

## NOTIZIE BIBLIOGRAFICHE

S. ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Carteggio*. I: 1724-1743, a cura di Giuseppe ORLANDI, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004, 840 p.

Die letzte Edition der Briefe des heiligen Alfons von Liguori, besorgt von Friedrich Kuntz und Francesco Pitocchi, liegt bereits mehr als 100 Jahre zurück. Seither wurde eine Anzahl weiterer Briefe de Liguoris aufgefunden und zum großen Teil an verschiedenen Orten veröffentlicht. Bereits nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wurde der Ruf nach einer Neuedition laut, die nicht nur die neu hinzugekommenen – und noch zu entdeckenden Briefe – berücksichtigt, sondern auch den Erfordernissen gerecht wird, die heute an eine Briefedition gestellt werden. Der Ruf wurde umso drängender, weil man heute mehr als früher um den Quellenwert von Briefen weiß, da diese besser als jede Biographie – unmittelbar und ungefiltert – die Person des Schreibenden widerspiegeln. So war es an der Zeit, dass endlich eine neue und möglichst definitive Neuedition erfolgt, die den heutigen modernen Erfordernissen gerecht wird.

Giuseppe Orlandi, Professor an der Lateran-Universität und Mitglied des Historischen Instituts der Redemptoristen in Rom hat die Neuedition in Angriff genommen. Dabei ging es ihm nicht nur um eine bloße Briefsammlung (epistolario), sondern um einen Briefwechsel (carteggio) des Heiligen. Im Vergleich zu den bisherigen Briefsammlungen de Liguoris zweifellos ein qualitativer Sprung, denn man erlebt den Heiligen im unmittelbaren Gespräch mit seinen Zeitgenossen und es ist hoch interessant, seine Briefe bis hin zu Stil und Sprachduktus mit denen seiner Briefpartner zu vergleichen. Nach langen mühsamen Vorarbeiten konnte Orlandi den ersten Band der projektierten Edition vorlegen. Er stellt eine editorische Glanzleistung dar, nicht zuletzt auch auf Grund der darin enthaltenen Einleitung zur Gesamtedition, der vorgestellten Editions-kriterien und der die Edition erläuternden Anhänge und Indices, die in ihrer Akribie nicht übertroffen werden können. Wenden wir uns zuerst diesem Teil des Werkes zu.

Da ist zunächst die allgemeine Einleitung. Sie zeichnet in einem ersten Abschnitt eine kurze Skizze des Lebens und des Persönlichkeitsprofils de Liguoris, um dann auf seine immense literarische Tätigkeit zu sprechen zu kommen. Neben dem Umfang, der Art und der Qualität seiner Publikationen kommen ausführlich Stil und Sprach-

gebrauch bei Alfons zur Sprache. Überzeugend wird dargestellt, dass de Liguori – so sehr er die gehobene Sprache beherrschte – aus pastoralen Gründen einen bewusst einfachen Stil schrieb, was nicht heißt, dass er sehr wohl, je nach Inhalt und literarischer Art seiner Publikationen, die verschiedensten Register zu ziehen verstand. Gelehrsamkeit um der Gelehrsamkeit willen lag ihm fern; doch hielt er sich hinsichtlich einschlägiger Neuerscheinungen stets auf dem laufenden. Bedeutend für die Verbreitung seiner Werke erwies sich, so Orlandi, dass de Liguori es verstand, einen engen Kontakt mit dem führenden europäischen Verlagshaus Remondini herzustellen, von dem zahlreiche Briefe Zeugnis geben.

In einem zweiten Abschnitt geht Orlandi den Geschicken der Briefe de Liguoris und ihrer Editions-geschichte im Laufe der Jahrhunderte nach. Dabei zeigt sich, dass von Anfang an ein großes Interesse an den Briefen bestand. Von den möglicherweise 5000 Briefen, die Alfonso de Liguori geschrieben hat, wurden in einem Verzeichnis des Jahres 1803 2013 als vorhanden katalogisiert. Leider gingen viele Briefe dadurch verloren, dass sie als Reliquien in die ganze Welt gegeben wurden, vor allem nach der Heiligsprechung des Jahres 1839. Was die Editionen der Briefe anlangt, so erschien die erste 1815. Nachdem im Laufe der Jahre weitere Briefe entdeckt worden waren, kam es dann in den Jahren 1887 bis 1890 durch die Redemptoristen Friedrich Kuntz und Francesco Pitocchi (die Gesamtzahl der edierten Briefe belief sich auf 1470) zur ersten großen Edition. Sie konnten damit einem lang gehegten Bedürfnis nachkommen. Vom wissenschaftlichen Standpunkt aus allerdings wies die Edition zahlreiche Mängel auf, ja, in Einzelfällen wurden Briefe verstümmelt und nicht textgetreu gedruckt. Dies wie die Auffindung weiterer Briefe – die Gesamtzahl ist auf 1921 gestiegen – ließ dann, wie bereits angeführt, den Ruf nach einer wissenschaftlich-kritischen Neu-edition lautwerden.

Im dritten Abschnitt der Einleitung erläutert Orlandi sein Projekt des „Carteggio“ und die maßgeblichen Kriterien für die Aufnahme einzelner Dokumente in dasselbe. Als wichtigste Korrespondenten nennt der Verf. Personen aus dem engsten Umfeld de Liguoris (Tommaso Falcoia, Maria Celeste Crostarosa) sowie das Verlagshaus Remondini. Orlandi hebt hervor, dass er glaubt, mit seiner Edition nicht nur einen sehr speziellen Bereich zugänglich gemacht, sondern auch einen Beitrag zu allgemeinen Kirchen- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte geleistet zu haben.

Der Einleitung schließt sich ein kurzer Abschnitt an, in dem die Kriterien für die Wiedergabe der Briefe erläutert werden, gefolgt von

einem Verzeichnis der in den Texten vorkommenden Münzen, Maße und Gewichte sowie einer Erläuterung der damaligen italienischen Tageseinteilung. Es folgt das Vorwort zum 1. Band mit einem Überblick der in dem Band enthaltenen 296 Briefe aus den Jahren 1724-1743 (davon 106 Briefe de Liguoris und 190 seiner Korrespondenten), gefolgt von einer detaillierten Auflistung und der Vorstellung der Briefe nach Absender und Empfänger.

