

Franciscan Bookreviews: *Franciscan History*

by André Cirino OFM

THE FRANCISCANS. William Short, OFM. Michael Glazier, Inc. [Now distributed by Liturgical Press]. Wilmington, De. 1989. 152pp.

This work by Bill Short provides us with a compact survey of the history of the entire Franciscan Order. It is a summary of the Order's development down through the centuries that provides a good introduction to those reading this history for the first time. It whets the appetite to pursue this history further, perhaps by reading a work like Duncan Nimmo's *REFORM AND DIVISION IN THE MEDIEVAL FRANCISCAN ORDER*, (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987). Bill's chapter on "The Franciscan Spirit" is a gem in its description of "the spiritual environment in which it (the Franciscan family) lives and grows, and the climate it creates around itself." Bill concludes: "In these pages I have assembled a series of snapshots, pieces of a family portrait, that of the Franciscans." He has indeed succeeded in doing just that. Recommended for course work for Secular Franciscan fraternities as well as for friary libraries.

SAINT FRANCIS AND THE THIRD ORDER: THE FRANCISCAN AND PRE-FRANCISCAN PENITENTIAL MOVEMENT. Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR. Franciscan Herald Press. Chicago, Il. 1989. 235pp.

This book would be a sine qua non for the summary it gives of the biblical and Franciscan understanding of penance, the origins of the penitents from the third century up to the time of Francis. Besides his development on how Francis himself became a penitent, Pazzelli has an excellent treatment on the First Letter to All the Faithful (Recensio Prior--the Volterra text) as well as the later or second version of the Letter to All the Faithful. "The Letter to all the Faithful could have undergone a development similar to that of the RNB (also known as the Earlier Rule) of 1221. As we know, the RNB is the result of that Protoregula of 1209 (1210). . . .In the same way, Francis could have added to and modified this Volterra text until he had the long or final edition, the Letter to All the Faithful." Anyone who works with TOR communities or SFO fraternities will appreciate his work on these two texts. Pazzelli's writing on both is solid research presented clearly and succinctly. Definitely recommended for SFO spiritual assistants, friary, convent and SFO libraries.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY. Damien Vorreau, OFM and Aaron Pembleton, OFM. Franciscan Herald Press. Chicago, Il. 1989. 110pp.

In the words of the authors, this is a "rapid overview of the history of the Order. For the most part, we have stressed people and institutions. . . ." As a survey of Franciscan history, the authors go through every century down to the twentieth, presenting primarily a survey history

of the first order with glimpses into the other branches. It is recommended for SFO and friary and convent libraries.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE FRANCISCAN MOVEMENT. David Flood, OFM. The Franciscan Institute of Asia. Quezon City, Philippines. 1989. 173pp.

Anyone who has ever read David Flood's writings or heard him speak will know that David approaches early Franciscan history almost exclusively from the writings of Francis. David, a former student and later colleague of Kajetan Esser, OFM, says: "The study of Franciscan history begins with an analysis of the basic document (the Early Rule). For the text manifests the intelligence in which Francis and his brothers fashioned the action called the Franciscan movement. That action differed sharply and consciously from the action prescribed by Assisi for its citizens. . . .The Early Rule throws open the door on the early Franciscan years. In the phrases of its development, in the variety of its themes, it offers itself to us as an oracle ready to answer all our questions. We have but to put the questions well. It is better than an oracle. It abhors ambiguity." In four chapters David formulates fascinating questions and the Early Rule has equally fascinating responses. The book has a unique approach to our early history. It is highly recommended for serious study or course work, for reflection, and for all SFO and friary or convent libraries. It can be ordered from The Franciscan Institute of Asia, P.O. Box AC 570 Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines.

FROM INTUITION TO INSTITUTION: THE FRANCISCANS, Theophile Desbonnets, OFM. Franciscan Herald Press, 1988, 165pp., with an appendix on Franciscan Sources.

"One day, the foolhardy desire of a man, or perhaps the desire of a group of men, encounters a marvelously expressive gospel text. Joy quickly emanates from the encounter: 'Here indeed is what we have been seeking!' In their desire, their encounter, their joy--in all three elements gushing forth from the same pure mountain spring--with the striking clarity of a starlit sky, they discover the Franciscan Intuition: to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ." [p.133]

Desbonnets, [RIP 8 July 1988] has a finely researched work that traces this intuition from its inception to its institutionalization. His analysis of the texts is critical and clear. His deduced insights are both new and refreshing. Some chapters along the way are: The Early Plan; Francis' Resignation; Brotherhood; Clericalization. I found his insights on brotherhood/fraternity particularly enlightening.

Desbonnets comments on Solet annuere, the papal bull approving the Rule of 1223, asking: "What could possibly have been the intention with an approval granted by means of the banal formula, Solet annuere?" Desbonnets says "this administrative formula was routine and involved no solemnity." There were 135 Solet annuere bulls issued by Innocent III and Honorius III. His insights on this and other questions are fascinating and

provocative. It is recommended for any Franciscan's reading and a good addition to any library, especially houses of formation.

