

These slight flaws notwithstanding, we have no hesitation in welcoming this painstaking and scholarly addition to Franciscan lore in English.

ETHELBERT CARDIFF, O.F.M.

AN OLD APOSTLE SPEAKS. By Vincent McNabb, O.P., with a Memoir by Fr Gerald Vann, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 1s. 6d.)

Those who knew and loved Fr Vincent will be glad to have the opportunity of sharing in these excerpts from his sermons and retreats. They will read them not only for the deep and simple truths, which were the *medulla* of Fr Vincent's life as an Apostle of Truth, but their memories will clothe them with the living voice and expression, which so often opened up unspoken visions beyond. More than anyone else one was always clearly aware that the Scriptures and the *Summa* were the sources of his life and thought. He applied the spirit of poverty all round, even in his choice of words and hence achieved on many occasions the chastened economy of the inspired word. And this arose not from any straining after literary form but from his own ascetic practice and self-discipline, so well illustrated in a family retreat: 'One very good mortification is *always* to get at the real truth—to search for it at great pains and having got it, preach it and see what happens'. That was not merely advice to his fellow-Dominicans: it was his own life-long rule—his work, as he loved to call it.

After truth comes love, and Fr Vincent's dying words: 'I have no enemies' did sum up his life, which he had spent in loving all men. Not only did he love the physically poor, but even more, the spiritually poor. 'Outside in the world there is a poor man at the door, and he doesn't know he is poor. Let us pity him, and let us ask pardon for any sin of ours that has made it more difficult for him to know he is poor and still outside the door of the great Gift of Faith which God is waiting to offer to his mind and heart'. We are grateful to Fr Vann for having stressed this all-embracing love and that mainly from quotations from Fr Vincent's own words. How necessary today are the mind and heart of an Old Apostle for a starving and spiritually sick world!

P. J. FLOOD

THE SORROW OF GOD. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Aquinas Papers No. 7, Blackfriars, Oxford; 1s.)

When any question is asked about the possibility of sorrow or suffering in God, the professional theologians are content to reply with a rather frosty, 'God is impassible'. Fr Vann, with his uncanny instinct for the problems that most afflict the contemporary mind, has decided to explore this dark and difficult matter. To our knowledge it is pioneer work for one who accepts the principles of the *philosophia perennis*, and perhaps more remains to be said.

The key to Fr Vann's treatment is the love of God. Love implies sympathy, the will-to-share, pity. As St Thomas says in a quite different context, *miser cordia*, pity, is first cousin to charity, or even

the outflow of charity. The supreme example of God's will-to-share in the sufferings of mankind is the Passion of his Son, Jesus Christ, which we must remember to see *sub specie æternitatis* as God sees it. God's willing 'involvement' (an ugly word Fr Vann seems fond of) in human suffering remains, for with him there is neither past nor present. But what do we mean by God's 'will-to-share'? That is the crux of the whole thesis. Using human analogies, Fr Vann points out that sorrow and joy, even with us, are not necessarily successive states but that often they interpenetrate one another: 'the deepest joy is that in which there is the trace of tears', something perhaps of what Virgil was trying to say. Apply this with all the necessary reservations to God, remember, as the early Church did, the suffering of Christ *with* the joy of his Resurrection and glory, and we come to glimpse a possible state, transcending joy and sorrow, where God sees 'the good, which is love, emerging from evil and the evil only in terms of that triumphant good'. These words remind one of St Paul's, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'.

Such is an outline of the thesis, delicately and respectfully handled, and the dangers of sentimentalism firmly avoided. We hope Fr Vann will expand his thesis a little and perhaps re-write it for the many simple and anxious souls who will welcome his doctrine.

J. D. CRICHTON

THE BOOK OF THE LOVER AND THE BELOVED. Translated from the Catalan of Ramon Lull, with an Introductory Essay by E. Allison Peers. (S.P.C.K.; 5s.)

Professor Peers has recast his introduction and translated the treatise afresh from the critical text of the original. The improvements on the first edition of twenty years ago are slight quantitatively but they give light in many passages: in the description of love, 'It is boldness. It is fervour. It is fear', becomes 'Love is the mingling of boldness and fear, that comes through great fervour'; 'each declared his Beloved perfection' becomes 'each one had the Beloved for his precious possession'. In addition the translator now includes the paragraphs from *Blanquerna* which immediately precede the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* in its original context, and an appendix of additional paragraphs found in certain versions only.

These improvements will help the reader to draw more benefit from this classic, in which Blessed Ramon sets forth 366 short paragraphs for daily meditation. Some of these would take a day to sort out—'Lover and Beloved are so strictly united in the Beloved that they are one actuality in Essence. And Lover and Beloved are actualities distinct, which agree without contrariety or diversity of essence'. Others will bring a happy conviction to the seeker for right order in his spiritual life—'Ninety of these hundred fear Me lest I should condemn them to Hell, and ten love Me that I may grant them Glory; hardly is there one who loves Me for My goodness and nobility'. The objective type of spirituality conveyed in this lament is characteristic of the