

I could not help regretting the absence of a chapter on Mary as woman of prayer within the Carmelite tradition – a lacuna in what is otherwise a remarkable book.

JAMES McCAFFREY, O.C.D.

[This review first appeared in «The Tablet» of 7th February 2004, and is reproduced with kind permission].

FELIP RIBOT, *The Ten Books on the Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelites (including The Book of the First Monks)*, edited and translated by Richard Copsey, O.Carm., *Early Carmelite Spirituality* 1. 2005, pp. xx, 187. Edizioni Carmelitane, Via Sforza Pallavicini 10, 00193, Roma, Italia (ISBN 88-7288-076-9).

Felip Ribot's *Ten Books on the Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelites* is a key-text for understanding the development of Carmelite spirituality and identity, though it is not nearly as well known as it deserves because of the lack of a reliable printed edition or anything other than small sections in translation. Paul Chandler's doctoral thesis, which edits Books I-VII, is still unpublished, so one is dependent for a Latin text on manuscripts or the two sixteenth-century editions, both of which are unreliable. A few short passages have been edited by modern scholars. Modern translations have tended to be confined to the first few chapters and are in any case not widely available.

The Ten Books are better known as *The Book (or Institution) of the First Monks*, the title of the first and longest of the texts supposedly edited by Ribot. It is a matter of scholarly debate how many of his early Carmelite documents are genuine, though most accept the text of the Rule given by Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The early chapters have long been valued as a spiritual 'classic'. They offer Elijah as a model of the 'prophet-hermit', with a sustained meditation on his life, illustrating both the discipline and the rewards of contemplation. However there is much to be valued also in the historical chapters, even if much of their history is legendary, for they give us an invaluable insight into the mind of the fourteenth-century friar and are not different in kind from other late medieval histories. We need *The Ten Books* also because of their impact on later Carmelites. They had a significant influence on Teresa of Avila, who read it in a Spanish translation, and her reforms may be understood as a response to Ribot's account of the life of the earliest Carmelite hermits.

Father Copsey comments that he has chosen 'English words which give the sense of Ribot's ideas, rather than attempting to slavishly follow his exact choice of Latin terms' (p. xviii), which is surely prudent. Nevertheless it is a very close translation and more often than not follows the basic sentence structure of the Latin. The style is formal, the idiom slightly old fashioned.

There may well be readers who would have preferred a more fluent and idiomatic translation, even if a little less close to the Latin - but this is a matter of taste. Readers with no Latin might have been glad to know about the pun on Carith and caritas, for it figures many times. Translating Ribot's citations can present a problem and Copsey has wisely chosen to give an English translation which preserves Ribot's understanding of the words rather than the most accurate translation of the words themselves or an already published modern translation. References are given in the footnotes which enable an interested reader to find a modern scholarly translation for comparison.

This book is a work of great scholarship. Whilst the first part is a translation of Chandler's text, the last three books translate a Latin text which Copsey himself has created from a study of all the printed editions checked against three of the manuscripts. The text is presented clearly and in a way which makes it easy to distinguish between the supposedly ancient documents, Ribot's comments on them and additional citations from later texts. The numerous quotations are identified and there is an index of quotations from authorities. The general index is very thorough, covering topics as well as people, places and texts quoted. So, for example, an entry on 'hermeneutics' leads one to an account of the early Carmelites being taught how to interpret the Old Testament scriptures allegorically.

This is an important book and Father Copsey is to be congratulated on his achievement.

VALERIE EDDEN

*University of Birmingham*

MICHEL DE SAINT-AUGUSTIN, *Vita Spiritualis. Introduction à la vie intérieure et pratique fruitive de la vie mystique*, traduite par George Bernard; annotée et éditée par Romero de Lima Gouvea, O.Carm. 2005. Éditions Parole et Silence. Euro 45,00.

Les Grands Carmes de Nantes ont publié une traduction française d'une œuvre de Michel de Saint-Augustin (1625-1684), qui s'appelle *Introductio in terram Carmeli et gustatio fructuum illius seu Introductio ad vitam vere carmeliticam seu mysticam et fruitiva praxis eiusdem*, Bruxelles 1659. Comme prier provincial d'une province bilingue (flamande et française), Michel de Saint-Augustin aurait été très heureux de voir son livre sur la vie carmélitaine traduit dans la langue française plus de trois siècles après l'édition de 1659 dans les langues Latine et Flamande. Pour la traduction du texte le traducteur prof. George Bernard et l'éditeur Romero Gouvea de Lima O.Carm. n'ont pas pris l'édition Latine de 1659, mais l'édition de 1926 de Gabriel Wessels. Wessels a réédité le texte Latin du troisième livre des *Institutiones Mysticorum libri quatuor* (1671). Les *Institutiones Mysticorum* sont une compilation de quatre livres de Michel de Saint-Augustin sur la vie carmélitaine (*Pia Vita in Christo*, 1663; *Tentationes pro Incipientibus, Proficientibus et Perfectis*, 1663; *Introduc-*