Das Corpus der in dem Band edierten Briefe selbst (Seite 91-645) besticht durch seine übersichtliche Anordnung: jedem Jahr geht ein Überblick über die für de Liguori wichtigsten Ereignisse des Jahres voraus; jeder Brief wird durch eine genaue Inhaltsangabe eingeleitet. Die zahlreichen Anmerkungen mit ihren Verifizierungen und Verweisen machen die immense Arbeitsleistung des Herausgebers deutlich und erweisen sich als eine fast unerschöpfliche Fundgrube, weit über die Geschichte der Redemptoristen-Kongregation hinaus. An das Corpus der Briefe schließen sich exakte archivarisches und bibliographische Angaben zu jedem einzelnen Briefe an. Sie beziehen sich auf den Fundort des Originals und eventueller Kopien, den Ort bisheriger Veröffentlichungen, die Erwähnungen in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur. Es folgen ausführliche Biogramme der Korrespondenten des Heiligen mit der Angabe weiterführender Literatur, ein Glossarium der von de Liguori verwendeten Abweichungen vom heutigen Italienisch und eine Zeittafel wichtiger Ereignisse in den Jahren 1696-1743. Das umfassende Literaturverzeichnis, die Personen- und Sachregister, spezielle Register der Absender und Empfänger der Briefe, schließlich ein Verzeichnis sämtlicher Briefe in chronologischer Reihenfolge erleichtern wesentlich die Arbeit mit den edierten Dokumenten.

Bleibt übrig, wenigstens kurz auf die edierten Briefe selbst einzugehen, auch wenn in einer Rezension nicht des langen und breiten über diese gesprochen werden kann. Die Lektüre muss der Leser selbst leisten und sich dabei immer wieder überraschen lassen. Vor der Lektüre sollte er allerdings nicht unterlassen, die kurzen Überblicke, die den einzelnen Briefen eines Jahres vorausgehen, sorgfältig durchzulesen. Sie weisen auf die wesentlichen Gesichtspunkte hin. Diese sind in den Jahren bis 1743 vor allem die Gründung, die Zielsetzung und Festigung der Kongregation der Redemptoristen. Die handelnden Personen mit ihren verschiedenen Intentionen, Plänen und auch Zweifeln – vor allem de Liguori und die Mitbegründer der Kongregation Maria Celeste Crostarosa und Bischof Tommaso Falcoia – treten sehr lebendig vor die Augen des Lesers, und es wird aus deren persönlichen Äu-

ßerungen selbst deutlich, welche Rolle sie am Beginn der Redemptoristen-Kongregation als Gründer und Mitgründer spielten, bis 1743 nach dem Tode Falcoias sich eine feste Form für das neue Institut herauskristallisiert hatte: „Was die äußere rechtliche Struktur und Leitung der Kongregation anlangt, so akzeptierte der heilige Alfons zwei grundsätzliche Festlegungen des Bischofs Falcoia: die Wahl des Generalobern auf Lebenszeit und den weiten Umfang seiner Machtbefugnisse. Der dem Institut eigene missionarische Ausrichtung hingegen wurzelt voll und ganz in den Intentionen de Liguoris, während die Spiritualität der neuen Gemeinschaft sich wesentlich an den Anregungen der Maria Celeste Crostarosa – angepasst an das Leben und apostolische Wirken einer Männerkongregation – orientiert“ (S. 627).

In diesem Zusammenhang sei nochmals auf den Vorzug des „Briefwechsels“ gegenüber einer bloßen Briefsammlung hingewiesen. Man kann die Briefe de Liguoris, der Schwester Maria Celeste Crostarosa und des Bischofs Falcoia mit einander lesen und den jeweiligen Stil auf sich wirken lassen und man versteht sofort die Beziehung, welche die drei Personen zu einander hatten und welche Rolle sie jeweils für die junge Gemeinschaft spielten. Ähnliches gilt von anderen Beziehungen, etwa hinsichtlich der Seelenführung verschiedener Schwestern durch Alfonso de Liguori, dessen ruhiger klarer Ton beeindruckt, so wenn er die Schwestern energisch mahnt, statt der Verwendung von allerlei Bußwerkzeugen sich lieber einer gesunden geistlichen Lektüre zu widmen.

Diese Hinweise auf den vorzüglichen ersten Band der Edition mögen genügen, und so sei zum Schluss der Hoffnung Ausdruck gegeben, das möglichst bald weitere Bände nachfolgen.

Otto Weiss

IMPROTA Lino, *Sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori e il Natale*, Napoli, Edlim, 2003, 434 p.

L'Autore, lo apprendiamo dalla Notizia bio-bibliografica a p. 364, è napoletano: “docente per diversi anni, è ora impegnato nei vari settori dell'informazione. Giornalista, ha diretto l'Ufficio stampa e P.R. del Magistrato per il Po in Parma, del Ministero dei LL.PP. in Roma, delle Opere Marittime in Napoli. Addetto stampa alla Giunta regionale della Campania. Scrive per giornali e riviste di rilievo. Realizza interviste. Esperto di relazioni pubbliche e di stampa aziendale (ha diretto diverse riviste), è consulente delle iniziative editoriali per pubblicizza-

re il prodotto o l'immagine dell'azienda. È presidente dell'IRSI (Istituto Regionale di Ricerche, Studi e Iniziative). Collabora ad attività di ricerca per strutture universitarie e per la RAI-TV. Formato agli studi umanistici e teologici, è scrittore e saggista dallo stile accattivante. Appassionato lettore e cultore di sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori, ne cita spesso la dottrina". L'Autore è altresì poeta, pittore, critico letterario e traduttore.

Ci siamo dilungati in questa citazione perché sorpresi da un nome nuovo e finora sconosciuto, a quanto ci è dato sapere, nel panorama degli studiosi alfonsiani. Siamo, pertanto ad un'opera prima, alla quale a breve dovrebbe seguire: *Antologia alfonsiana: un itinerario spirituale*.

Le ante della copertina ci offrono il contenuto del libro, che si divide in quattro parti. Riportiamo:

"La I parte offre una rivisitazione dell'Incarnazione di Gesù nei Vangeli di Luca e Matteo, nella parola affascinante di scrittori e giornalisti, di poeti, quali Angelini, Gozzano, Manzoni, Pascoli, Ravasi, Rebor, Torelli, Turollo. Autori eccezionali ci parlano anche di Maria: la Vergine protagonista dell'Incarnazione. Questo 'preludio' letterario e antologico, serve per introdurci nel clima di Natale e aiutarci a comprenderne e viverne il mistero. Nella II parte troviamo *Chi è sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, uscito dalla penna di Karol Wojtyła (papa Giovanni Paolo II). Una piccola lucida biografia del Santo. Alla III parte c'è *Alfonso scrittore*. Dei dottori della Chiesa (l'unico del XVIII secolo) è tra i più vicini a noi e sicuramente tra i più letti. È, nientedimeno, lo scrittore *best-seller* mondiale! Ha scritto di ascetica, dogmatica, apologetica: una vasta produzione, più di cento opere. Una biblioteca! In queste pagine vengono presentati solamente i suoi scritti natalizi, secondo il progetto editoriale del tema-binomio *Incarnazione-Natale*. Nella IV parte, infine, parliamo di *Alfonso poeta e musicista*, ma in due trattazioni distinte, e con le rispettive "Introduzioni". È questa la sede delle *Canzoncine spirituali* alfonsiane (vi troviamo solo quelle a carattere natalizio). [...] A corredo dell'attività culturale di sant'Alfonso è stato doveroso, e di somma utilità, riportare illuminanti interpretazioni e contributi critici di studiosi e di docenti universitari: Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, Patrizia Bertini Malgarini, Roberto De Simone, Pompeo Giannantonio, Valeria Giannantonio, Oreste Gregorio, Lino Improta, Rita Librandi, Marina Mayrhofer, Théodule Rey-Mermet, Paolo Saturno, Giovanni Velocci" (*omessi, non so perché, Giovanni Getto e Francesco Flora*).