OLIVI AND FRANCISCAN POVERTY: THE ORIGINS OF THE 'USUS PAUPER' CONTROVERSY,

David Burr. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, 211 pp.

Peter John Olivi, contrary to the Italian-sounding name he bears, was born in 1247/48 in southern France and died in 1298 and was buried at Narbonne. "He had entered the Franciscan order in 1259 or 1260 at the age of 12. He was a student in Paris by the later 1260s, but probably never taught there"[p.38]. He was the writer around when much of the Usus Pauper controversy surfaced. Burr writes:

Neither side of the Usus Pauper controversy can be identified precisely with the views of Saint Francis; yet in one sense Olivi catches the spirit of early Franciscanism as his opponents do not. His approach is more faithful to the spirit of adventure found in Franciscan legend. When a young Franciscan vows the rule, he embarks on a spiritual quest. The vow points him toward a goal and encourages him to travel in that direction. It does not offer a cookbook religion in which all the necessary ingredients are measured out to the nearest quarter-teaspoon. The boundary between...bending the vow and breaking it, remains unmapped. Nor can it ever be charted. It is beyond the simplistic human measurement. The Franciscan life is thus challenging and exciting, but these qualities are purchased at the cost of some uncertainty and thus some anxiety.

In stark contrast the life offered by Olivi's opponents seems less susceptible to uncertainty and anxiety, but it is as adventurous as lunch at a modern fast-food restaurant. The cost is reduced to a set price, and it is a price anyone feels he can afford; yet the value received is scaled down accordingly. The result is predictable but not very exciting. [Olivi] was by no means the sort of person who clings to old formulations through a need for familiar, clear answers. On the contrary, he was probably more comfortable with uncertainty than were most theologians of his time, more willing to live with open questions, and more adventurous. He displayed a noteworthy independence in deciding what should be accepted or rejected.[pp145-46]

Duncan Nimmo writes in his book **Reform And Division In The Medieval Franciscan Order**, that with the rise of the Spirituals, Olivi stands out as "a speculative thinker of considerable stature," a scholar and writer par excellence. Olivi's impact on the Italian spirituals dates at least from 1287, when Ubertino [da Casale] came to know him at Florence. Perhaps it dates from 1279. Of course, as we see from Ubertino and Angelo [Clarinus], the Italian spirituals made odd use of Olivi; yet, however much they may have distorted him. . . , any Franciscan leader who took the trouble to read his work could see that he resembled the rebels in his insistence that defying authority on the matter of usus pauper was not simply a right but a sacred duty when the purity of the rule was at stake. [p.172]

Nimmo holds that Ubertino and Angelo took Olivi's scholarly writing and popularized it in their own works for their followers. Burr gives another view of Olivi when he compares him to Bonaventure. He writes:

His stance was in some ways similar to that adopted by Bonaventure in his declining years. Both saw slippage in their own day but at least acted as if they thought it could be arrested or even reversed. The amount of decay seen by each was limited by the fact that both saw the development from Francis' time to their own not as a fall from original innocence but as a progression. The order had changed remarkably during those decades, accumulating a large membership, new responsibilities, and a great deal of power. Instead of bewailing these alterations, Bonaventure and Olivi both accepted them as positive accomplishments. Thus they sought not a return to the original standards of Rivo Torto and the Porziuncola, but a maintenance of a modest yet salubrious existence within a well-administered community, allowing the brothers to fulfill their responsibilities in the world while edifying it with their behavior [pp.179-80].

Burr has produced a scholarly work on Olivi and the Usus Pauper controversy. It shows us more of this friar than historical works sometimes portray in summary fashion. Burr has written articles on other aspects of Olivi's writings. This text makes for serious reading. It should be on the shelves of our study/formation libraries.

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALS AND THE CAPUCHIN REFORM by Thaddeus MacVicar, ofm cap, edited by Charles McCarron, ofm cap, The Franciscan Institute, St.Bonaventure, New York, 1986. 173 pp.

As I was preparing a few classes on the Capuchin Reform for our novices, I received a copy of this book. Finished in 1963 as a doctoral dissertation at the Gregorianum University of Rome, the present edition includes the entire original dissertation along with an updated though select bibliography.

The author basically establishes who the Spirituals were in our Order's history with a good summary in chapter III on the doctrine of the Spirituals. MacVicar writes:

The master idea of the early Capuchin legislation is the perfect imitation of St.Francis and complete fidelity to his every intention and wish. The opening chapter of the Constitutions of 1536 lays down the fundamental principles by which the Reform hopes to accomplish its perfect renewal of primitive Franciscan life. 1. The friars shall observe the Holy Gospel in the manner prescribed by St.Francis. When they speak of the Gospel life, they understand its obligations for the Order according to the papal declarations. 2. They shall observe the Rule to the letter, and without gloss. 3. They shall observe the Testament of St.Francis. 4. Over and above the Rule and Testament, they shall model themselves on all his words and works. 5. The general

chapter renounces in the name of the Order all privileges and exemptions which tend to relax the Rule [pp.57-58].

