

BOOK REVIEWS

SAYDON P. P. *List of Publications by Members of the Teaching Staff of the University*, Malta University Press, 1966, pp. 129.

The University of Malta should be grateful to Mgr. Prof. P. P. Saydon for his compilation of the bibliographical list of publications by Professors and Lecturers of our *Alma Mater* from 1769 to the present day. The list is arranged according to the diverse Faculties — Theology, Laws, Medicine, Architecture and Engineering, Arts and Scienc. The Author closes the list with the publications of the Rectors. Mgr. Saydon hints to some defects — in no way due to negligence on his part — which mar his work, which honestly is, as he himself believes “fairly complete and fully representative of the varied activities of the Professors of our University”, and — we add — painstaking. The publications mentioned embrace a most wide range of subjects: biblical commentaries, explanation of Catholic truths, solution of moral cases, collection of pastoral letters, comments on Maltese Laws, papers on educational and constitutional developments, historical works, social questions, medical treatments, notes on natural history, poetical and literary compositions, treatises on philology and astronomy, writings on chemical complexes and archeological remains, inaugural addresses and sundry talks. It is rather surprising that some of the teaching staff, especially the older ones, wrote on this or that subject, but published almost nothing on the subject they taught! The list evidently shows that recent teachers are keener in publishing their works, although we cannot say that their publications are always the product of personal research work. As a Professor emeritus of the Royal University, whose works have been mentioned in Prof. Saydon's list, I feel in duty bound to thank the Author and to congratulate him for having lifted the veil that shrouded several stars of our *Alma Mater* and given scholars a bibliographical aid in their studies.

Mgr. ART. BONNICI.

FIorentini Bianca, *Malta Rifugio di Esuli e Focolare Ardente di Cospirazione Durante il Risorgimento Italiano*, Malta 1966, pp. 220.

Con vero piacere segnaliamo ai cultori della Storia il dignitoso lavoro di B.F. Il volume in rassegna, che ha visto la luce recentemente, consta di undici capitoli, ricchi di annotazioni e di alcune appendici documentarie che si rippongono di illustrare un panorama dell'azione svolta dagli antesignani del Risorgimento Italiano nell'Isola di Malta, la quale “prende parte attiva al movimento unitario della Penisola.”

Ciò premesso, va senz'altro sottolineata e nello stesso tempo apprezzata l'indagine documentata, spesso originale di B.F., condotta con rigore metodologico e serio impegno scientifico.

Alcuni titoli: “*Prima ondata a Malta di esuli liberali*”; “*Cospiratori italiani a Malta*”; “*I Fratelli Fabrizi di Modena*”; “*Attività dei cospiratori a Malta dal 1851 alla vigilia dell'Unificazione italiana*”; mostrano evidentemente come la scrittrice abbia voluto battere strade nuove, presentando problemi fatti e figure fino ad oggi completamente ignorati

Dopo aver collocate nella sua giusta cornice l'origine della dominazione Britannica su Malta, l'autrice passa a delineare lo stato interno religioso-politico dell'Isola ed espone cronologicamente l'operato dei numerosi profughi continentali a Malta, diventata ormai “*terra promessa*” degli esuli italiani. La presenza di questi a Malta suscitò l'ira del Governo Borbonico e a cui i contrasti fra Londra e la Corte di Napoli. Dopo varie peripezie i rifugiati a Malta, per la sconfitta della spedizione di Savoia, si sentirono raffreddati e perciò venne meno il primitivo entusiasmo per l'unificazione d'Italia. Ma presto fu riaccesso da Nicola Fabrizi con la collaborazione di Attilio Bandini, assumendo nel 1847 l'Attività dei Cospiratori “un ritmo straordinariamente inteso” conosciuto attraverso i loro scritti. La Fiorentina, per salvare dall'oblio parecchi ignoti particolari, passa a svolgere ampiamente fatti succedutisi e ad enumerare i nomi dei principali fautori della complessa vicenda, ritenendo Malta “come punto strategico morale e materiale” dell'impresa.

Il lavoro della Fiorentina oltre il merito di avere messo in luce le vicende che effettuarono l'attuazione di un progetto da tempo accarezzato, l'unificazione, cioè d'Italia, sta anche al suo attivo il fatto di aver contribuito un nuovo capitolo da inserirsi nella storia della nostra Isola. Emergono infatti, uomini e avvenimenti meritosi e deplorabili altri opportuni e lodevoli per i riflessi che apportano sulla storia della nostra Isola. Riteniamo, perciò, degna di apprezzamento la fatica della Fiorentina e auspichiamo al suo lavoro larga diffusione.

BONAVENTURA FIORINI.

FIORINI BONAVENTURA, *I Frati Minori Conventuali a Malta* (1370-1965). Estratto da “*Miscellanea Francescana*”, pp. 305-348. Roma, 1965. FIORINI BONAVENTURA: *Il culto a Sant'Antonio nell'isola di Malta*. Estratto dalla Rivista “*Il Santo*”, pp. 269-286, Anno V, fasc. 3: Padova, 1965.