Da redentorista, appena avuta notizia dalla stampa di quest'opera, dal titolo così accattivante e di autore ignoto alla bibliografia alfonsiana, abbiamo cercato di procurarcelo attraverso una nota libreria cattolica romana, ma invano. Eppure ce lo siamo trovato tra le mani, richiesti di recensirlo. Ci ha subito colpito la qualità del volume: formato insolito (28 x 20), carta patinata, impaginazione incorniciata in un fregio, illustrazioni di qualità. Abbiamo pensato si trattasse di una strenna natalizia, ma non lo è; di un commento-guida alle Meditazioni e ai canti natalizi di sant'Alfonso, ma non lo è. Che dunque? Non vorremmo errare, ma la collocazione più adeguata ci sembra debba essere tra le Antologie di critica letteraria. Infatti, tolti alcuni piccoli contributi personali, l'Autore con molta abilità sceglie e collega gli argomenti dai saggi specialistici degli studiosi e critici letterari da lui citati e tutti ben noti. Si distingue la preferenza accordata a *Quanno nascette Ninno a Bettaleme* (ottima la traduzione in lingua di Improta), sulla quale si ritorna molte volte e a lungo. C'è poi squilibrio tra le parti: ben 215 pagine dedicate a *Alfonso poeta e musicista*, delle quali 63 tratte da *Alfonso M. de Liguori e la società civile del suo tempo*, Atti del Convegno internazionale per il Bicentenario della morte del Santo (1787-1987), a cura di Pompeo Giannantonio, Firenze, Olschki, 1990, 2 voll.

In un'opera così ben curata ci aspetteremmo meno errori tipografici, data la facilità di correggerli al computer. Ci permettiamo di segnalarne alcuni: p. 164 l'autore del dipinto è il prof. [Carlo: nome] Clara de Montanaro (cognome); p. 208: In uno di questi viaggi a Scalea, ove fin dal 1690 il Metastasio [nato nel 1694] seguiva le lezioni di Gregorio Colaprese; p. 213: *Carmina sacra... latinae vera* [latine versa]. Facciamo notare che la citazione esatta è: REUSS François Xavier, *Carmina sacra S. Alphonsi M. de Ligorio, Doctoris Ecclesiae, nunc primum anno natali S. Doctoris CC ex italico sermone variis adhibitis metris latine reddita*, Roma, Cuggiani, 1896; p. 399: mirabuntur [mirabantur] et non convertebantur; p. 400 ma anche il [da] vecchio metteva in nota a meraviglia; p. 321: *spingole frangese* diventano: *spigole* (quante per un tornese?); p. 344: Domenico Scarlatti (1729-1757): re del clavicembalo e musicista illustre. Figlio di Alessandro (Palermo 1660-Napoli 1725): *stando così le date, avrebbe generato il figlio 4-5 anni dopo la morte: in realtà questi nacque nel 1685*. Ci sorprende poi che Improta, così puntiglioso e quasi irritato nel precisare (p. 361) che *Zambardelli (con le altre varianti)* deve essere scritto *Zambarelli*, non faccia altrettanto con il *Perrucci* di Bàrberi Squarotti, correttamente Pe-

trucci. All'attentissimo Autore è sfuggito anche un meridionalismo, eccolo: "e nemmeno le cosiddette 'Scuole di poesia' possono imparare a fare il poeta" (p. 324).

Avviandoci alla conclusione del nostro discorso, ci viene alla mente un libro che l'Autore non cita e forse non conosce, ma che gli sarebbe stato molto utile compulsare: *Un umanista del '700 italiano Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, Provincia Romana C.Ss.R.-Bettinelli Editori, Verona, 1992, 263 p. Si tratta di un pregevole lavoro dei redentoristi S. RAPONI e E. MARCELLI. Se un appunto si può muovere ai due confratelli, e venne fatto, è che l'amore al Fondatore li ha portati a moltiplicare, in luogo di ridurre al dovuto, le citazioni alfonsiane. *Il grande amore a S. Alfonso*. Ci siamo arrovellati durante tutta la lettura di *S. Alfonso e il Natale* per scoprirne la genesi, la natura e il motivo dell'abnorme sviluppo, in particolare di alcune parti, che ci faceva pensare ad una incapacità dell'Autore di dominare la materia. Ma la dedica e poi l'Antefatto premessi dall'Autore ci convincono che la nostra intuizione sia quella giusta: *Il grande amore a S. Alfonso*. Lino Improta fin dai suoi anni di aspirantato nel Seminario di Lettere (NA) è un grande devoto e cultore di S. Alfonso. Uscito dal Seminario, rimasto redentorista nel cuore, ha approfondito la conoscenza del Santo e maturato il suo amore. Dice di se stesso: "Appassionato lettore e cultore di sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori, ne cita spesso la dottrina" (p. 364). Lo stesso potremmo dire del suo amico, e forse condiscipolo maggiore nello stesso Seminario redentorista di Lettere, Pompeo Giannantonio (a proposito, anche il citato Francesco Flora deve la sua solida formazione classica e musicale e l'interesse per S. Alfonso al Seminario redentorista di Scifelli (FR); fu anche novizio a Roma per qualche mese). Al tutto si aggiunga l'impulso di quanto gli accadde in un soggiorno in Terra Santa e riferito nell'Antefatto: "Nel dischiudere il librino rilegato, mi scivolò via l'immaginetta di sant'Alfonso. La porto sempre con me, dagli anni dell'Educandato, come talismano. Una protezione sempre viva. La raccolsi, il Santo mi parve sorridente, come per dirmi qualcosa; e d'un balzo, negli occhi, la visione bellissima del giardino del collegio, gli alberi trapunti di lampadine variopinte, e i piccoli presepi nelle nicchie dei tronchi, costruiti amorevolmente da noi missionari in erba. [...] Non so ridire quanti altri ricordi mi presero il cuore, ma, è certo, un proposito nacque sotto il cielo di Palestina: scrivere un libro su Sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori e il Natale"(pp. 21-22). Abbiamo volutamente letto per ultima, per non farcene influenzare, la prefazione di Pompeo Giannantonio, grande specialista del Settecento

napoletano e di S. Alfonso. Il giudizio del critico è tutto nella conclusione: "Lino Improta ha diligentemente raccolto in questo volume le testimonianze sulla genesi del Natale, ripercorrendo i secolari itinerari mistici, chiarendo interventi, localizzando episodi, interpretando passi scritturali. È un lavoro utile, atteso e insostituibile. Resta un punto fermo su sant'Alfonso e il Natale" (p. XV).