Having already shown earlier in the text that the "doctrine and mentality (of the Spirituals) were full of exaggerations"[p.60], nevertheless, "purified of the exaggerations their principles were basically sound and seemingly the only workable plan for renewing the primitive observance" [ibid.]. "We merely wish to show that the early Capuchins received from the Spirituals, though not from them exclusively, the fundamental principles of their reform"[p.61]. This last statement seems to be in opposition to the author's ultimate conclusion.

In the principles enunciated above, it would seem that there could be a discrepancy between numbers one and two. The Spirituals, according to Duncan Nimmo [Cf. REFORM AND DIVISION IN THE MEDIEVAL FRANCISCAN ORDER] basically strove for literal observance of the Rule, Testament, and the entire Gospel. For them, papal declarations would be considered a "gloss," the first in a long line of which would be the papal bull *Quo Elongati* of Gregory IX. It stated that the Testament was not binding for the friars, only the Rule was. Moreover, they were bound by obligation only to observe those passages of the Gospel contained in the Rule, not to the entire Gospel.

The author is concerned mainly with comparing the early Capuchins with the Spirituals to discover if they were "mentally and historically the inheritors of the Spiritual tradition."

He writes in his final chapter: "As a final conclusion to our entire study, we can say that in the origin and development of the Capuchin Reform, Spiritual influence properly so-called was limited to an overemphasis in the initial years on the eremitical life, a cult of prophecies (Joachimistic), and a certain opposition to studies...Outside the infiltration of Spiritual doctrine just mentioned, we must deny Spiritual influence as a whole" [p 103].

This work would be valuable in the libraries of our formation houses.

ANTHONY OF PADUA: PROCLAIMER OF THE GOSPEL, by Lothar Hardick, OFM; translated by Zachary Hayes, OFM and Jason M. Miskuly, OFM; edited by Cassian A. Miles, OFM, and Janet Gianopoulos; published by Editions Du Signe, B.P.94 m, F67038 Strasbourg Cedex 2, France, 48pp.

This volume published during this centenary year of St. Anthony's birth is most welcome. Its format is handsomely presented with each of its sections accompanied by reproductions of artistic works of St. Anthony. And the biographical research of Lothar Hardick, OFM is refreshing. Hardick, in a brief biographical sketch, treats of Anthony's family background and youth, his becoming a Franciscan, his work in northern Italy, southern France, his leadership of the Romagna Province, his last years in Padua, the return of the saint to God, St. Anthony today, and a brief chronology.

The value of this solid but short biography is in its excellent research. And it is brief enough for readers to acquaint themselves with this very popular saint. The biography gives a good sense of who Anthony was, and as such it gives the reader a good handle on the facts as opposed to the many legends and devotions that have sprung up around Anthony.

It would make an attractive addition to any Franciscan library. More importantly, this work would be most helpful to those whose ministry involves devotion to St. Anthony, whether it is

used for basic background information for preaching or presentations, or whether it is made available to devotees of St. Anthony.

THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS by Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, translated by Aidan Mullaney, TOR, Franciscan University Press, Steubenville, Ohio, 1993, 239pp.

Raffaele Pazzelli, in this detailed study, traces the origins of the Franciscan Sisters, i.e., congregations of Sisters of the Third Order Regular. It is an historical study in 13 chapters of the struggle of the women's congregations (the male TOR friars are included at times) who banded together in communities while doing some work outside their community such as care for the sick.

Pazzelli uses papal bulls as the main focus of his study to unravel this complicated history. He takes each century from the thirteenth to the present emphasizing the struggle to avoid enclosure that was the thrust of the Rule of Clare for the second order. Until 1521, these sisters (and brothers) followed the Rule of Nicholas IV of 1289, a Rule written primarily for Secular Franciscans, "suitable for married people, but not for virgins and celibates"[p.95]. So Leo X wrote a "suitable" Rule for the third order regular in 1521. The Council of Trent (1545-63) decreed strict cloister for all women's congregations "causing Franciscan sisters to pass from the status of...sister to...cloistered nuns" [p.101]. As Pazzelli moves to the 17th and 18th centuries he treats of new congregations that arise "because of life's circumstances" [p.121], the Franciscan sisters being distinguished by the special attention given to the care of the sick in hospitals, in rest homes, in homes for the elderly, in charitable activity among the very poor, sheltering homes for the orphans and educational programs for children and youth, particularly for young girls [p.129].

Pazzelli moves through the centuries down to the present by highlighting the origins of a sample of Franciscan sisters' congregations, showing how the Holy See gradually shifted gears from prohibiting to encouraging the formation of new congregations.

The author touches on the Rule of Pius XI, leading to his treatment of the new Rule approved for all TOR men and women 8 December 1982. His last chapter is a summary of penitential spirituality which he gives a clearer and more extensive treatment to in his book **ST. FRANCIS AND THE THIRD ORDER**.

This volume should be found in any Franciscan library, especially in our houses of formation.