable custom nowadays for the lives of saintly folk to be as readable as novels and to give a picture of one who both lived and can be imagined as living. This work is hardly in the style of Joergensen or Father Brodrick, but the use of a little imagination on the part of the reader makes possible the reconstruction of the life and character of a great priest, novice-master, retreat-giver and friend and counsellor to all. Unlike so many of such biographers the author does try to give some of the unfavourable impressions as well, mentioning the little shortcomings which can at times be so noticeable to those with whom a man lives and yet in no way interfere with the oneness of his life with God which means holiness. Yet such details are necessary to make up a picture of one whom we can love and understand. Some evidently found Father Browne a little too aloof and austere, others complained that he did not prepare his conferences well enough, or that they teemed with miscellaneous historical information. It says much for the breadth of his taste that as superior he included in the refectory reading Morley's *Gladstone* and the life of Labouchère. The letters and conferences given in the book seem rather dry and commonplace

in cold print, as is so often the case with words whose life and sparkle come from the spirit and personality of the man who makes them. The book cannot be recommended for all and sundry, since it is not attuned to the modern taste, but as a memorial to a great man of God it should find a place in many Irish homes, lay and religious, where the memory of Father Browne (he died in 1933) is still cherished.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE PRIEST. By Fr Eugene Boylan, O.C.R. (Mercier Press; 10s.6d.)

This book is described in the blurb as 'a spiritual classic for priests' but it is not that—its defects are too numerous. First of all, it is not a book but a series of monthly articles bound together in their original form, and consequently there is much needless repetition both of phrase and thought and an irritating repetition of such remarks as 'space does not permit more to be said here'. Then there are some 'notable omissions' which though admitted by the author are not thereby justified. For example, there is 'no attempt to examine a priest's obligation to seek perfection', which the author admits is a fundamental and which is, of course, the only justification of all that follows. To include it would have meant recasting the whole book, and although there is a promise that these omissions will be made good later, the promise does not justify this book. There is, too, a wide gap between abstract idealism and practical counsels. Time and again the author leaves us in no doubt that his ideals are second to none, 'These views may seem extreme. And so they are. But the priesthood is an extreme thing. . . . Those are extreme words, terribly extreme . . . and if we are to put such extreme words into practice no superficial fulfilment is sufficient': but the practical counsels are by no means of so high an order. Internal evidence shows that the author is not entirely happy about this: see, for example, his half-apology that he 'would not care to undertake the responsibility of opposing views' more extreme than his own. One gets the impression, so often given in Clergy Retreats etc., that religious feel constrained to mitigate their idealism to suit what they consider the most they can ask of seculars. They seem to have decided that secular standards are low and they want to make them higher but dare not suggest that they should be as high as they know they ought to be. Their policy (and it seems almost a conspiracy) tends to confirm the unfortunate secular in acquiescing in something less than the highest practical idealism. It is noticeable throughout this book that the author is ill-at-ease and diffident when writing practical suggestions to the clergy (these passages are in glaring contrast with the authoritative and magisterial way in which he writes of the inner life) and he seems to realise his own limitations for he gives lengthy quotations from secular (and therefore in the circumstances unimpeachable?) authors rather than his own opinions. The doubt is inevitably raised whether,