Lasciando giudicare queste affermazioni ad altri meglio attrezzati di noi, certamente il lavoro di Improta sarà utile a quanti, studiosi e gente di cultura, poco conoscono S. Alfonso e la sua epoca. Per quanto ci riguarda, abbiamo apprezzato vivamente le pagine (177-186) di Bruno Forte sul presepe napoletano, dal quale insieme alla Bibbia Alfonso trasse ispirazione. La pastorale *Quando nascette Ninno a Betlemme* fa da trama alla individuazione con nomi propri e alla descrizione di personaggi, scene, gruppi, animali e paesaggi: una vera e spassosa guida ad un presepe pulsante di vita, che solo un napoletano verace poteva darci.

Vincenzo Ricci, C.Ss.R.

QUANTIN Jean-Louis, *Il rigorismo cristiano*, Milano, Jaca Book, 2001, 143 p.

Moral behaviour can be studied from various aspects. The accent has mostly been on the normative approach to inculcating virtue. Moral education is necessary to introduce new members into an adult society. The moral content of law may then be examined in a systematic way by ethics or moral theology. Law structures society and gives birth to the discipline of jurisprudence. With the coming of the social sciences psychology and sociology must be added to the list. The most recent science to investigate moral theology has been history. It is worth noting that the history of moral theology in the scientific sense only dates from after the Second World War. The present volume, translated from the French, can be situated in that current of thought but with the difference that Quantin seeks to incorporate these new findings back into a wider horizon of Church and secular history.

Rigorism is no new theme in history. But nobody has yet, as far as this reviewer is aware, attempted a comprehensive treatment of Christian rigorism. Quantin traces its life-cycle from the ancient



Church to its high point in the Catholic and Protestant reforms, the tensions inherent in which finally issued in a thoroughly secular morality. His book could be called the rise and fall of Christian rigorism. The author's originality can be seen by the way he connects a Church historians's view of the penitential discipline in the ancient Church with the disputes over moral systems in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries among Catholic intellectuals. The same tensions were just as fiercely reflected in non-Catholic circles seeking for the community of the pure. The conclusion is not just a summary but the final act that completes the drama with the secularisation of Christian rigorism when it is assumed into the social framework of the modern state.

The author defines rigorism by its two distinguishing characteristics. First, severity or harshness in the application of moral rules to behaviour. Second and more specifically, it concerns the discipline governing the administration of the sacrament of Penance. In the concrete, the denial or delay of absolution as the Church's established pastoral policy of withstanding sin. He treats these two features not in dogmatic terms as was usual in the past, but as they impinged on people's everyday lives. He is not too interested in the charge of heresy that was often brought to settle the issue. He argues instead that rigorism fell apart because it just would not work in fact and so people rejected what it stood for. Rigorism for both Catholics and Protestants referred back to the use of excommunication in the penitential discipline in the early Church. The idea was that no one could be admitted to the Lord's table without a full and perfect conversion of life. The author gives the usual account of how Augustine's doctrine of original sin was invoked to justify moral pessimism. It was probabilism's great merit to have at last made a breach in this mentality.

Theologians are accustomed to treat the dispute over moral systems as an internal Catholic affair. The author emphasises that it was part of the process of confessionalisation and therefore of constructing a Catholic identity after the Reformation. Although laxism was compassionate toward human weakness it unfortunately precipitated a spiral of opinions that made it impossible to discern the moral truth with assurance. It had overtones of class as well, for instance, nobles might defend their honour with violence but not ordinary folk. In the long run it would have undermined the Christian spirit if not corrected.

As regards rigorism Quantin gives a good account of its spread, underlining the crucial importance of Belgium and the university of

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Louvain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was in that context that the word «rigorism» was first used. The author points out that it is not easy to assess how people actually reacted. The clergy most likely moderated these doctrines when treating pastorally with their flock. The moral books could represent more a platform for reform than what truly occurred in most parishes. Nevertheless, rigorism was so riddled with internal contradictions that it collapsed not so much because it was successfully refuted by its adversaries as that it simply imploded on itself because of its impracticability.

This book emphasises the idea that the Protestants underwent the same tensions about admission to altar fellowship even though their sacramental theology was so different. The closest parallel is with German pietism. Lutherans, Calvinists, Puritans and Methodists all experienced the temptation to split off and separate into groups of the perfect. Often the civil power limited expressions of religious enthusiasm to prevent sect-like divisions in the wider, community. It usually favoured rigorism for the reform of morals but without permitting dissent from its authority.

The author is convinced that Christian rigorism in its proper sense died with the fall of the Ancient Regime. He seems to be calling for a reassessment of St. Alphonsus Liguori's role as the hero who turned the tide on Jansenism which, as he says, was how rigorism was often named at that time. He does not underrate Alphonsus's immense influence on Church life. But he would contend that this influence was overtaken by events. The modern state took over from the regal powers control of social mores and the interiorisation of the moral code that accompanied it. This process heightened the awareness of the individual self as conscience. If this is true rigorism was ultimately victorious in the modern state, but not in terms of Christian values. It is hard to deny this thesis since the facts seem to be massively in its favour. That fact itself should be cause for serious reflection. Why should the rigorist account of conscience win out in the end? St. Alphonsus and others had an alternative. Conscience is precisely the sanctuary where a person responds in freedom to the demands of the Gospel amid all the details of their life situation. Why was this put aside as a contender to give moral shape to society. The author is right to point out that St. Alphonsus's growing influence *de facto* depended on his doctrine being espoused by Church authority. Both probabilism and equiprobalism have a history of unsettling civil authorities because of the space they afford freedom in their systems. It seemed to

awaken anxiety that authority had lost control of the situation and so cannot provide a secure base for a social conviviality.

But perhaps the author's position is prey to its own logic. During the period covered in this book the secular state may have espoused a rigid morality. But what of the permissivism that prevails in much civic legislation today? Is not the dialectic between laxity-rigidity a tension running through history, a characteristic of the human condition. We should not be surprised to discover the same tension in Church and civil society. Certainly we find it difficult to comprehend the past in its own terms. In those centuries both sides formulated moral disputes in doctrinal terms. The author is correct in criticising their polemic obsession with doctrine and with heresy. However, we need to take seriously their conception of *praxis* in relation to doctrine, precisely as its application and realisation. The author emphasises practice but they did not understand that term as we do, especially as regards the theory-praxis relationship. A question left unanswered is whether there is a historic link between their idea of *praxis* and the 19<sup>th</sup> century's, and how might the process of secularisation have functioned in that case. Further, how does the increasing intervention of the Papal magisterium on moral matters at this period sit with the author's thesis?

