

REVIEWS

about it. But it is a great pity that carelessness should have brought about so many lapses from elegance and even from grammatical soundness, and from clearness of statement.

As inelegancies might be instanced: 'And the Master, not too pleased, replies: I am the Resurrection . . .'; '. . . the privileged three, fresh from the heavenly cloud'; 'After a turn or two in the house below he begins again' (of Eliseus working to raise the widow's son to life); '. . . some Swiss countryside, pregnant with possibilities of pleasant rest.' And who does not shiver to hear the term 'enceinte' used of the Blessed Virgin?

There being so many misprints (certainly not less than twenty-two), and these often very confusing or even seriously misinforming, the publisher would do well to take the step of providing every unsold copy with a list of corrections.

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THE FRANCISCAN MESSAGE TO THE WORLD. By Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M. Translated and adapted by H. L. Hughes. (Burns Oates; 7/6.)

The title of this book may sound a trifle grandiloquent; but it is not easy to find an intelligible equivalent in English for *Il Francescanesimo* under which it first appeared. The author is well known as the Rector of the Catholic University of Milan, though many, no doubt, will be grateful for Fr. Hughes' brilliant little *Foreword* introducing Fr. Gemelli himself. The purpose of the book is best shown in the author's own words in his *Preface*. 'My intention,' he writes, 'has been to outline broadly the historical development of Franciscan spirituality and explain its ever-present and universal value, without dwelling on isolated historical facts or stopping to discuss points of philosophy and theology—however important and full of interest they may be.' One result of this—we may note in passing—is that here is a book of well over three hundred pages without a breath of controversy or bitterness; and the very division of the Order, in the sixteenth century, into three branches is shown in bright colours as involving 'a distribution of labour which became a source of strength.'

Bearing his intention in mind the author divides his book into three parts. The first is on *St. Francis and the times he lived in*; and it is hardly necessary to say that Fr. Gemelli not merely throws new light on old facts, but gives us something fresh as question of *more or less* of this world's goods, but on the *grawell*. Thus Franciscan poverty is held to depend not on any dual depression of 'the acquisitive instinct,' leading to a universal charity towards all, rich and poor alike, and to a new

concept of labour as toil for the sake of general welfare instead of personal wealth. The influence of Francis is emphasized in that changed conception of the material world which led the thirteenth century to look upon as a mirror of beauty what the twelfth had only seen as a 'valley of tears': and again in the development of the old monastic idea of the sanctity of *manual* labour into that which shows us powers of sanctification in legitimate action of *every* kind, in shop-keeping, trade, business and homely domestic life. Part II, *Franciscan Spirituality throughout the Centuries*, is a really brilliant piece of work, a concise but comprehensive survey, well balanced and judicious, of the Order's work for God and the salvation of souls. One may not always find oneself in perfect agreement with the author. If four men in a group of fifty come to blows, it is hardly right to speak of the uproar as general; so neither, to the present writer at least, is it correct to say that at the death of Francis, the Order he founded was 'rent in twain by rival factions, who fought over the question of the observance of poverty': and was poverty really the bone of contention? There are one or two slips, unavoidable in so catholic a survey. It was the Oxford rather than the Cambridge friars whom Grosst te befriended; and St. Peter of Alcantara, though asked for, never actually became confessor to Charles V. But these are pin-pricks—and it is a sure hand that paints for us, with rapid, masterly touch, the portraits of famous men that meet us in this second Part; and it is good to find lodged firmly in the Franciscan edifice saints whom some have fancied fitted ill with their Franciscan habit, St. Peter with his austerities—which yet may all be matched in the life of Francis—or St. Leonard of Port Maurice with his somewhat meticulous type of sanctity. Part III, *St. Francis and our own times*, opens with an account of the prevalent mentality, beyond the Catholic world, in all matters of religion, and gives a succinct analysis of the moral maladies from which present-day society is suffering; and these, Fr. Gemelli writes, 'can be condensed into a few words: the privation of God, the lack of supernatural life, the dominion of nature.' The chapters that follow—including considerations on *Liberty*, on *Action*, on *Happiness*—suggest, in optimistic fashion, ways and means of coping with these various ills of the modern world. This Part III is so well done as to give Fr. Gemelli's book a value of its own quite independent of its Franciscan tint. A word of praise and gratitude is surely due to Fr. Hughes in making this fine work accessible; but one would have preferred *Juniper* to *Ginepro*, and *Giles* to *Egidio*, and so on with certain other names possessed of a well-known English equivalents.

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