

So we can picture these medieval missionaries of the sea, conducting morning and evening prayers on the deck of a galley, or celebrating their 'Dry Masses' while it was often hard for them to keep their balance, what with the rolling and pitching of the vessel. They consoled and encouraged the sick; warned open sinners of the fate that awaited them if they did not repent and give up their evil ways; set an example by their own lives; their patience and acceptance of discomfort and hardships. Had it not been for them there would have been nobody on board to speed many a soul on its last voyage, and to commit the body to the sea. Very few of the names of these sea apostles of the later Middle Ages have been recorded, but, thanks to *The Book of the Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri* we are able to visualise how others besides himself revealed Christ to seamen.

REVIEWS

A SIMPLE WAY OF LOVE. By a Poor Clare, edited and introduced by Columba Cary Elwes, O.S.B. (Burns Oates; 6s.)

As the Editor of this little book well remarks, 'it is obviously written for nuns. This may keep many from reading it, even nuns. But that would be a pity, as the spirit is strong and manly, full of sound sense and humour, besides being uncompromising'. God calls all souls to a loving union with him. This is obtained by uniting the will lovingly with his. In religion this is more easily attained, though the young aspirant will soon discover that he or she has not left behind self-love, which is the greatest obstacle to the love of God. The love of God is not a matter of sentiment, nor does it consist in performing great and extraordinary austerities, or in prolonged prayer. Such practices are only pleasing to God when they are according to his will, 'but if they are not His Will they are a danger to the soul who seeks holiness in them and neglects to do the Will of God in humbler ways'.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one way to know and love God. 'Some tell us that to attain to union with God we must tread down all created images under our feet, even the humanity of Jesus must be left behind as we strive to dart up to the Godhead. No, this is not the way. Union with God cannot be arrived at by any forcing of the will; no, not even by any fervent effort except the effort be the sacrifice of the will in love. There is no other way to union but looking at Jesus and desiring Him, and then, for the sake of that desire, renouncing all other desires, even the desire of pleasing yourself'. It is Jesus who sends his Spirit of Love forth. In the Heart of

Jesus we find God. Life's work is to overcome self-love and put the love of God in its place.

The writer shows more than human prudence in her chapter on Poverty. She admits that external changes may be necessary sometimes, but the interior spirit must never be sacrificed. Elaborate labour-saving devices would introduce a spirit of worldliness. 'This does not forbid simple hand-worked tools such as working people can afford, which will lighten heavy work and enable our sisters to dispense with a man's help and prevent the work encroaching on the time of prayer or exhausting the sisters beyond their strength. Instances of such justifiable helps are sewing machines and hand-cultivators, where a large garden is cultivated, but not those driven by electricity or motor power. Electric lighting and central heating may be used, as these are better for the health and more economical than more old-fashioned lighting and heating methods. When an old customary article has gone so far out of general use that it would cost more to procure than a more modern article, the cheaper modern one would be more in keeping with holy poverty'. These points have a deeper significance and a wider range than the proverbial Victorian umbrella, which religious decorum would not allow to be used as a walking-stick. Some amusing anecdotes are told to illustrate that the rigorous spirit of poverty is not best expressed by charging others with expenses incurred.

A timely note of warning concerning manifestation of conscience is attached to Chapter VI. But it does not sufficiently modify what is written on p. 48, where it is positively advocated that nuns should choose as their director their own superior, in preference to the confessor, on the grounds that he has insufficient understanding. This prevalent view can only be described as false and is open to very many objections. A lady superior who has not the theological learning to function as a spiritual director will inevitably take the lay-person's viewpoint, and there is no safeguard to prevent her from using her information in the external régime, not to say in other ways.

In a discerning final chapter for Superiors, they are reminded of their responsibilities, and not to use their power to impose their personal tastes or opinions on their communities, unless there are good reasons for believing that those things are according to the Will of God.

The book is an example of wise simplicity, and is of tremendous value even to the learned if they are wise enough to follow the simple way which is Christ.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.