The author draws attention to the doctrine that few would be saved as the backbone of rigorism. Unfortunately he did not mention the heretical teaching that Christ did not die for all but only for a few. Here St. Alphonsus identifies the source of despair that characterised rigorism. His work *Il gran mezzo della preghiera* as the way of salvation shows how the 18<sup>th</sup> century Church began working its way out of the problems so well formulated by Quantin. The author has brought an historian's realism to the topic. The alternative to rigorism could have been more clearly perceived and firmly presented. The authentic practice of the Christian life starts out from God's universal will to save all through his superabundant offer of Redemption. To this we are called to respond freely and lovingly with our whole lives.

Terence Kennedy, C.Ss.R.

AMARANTE Alfonso Vincenzo, *Evoluzione e definizione del metodo missionario redentorista (1732-1764)*, (Copiosa Redemptio, 1), Maderdomini, Valsele Tipografica, 2003, 479 p.

Vorliegendes Werk verbindet zwei nicht zu unterschätzende Vorzüge. Zum einen bietet es eine gelungene Zusammenfassung der oft schwer greifbaren, weit zerstreuten Literatur zur Thematik, die durch eigene Archivfunde des Autors ergänzt wird. Zum andern versteht es der Autor, seine Erkenntnisse in äußerster Klarheit, fast handbuchartig, darzustellen.

Das Werk gliedert sich in vier Kapitel. Nicht zu überschlagen ist das erste Kapitel: „Das Königreich Neapel im 18. Jahrhundert“. Tatsächlich nämlich ist die Gründung und Zielsetzung der Redemptoristen als Volksmissionsorden nur zu verstehen auf dem Hintergrund der Gesellschaftsstruktur und der daraus resultierenden Situation in Neapel, zumal der Situation der armen Landbevölkerung. Wieder einmal wird beim Blick auf die archaische, ja magische Religiosität weiter Volksschichten der Buchtitel Carlo Levis „Christus kam nur bis Eboli“, den Gabriele De Rosa in den Satz „Das Konzil von Trient kam nur bis Eboli“ umwandelte, bestätigt, allerdings mit einigen Korrekturen. Sie beziehen sich zum einen auf die aufgeklärte Wissenschaftskultur in Neapel, zum andern auf einzelne Reformimpulse, die durchaus von den Vorschriften des Konzils von Trient ausgingen. Genannt werden die Reformen des Kardinals Giuseppe Spinnelli in Bezug auf die Katechese, ohne die auch die Aktivität des heiligen Alfons und der Redemptoristen nicht voll zu verstehen ist. Das Gleiche gilt für die verschiedenen volksmissionarischen Initiativen, die in Neapel denen der Redemptoristen vorausgingen, wie der Lazzaristen, der Jesuiten und insbesondere der Pii Operai und der „Apostolischen Missionen“. Im Übrigen erscheint das erste Kapitel, dass die sozio-kulturelle Situation im Königreich Neapel beschreibt, auch deswegen von eminenter Bedeutung, weil es durch seine Beschreibung der noch weithin feudalen neapolitanischen Gesellschaftsstruktur einen wichtigen Schlüssel – wenn auch nicht den einzigen – zum Verständnis dessen beibringt, was in der Regel der Redemptoristen mit dem Begriff der „am meisten verlassenen Seelen“ gemeint ist. Wenn etwas an dem ersten Kapitel zu bemängeln ist, dann höchstens, dass der Autor neben den von ihm konsultierten zahlreichen Quellenwerken und den neuesten Überblicken von Giuseppe Orlandi, Giuseppe Galasso, Gabriele De Rosa, Enrichetta Delle Donne usw. die hervorragende Untersuchung von Peter

Herrsche, *Italien im Barockzeitalter* (Wien-Köln-Weimar 1999), nicht beigezogen hat.

Kommen wir zum zweiten Kapitel, das die Entstehung und die erste Entwicklung der Redemptoristen im Königreich Neapel nachzeichnet. Im Mittelpunkt stehen neben dem heiligen Alfons Persönlichkeiten wie Tommaso Falcoia, Maria Celeste Crostarosa und Gennaro Maria Sarnelli. Der Akzent liegt dabei zunächst, wie nicht anders zu erwarten, auf dem, was man das missionarische Engagement dieser Gestalten nennen kann. Es schließt sich die Darstellung der Ereignisse an, die zur Gründung der Redemptoristenkongregation im Jahre 1732 in Scala führten. Der Schilderung der nicht leichten Anfänge folgt im Kontext der ersten Gründungen die Darstellung der ersten Missionen und der bei ihnen verwendeten Missionsmethode, die von Antonio Tannoia im einzelnen beschrieben wird. Als grundlegender Gesichtspunkt bei der Durchführung der ersten Missionen erweist sich die Konzentrierung des heiligen Alfons auf die arme Landbevölkerung, die von der allgemeinen Seelsorge de facto ausgeschlossen ist. Dazu kommt des Heiligen Sorge, alles zu tun, dass die Missionen nicht nur ein vorübergehendes Strohfeuer darstellen. Diesem Ziel dient u.a. die Wahl der Gründungsorte, die Gestaltung der Missionen wie die Einrichtung der so genannten Nachmission, d.h. die Rückkehr der Missionare an die Missionsorte, um das bei der Mission Erreichte zu festigen.

Das dritte Kapitel schildert die Missionsmethode der Gründungszeit. Vorgestellt werden zunächst Missionsdirektiven aus den Jahren 1733 bis 1764. Ziel und Zweck der Missionen wird in ihnen definiert als Predigt des Evangeliums an die Armen in der Nachfolge Jesu Christi. Anschließend handelt der Verfasser über die Jahreszeit, in der die Missionen stattfinden sollen, und über deren Dauer, um dann die geistlichen Übungen während der Mission (die Hauptpredigt, die allgemeine Geißelung der Männer, die „sentimenti della pace“, die Generalkommunion usw.) zu beschreiben. Hier wird noch eingehender die Bedeutung der Nachmission betont. Schließlich werden die Anforderungen aufgezeigt, die an die Missionare gestellt wurden. Eingeschärft wurde eine einfache, dem Volk entsprechende Predigtweise. Großer Wert wurde von Anfang an auf eine einfache und vorbildliche Lebensweise der Patres während der Missionen gelegt, wie darauf, dass die fähigsten Leute zu den jeweiligen Aufgaben während der Mission bestimmt wurden.

Das vierte Kapitel schließlich geht den Gedanken des heiligen Alfons zu den Missionen in seinen Schriften nach. Außer in einigen

Briefen finden sich diese vor allem in dem einschlägigen Werk *Selva di materie predicabili ed istruttive*. Alfons hat sich ausführlich über die Notwendigkeit, das Ziel, die Dauer der Missionen in ländlichen Gegenden geäußert. Er hat den Missionaren bestimmte geistliche Übungen während der Missionen vorgeschrieben, er hat sie ersucht, während der Mission ein bescheidenes Leben zu führen, hat ihnen gezeigt, wie sie am besten die Botschaft des Heiles den verschiedenen Menschengruppen vermitteln können, und hat ihnen bis in Einzelne vorgeschrieben, wie und was sie zu predigen hätten. Einfach vor allem sollten die Predigten sein, sie sollten aus der Liebe zum gekreuzigten Heiland und zur Madonna kommen und zu dieser Liebe auffordern, sie sollten zur Vermeidung der Sünde, zum Gebet und zu einem innerlichen Leben (*vita devota*) anregen. Immer wieder kommt Alfons auch auf die geistlichen Übungen während und am Ende der Mission zu sprechen wie auf die Bedeutung der Einführung von Bruderschaften u. dgl. zur Wahrung der Früchte der Mission.

Das Buch, das mit einem Dokumentenanhang und einem Bildanhang schließt, sei jedem empfohlen, der sich über die Anfänge der Kongregation der Redemptoristen als missionarische Gemeinschaft und über den ursprünglichen, vom Gründer selbst vorgegebenen Elan bei den ersten Volksmissionen informieren will.

Otto Weiss

MONTES URRIOLA José, C.Ss.R., *Apostół trędowatych. Życie błogostawionego Piotra Dondersa redemptorysty*, trad. Jan Cygnar, [Tit. orig.: *Vida del padre Pedro Donders, redentorista, apóstol de los leprosos*], Kraków, Homo Dei, 2004, 159 p.

One hundred years ago the outstanding Polish novelist and Nobel Prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote: "A nation without its own history is like a man who has lost his memory". This sentence refers to all communities and societies that want to preserve their identities and charism. A man can plan the future clearly and wisely only when he knows the path that led him to the present. It is in the light of this that we can appreciate the initiative of Homo Dei, the publishing house of the Polish Redemptorists in Kraków. The biography of Blessed Peter Donders by José Montes Urriola, C.Ss.R. began an edito-

rial series entitled "Redemptorist Saints" in the year 2003. The Author gave his book (159 pages) the significant title *The Apostle of the Lepers: the life of Blessed Peter Donders, Redemptorist*. Urriola divided the biography into 14 chapters and added an introduction. It is a typical literary work. Some passages contain much dialogue, which gives the narrative features of a thoughtful drama. The Author presents the life of the Redemptorist missionary in a chronological way and the history of his progress to the honour of the Church's altars. The Polish edition of this biography is of significance to the market in Poland because such a thorough presentation of the life and activities of Donders has been published for the first time. It has been made possible by the accurate translation into Polish by Father Jan Cygnar, C.Ss.R.

The spread of Peter Donders' cult in the Polish lands was first mentioned during World War II. In the years 1941-1944 there were special services in Redemptorist churches and monastery chapels where people prayed for Donders' prompt beatification (cf. the Archives of the Redemptorist monastery in Kraków: [without call number], *Kronika domu krakowskiego CSsR (The chronicle of the Kraków House of C.Ss.R.)*, vol. 3, pp. 1056, 1092; cf. the Archives of the Redemptorist Monastery in Tuchów: [without call number], *Kronika klasztoru tuchowskiego (The Chronicle of the Tuchów Monastery)*, vol. 5, p. 150). The seminary chronicler noted in October 1941, 'Before noon there was an adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament with prayer that the heroicity of virtues of this Servant of God, Father Donders of our Congregation be recognized for today the cardinals are to meet in Rome (the Archives of the Redemptorists' Warsaw Province in Tuchów [without call number], *Kronika polskiego studentatu (The Chronicle of the Polish Studentate)*, vol. 8, p. 362). After the Apostolic See had declared that the Servant of God practiced heroic virtues Father Władysław Szołdrski attempted to popularize the figure of his holy confrere. He prepared the first Polish biography of Donders on the basis of the work of Father J. Kronenburg in 1924 (cf. *Czcigodny O. Piotr Donders. Apostoł trędowatych, Redemptorysta, 1809-1887 (Venerable Father Peter Donders. The Apostle of the Lepers, Redemptorist, 1809-1887)*, Wrocław 1953, typescript in the Archives of the Novitiate of the Redemptorists' Warsaw Province in Lubaszowa). However, this biography was not published. The Polish reader had to wait for the next hagiographic works about the life and ministry of Father Donders until the beatification of "the apostle of the lepers" in 1982. Yet, these were only of simple character (see *Wybrał ich Bóg – święci i błogostawieni redemptoryści*

[*God Chose Them – Redemptorist Saints and Blessed*], collective works, Kraków 1998). The discussed book is, therefore, the first biography of Peter Donders, available to all Polish readers.

Peter Donders was born on 27 October 1809 in Tilburg, Holland. The Author gave a clear account of his difficult childhood. Even when quite young he was not spared much discomfort and poverty, thus being prepared by God for the great mission he was to undertake in the future. Peter was convinced of his priestly vocation from early childhood. However, he came from a poor family who were unable to provide him with a good start in life. Another disadvantage was his poor physical condition. Donders' intellectual skills were also mediocre to say the least. Nevertheless, Urriola makes it very clear that God's plans for him were entirely different. From his childhood Donders was characterised by a healthy piety, cordiality towards his environment and extraordinary diligence.

Facing objective difficulties Donders tried to live a monastic life; first as a Jesuit, then as a Redemptorist and at last he knocked at the Franciscan gate. Finally, he was able to attend the diocesan seminary in Herlaar, and four years later he became an ordained priest. Immediately after his ordination he wanted to go to the Dutch mission in Surinam. The Author has penetratingly described the self-sacrifice and varied service of Father Donders who cared for slaves coming from 40 local plantations. At the beginning of 1856, Fr Donders went to his new post in Batavia, to perform a special ministry among lepers. We are shown in some detail his struggle on behalf of the spiritual needs of his patients, and in seeking to improve their living conditions. After several years of generous service the situation at Batavia changed completely. This was corroborated by one of the officers: "The whole ethos has improved so much that the people seem to be completely different. I do not have even a quarter of the work I used to have in order to keep everything peaceful. The missionaries deserve the credit."

It was only when he was 58 that Father Donders realised that his life up till then had reflected the ideals of the Redemptorist mission. When in 1865 the Apostolic Vicariate of Surinam was given to the Redemptorists of the Dutch province, Fr Donders applied for admission to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. His old parish house in Paramaribo was changed into a monastery and Redemptorist novitiate. His love for the Congregation was expressed in the following words: "Day after day I comprehend more deeply the joy in be-



ing called to our Congregation. May we persevere in that vocation until we die". After he had completed his novitiate he returned to his leper station in Batavia. He continued his mission among the Indians for 18 years. Urriola does not hesitate to present the failures and adversities faced by Fr Donders. For example, after 30 years of self-sacrificing work, in 1883 during the apostolic visitation, several delegates of lepers came to Bishop Schaap to ask him to remove Fr Donders because of his old age. What was significant is that Fr Donders served as a translator in the conversation. We continue to have a consistent and interesting description of the life and activities of Fr Donders. On 14 January 1887, on the day of his death the sacrifice of the life of the Blessed Redemptorist was completed. After this the writer depicts the successful attempts for Donders' beatification.

This biography confirms again that saints in every age are people who give a universal message to future generations. The editor is right in claiming that 'this history is worth presenting because it tells us today that neither poverty nor lack of proper education are able to destroy man's deepest desires and deprive him of the joy of fulfilling his vocation'. It is only right that we should wait for the next successful and extremely necessary biography of the cycle "Redemptorist Saints".

Maciej Sadowski, C.Ss.R.

DOUGLAS Philip, *Święty Filadelfii. Życie świętego biskupa Jana Neumann redemptorysty*, trad. Jan Zubel, [Tit. orig.: *Saint of Philadelphia: the Life of Saint Bishop John Neumann*], Kraków, Homo Dei, 2004, 125 p.

In 2003 the Publishing House of the Polish Redemptorists Homo Dei in Kraków began an editorial series entitled "Redemptorist Saints". The second book of this cycle is the biography of St John Nepomucene Neumann by Philip Douglas. The book of 125 pages is divided into 14 chapters, which contain the chronological history of the life of the holy Bishop of Philadelphia and the history of his canonization. The book was published with great care, complete with several photos from the National Shrine of St John Neumann in Philadelphia and comprehensively translated by Father Jan Zubel, C.Ss.R. The Polish edition of this

biography is significant because it is the first complete presentation of the life and activities of Neumann available to Polish readers. It can become an encouragement and basis for other translations into the languages of Central and Eastern Europe for the Redemptorist communities in Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The life of Bishop Neumann was first published in the United States in German and the publication was prepared in 1883 by the saint's nephew Father John N. Berger, C.Ss.R. However, it was only in 1952 that a well-known historian of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer Father Władysław Szołdrski prepared the first Polish biography of the saint on the basis of the French edition, entitled *Życie Sługi Bożego O. Jana Nepomucena Neumanna (The Life of the Servant of God Fr John Nepomucene Neumann)*. Unfortunately, the work was not published due to the contemporary severe restraints on the free press imposed by censorship, especially in the context of the ideologically extreme anti-American attitude of the communist regime. In the introduction to the only preserved copy of Szołdrski's work to be found in the Archives of the Novitiate of the Redemptorists' Warsaw Province in Lubaszowa, we read, 'Without exaggeration we can say that the radiant figure of the Servant of God John Neumann has been completely unknown to Polish society. Therefore, let this book help us get to know those excellent virtues, which characterised the Servant of God and the wonderful deeds of his apostolic zeal which he performed for the glory of God and the salvation of souls' (W. Szołdrski, *Życie Sługi Bożego O. Jana Nepomucena Neumanna*, Warszawa 1952, pp. 1-2, typescripts). In the following years there were some attempts to popularise the person of the holy Bishop of Philadelphia, among others a collective work entitled *Wybrał ich Bóg – święci i błogosławieni redemptoryści (God Chose Them – Redemptorist Saints and Blessed (Kraków 1998)*. However, a wider circle of Polish readers had to wait for the Polish translation of Philip Douglas's work.

From the first pages of his book the Author uses a dramatic narrative effect describing the last hours of the life of Bishop Neumann against the background of the turbulent history of America, in Philadelphia – the city which became the cradle of American democracy. Then Douglas makes a retrospective journey in space and time, giving a vivid picture of John Neumann's life and activities. The biographer devotes a separate chapter to the history of the Czech lands, Neumann's fatherland. The frequent use of the term "Bohemia" seems to be ungrounded although, we must admit, has been consistently ap-

plied. The term has its traditional counterpart "the Czech lands" in historiographic and topographical terminology. It is a serious language defect, which strikes us as alien and definitely incomprehensible for readers, all the more so because the author correctly calls inhabitants of that country Czechs and not "Bohemians".

On the other hand, the presentation of the saint's personality against the background of the complicated national and social relations of his fatherland is more explicitly made. John's father Philip Neumann was a native of Bavaria and his mother Agnes Lebiš came from a Czech burgher's family. The future Bishop of Philadelphia was born on 28 March 1811 in Prachatitz and from his youth he grew up at the meeting-point of various cultures and nations, in the melting pot of Europe, which in the 19th century was characterized by the Habsburg monarchy. It is also important to notice that John learnt Czech only in the Gymnasium (high school) because German was used at home. Taking this into consideration the book omits an obvious conclusion that John Neumann had a special predisposition for his later pastoral work in the multicultural and even more diversified society of North America. In almost every biography of a famous person the most difficult task for a biographer is to describe the earliest years of the hero. The same applies to Philip Douglas' book because the first 20 years of Neumann's life are covered in only three pages. It seems that if he adopted a narrative form he could have noticed one of the most characteristic events of John's life, i.e. when his mother, having heard him take an exam at school, ran home lamenting. She had heard compliments from his son's teachers and the applause of his peers who had admired his excellent composition. However, it occurred that in his much-praised composition entitled "Who would you like to become" John had described the profession of a barber. Later he had to explain to his artless parents that the job of a barber was not his dream at all. The author meticulously presents Neumann's difficult way to priesthood. Nevertheless, Douglas does not explain, and this will perhaps remain a secret for ever, how on earth a poor graduate of a provincial Gymnasium was admitted, with other 19 candidates, to the seminary in Budweis, and then to Prague. The Author does not pass over the seminary troubles of his hero, which were related to the lecturers supporting Josephism. He gives an interesting description of the desire arising in the young seminarian to be called to the missions *ad gentes*.

The most detailed and penetrating description of St John Neu-

mann's life concerns his missionary activities as Bishop and Redemptorist on the American continent. The Author presents in detail his journey across the Atlantic in 1836 and the moment when Neumann stood on Staten Island in New York, wearing shabby clothes and shoes full of holes, and with one dollar in his pocket. Then the reader discovers his successful attempt to receive Holy Orders, which he desired most, and the dynamism of his first pastoral tasks in the vicinity of Niagara Falls and Buffalo. The meeting with Austrian Redemptorist Father Joseph Prost and the way Neumann reached the decision to enter the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, which finally took place on 16 January 1842, are described thoroughly in the chapter entitled "The Son of St Alphonsus", pp. 54-61. However, it seems that the Author should have presented, even briefly, the motives of this crucial decision of St John, who remembered Father Prost's words that it was very difficult for a missionary to live in solitude for a long time. Fortunately, Douglas did not omit the effects of the religious formation on Neumann who wrote a significant sentence about the Redemptorist community in his Journal or the diary of his soul: "Mutual physical and spiritual help, inspirational impact and good example, which embrace every member of this spiritual community, mean that life and duties become much easier for me" (pp. 57-58). These words remarkably relate to St John Neumann's earlier fears of being lonely in his missionary work. We should admit that one of the greatest advantages of the biography in question is the fact that in the course of his narrative the Author skilfully weaves together fragments of press articles, letters and recollections of eyewitnesses and fragments of Neumann's works. This way of narrating makes the book more vivid and it gives it the characteristics of a quasi-documentary.

In the next six chapters of John Neumann's biography Philip Douglas gives a conscientious description of his enormous dynamism in the service to the Congregation and the Church, first as Vice-Provincial of the American Redemptorists and then as the Bishop of Philadelphia (from 1852). Neumann's pastoral activities in the field of the Catholic school system, establishing new parishes and charities as well as supporting religious foundations have been depicted exhaustively. Bishop Neumann lays several claims to fame in establishing the first system of parochial schools, which was extended to all American states in later years. The numbers sound very convincing. When Bishop Neumann was elevated to the See of Philadelphia there were only five hundred children in Catholic schools, but two years later the

number increased to almost nine thousand. Up till now this work is considered to be one of the greatest achievements of St John Neumann, and has been suitably illustrated in the biography. The Bishop also founded the Diocesan Center for the Education of Catholic Youth and the Association of Friends of Catholic Youth, which, however, escaped Douglas's attention. While erecting sanctuaries of brick the Bishop did not forget to build the spiritual life in his diocese. Having this in mind he organized the schedule of the Forty Hours' Devotion, which he carefully prepared focusing on the proper liturgical setting and subjects of sermons. The service increased people's piety so much that it was extended to the entire United States. Douglas did not omit to mention the hardships in the ministry of Bishop Neumann. He quoted disgraceful examples of intolerance and anti-Catholic aggression in the American society of those times, the society that is nowadays a symbol of love for democracy and freedom. The activities of forces hostile to the Church, organized in an influential political party popularly known as "Know-Nothing Party", and the discontent of some rich Catholic circles of the Philadelphian elite aimed at removing Bishop Neumann and even led to his readiness to resign from his office voluntarily. The Author stressed, however, the humble availability of the Redemptorist Bishop and his unshakable obedience to the Apostolic See.

The last chapter of the biography is devoted to the history of the processes of beatification and canonization of Bishop John Neumann. After Neumann's death Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick said some significant words, 'Such a bishop could not die otherwise than on the way, with his soul directed to his Lord at every hour, at every minute'. In 1897 the process of a thorough investigation began and after fifteen years of examination and hearing of witnesses Pope Benedict XV saw fit to have Neumann declared Venerable, issuing a decree in 1921. His beatification took place during the Second Vatican Council on 13 October 1963. Finally, on 19 June 1977 Pope Paul VI declared the Bishop of Philadelphia a Saint. Thus John Neumann became the first citizen of the United States and first member of the American Church hierarchy to be declared a saint. This biography of the Redemptorist Bishop is an important attempt to bridge a sorely felt gap in Redemptorist hagiography for Polish readers. One hopes that this carefully published work signals other successful editorial enterprises.

*Maciej Sadowski, C.Ss.R.*

CUCHET Guillaume, *A propos de l'italianisation de la piété française au XIX.e siècle. Le cas de la dévotion aux âmes du purgatoire (1850-1914)*, in *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 115 (2003) 863-878.

In Europa è in atto il grande movimento di composizione o, meglio, di ricomposizione della sua unità, in forza delle comuni radici storiche e culturali. Non si vuole inserire la componente fondamentale, quella cristiana, non solo radice comune, ma forza operante, almeno a livello di pietà popolare, anche nei periodi storici di maggior laicismo e di lotta ai cristianesimo, soprattutto nella sua espressione cattolico-romana, come nell'Ottocento. Grazie agli studi e alle ricerche di storici e studiosi del cattolicesimo e della sociologia religiosa non solo in ambiti locali e regionali, ma europei, scopriamo, nel sec. XIX, un vasto movimento di unificazione europea, a livello di pietà popolare. Esemplare è il caso della *italianizzazione di forme della pietà popolare*. Il termine italianizzazione potrebbe far pensare ad una crociata o azione missionaria di penetrazione da parte della chiesa romana e italiana, mediante forme di pietà popolare, per contrastare la politica laicista degli Stati, evitando scontri frontali o diplomatici. In realtà si tratta di forme nate o affermatesi in Italia e importate per motivi pastorali: favorivano la pratica religiosa e la fedeltà del popolo alla Chiesa. Degno di nota è che questo movimento, importato dall'Italia, negli altri Paesi, come Francia, Belgio, Inghilterra e altrove, si diffonde, si arricchisce dottrinalmente, – non si prega solo per le anime del purgatorio, ma si chiede *la loro* intercessione – e si riespande con ritorni anche in Italia, ad esempio con il *Mese dei morti* (novembre). Il Cuchet, nel suo interessante nonché stimolante saggio, prende in esame *la devozione alle anime del purgatorio*. Le forme nelle quali tale devozione si concretizza e si esprime, sono principalmente: *Confraternite, altare privilegiato, messe gregoriane, voto eroico*. Si parte dalle Confraternite di Roma per il suffragio dei defunti, anzi dalla *Confraternita* per eccellenza la *Primaria Arciconfraternita Maria SS.ma Assunta in cielo in suffragio delle anime del purgatorio*, fondata dal redentorista Giuseppe Mautone (1765-1845) nel 1840, con sede nella chiesa di S. Maria in Monterone. Diretta dai redentoristi, era molto attiva e si era assicurata un ricco patrimonio spirituale di indulgenze e di opere buone con l'adesione di vari Ordini maschili e femminili. Siccome l'ottenimento di indulgenze maggiori e di altri privilegi da parte delle Congregazioni romane non era tanto agevole, bastava aggregarsi ad una Confraternita, e nel no-

stro caso a quella dei redentoristi, per raggiungere subito lo scopo. I grafici curati dall'Autore mostrano la grande richiesta di aggregazioni e iscrizioni all'Arciconfraternita redentorista da tutto il mondo negli anni 1862-1863. Per quanto concerne l'Europa, troviamo al primo posto la Francia, seguono l'Italia, il Belgio, la Germania, la Svizzera, l'Olanda e l'Inghilterra. In seguito, a partire dal 1873, sorsero in Francia Arciconfraternite indipendenti, con diritto di aggregazione. Come si è accennato, le altre *forme* analizzate dall'Autore sono gli altari privilegiati, le messe gregoriane, il voto eroico, il mese dei morti. A tale scopo l'Autore esplora i fondi romani (Congregazione delle Indulgenze e delle Sante Reliquie, Segreteria dei Brevi, Arciconfraternite) e le opere specialistiche francesi. Una ricerca modello, che apre prospettive sulle quali Cuchet non si spinge, quali quelle politiche o dello sviluppo dottrinale. Nella speranza che tali vie vengano esplorate, possiamo concordare con l'Autore che, per gli aspetti illustrati, si può definire il XIX *il Secolo della devozione alle anime del Purgatorio*.

Vincenzo Ricci, C.Ss.R.