These two pamphlets written by Chev. Fr. Bonaventura Fiorini, O.F.M. Conv., cover subjects which may be considered as two important branches of the history of Malta. The history of these islands would be incomplete were we to leave out the history of the monastic orders for these were established in Malta during the late Middle Ages, and, as in other countries, influenced the life of the people. It gives us therefore great satisfaction to see in print the story of the Minor Conventual Friars from the date of their first monastery in Malta, about the year 1370, narrated in its important details up to the year 1965.

Because of the lack of documents the history of our Middle Ages, including that of the monastic orders established in these islands, can only be fragmentary and incomplete. It is only in the late 16th century that we have more documentary evidence on which to base the narration of facts.

In the first pamphlet the Author follows the trend of events as furnished by contemporary evidence or by the works of historians. The pamphlet is ably annotated and compiled in a style which makes it comprehensible and easy to follow.

Fr. Fiorini narrates the vicitudes of the Friars Conventuals under the Order of St. John, the difficulties encountered under the Bourbons — it should be remembered that the Maltese monasteries formed part of the Sicilian province. Then

follows the period under the French occupation and that under British rule. In the year 1819 the local community was abruptly separated from the Sicilian province and placed directly under the General of the Order in Rome, represented in Malta by a *Commissario*. In 1905 Malta became a Province in its own right under a Provincial who was elected locally. The Province was placed under the protection of St. Paul.

The new local Province was instrumental for the re-establishment of the old Franciscan Province in England in 1907, which had been suppressed for at least three and a half centuries.

It is gratifying to observe that the Franciscan Minor Conventuals have today eleven Convents and houses forming the local Province; six in Malta and five abroad.

The second pamphlet, as the name shows, deals with the local devotion to St. Anthony, a cult typically Franciscan. It is difficult to think of the religious life of the Middle Ages without this saint who was venerated throughout Europe. This devotion locally must have been introduced, it is surmised, by the first Franciscans who came to Malta about the year 1370.

After a short introduction the Author gives us a list of iconography of St. Anthony to be found in Malta and Gozo. The list is extensive and it is interesting to study the various paintings of St. Anthony, the artist who painted them, and the locality where they are to be found.

The Author mentions the devotion to St. Anthony held by members of the Order of St. John — among these were Grand Masters and high dignitaries of the Order.

Fr. Fiorini further gives the number of churches dedicated to St. Anthony and describes the statues found in churches; and others carried in procession for the feast of this saint. There is a list of streets bearing this name and it is interesting to find this both in Gozo and in Malta. There are localities named after St. Anthony.

St. Anthony, an early follower of the much loved St. Francis of Assisi, has throughout the centuries inspired many and been invoked for all anxieties, and faith in his intercession has helped many over difficult periods.

E. R. LEOPARDI.

MIZZI FORTUNATO P., *Priestly vocations in the Maltese Ecclesiastical Province* (1911-1964), Malta, Pastoral Research Services, 1966, 55pp.

The Maltese Ecclesiastical Province was always flourishing with priestly and religious vocations. Up to our days, however, we could give only an average number of those who belonged to the Ecclesiastical state. The present work of Fr. Fortunato Mizzi completely filled this gap in our History by providing several comparative statistics that concern not only our Diocesan and religious clergy but also our population in the twentieth century. The study does not mean to investigate either the activities of the Church in Malta or the social reasons for the increase or decrease of vocations during the last fifty years. The unique aim of the author is to give a clear and exhaustive numerical picture of the Church in

Malta. Any Historian who in time to come will endeavour to inquire into any other aspect of the Church Role in our Island will find a great help in these statistics.

It is worthwhile noticing that the Religious vocations are in continual increase; on the other hand, the Diocesan clergy is always decreasing. (In 1911, there were 734 Diocesan Priests and 228 Religious; but up to 1963, the Diocesan Priests went down to 578 and the Religious reached the number of 619. At the same time, we relatively had more vocations in the past years; in fact, in 1911, the ratio of the Priests to the population was 1 to 220, but in 1963 it was 1 to 313.

The above mentioned factors are just a fragment from the many statistics found in this work, which is undoubtedly a most valuable book of reference to all those who are interested in the vicissitudes of the Church in Malta.

Fr. ALEXANDER BONNICI O.F.M. Conv.

BONNICI CALI', RAPHAEL, *The Church of Our Lady of Victory, Malta*, Information Dept., 1966, 24p.

During this year that marks the fourth centenary from the laying of the foundation stone of our capital city, the work of Chev. Bonnici Cali stands out as one of the most important for a worthy commemoration of such event.

In fact, the Church dedicated to "Our Lady of Victory" was the first building of our beautiful city.

The Author diligently narrates all the events basing himself on some of our Archives and Historians. The pamphlet published is rendered also very interesting through its numerous illustrations.

It is in this Church that the Knights and the Maltese began to invoke Our Lady with a new glorious title: "Our Lady of Victory". Hence, the Church stands out as a monument of Malta's great victory over the infidels.

For those who are interested in our architecture, the Church is also of an outstanding importance; it belongs to one of our most famous architects, Girolamo Cassar who "shaped it as a model for the future Conventual Church of St. John".

Throughout the whole seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several Knights and "respected gentlemen" continued to manifest their internal devotion towards Our Lady through their generous donations to this Church.

Surely, this interesting work will captivate all those who are interested in the history of our monuments in Valletta.

Fr. ALEXANDER BONNICI O.F.M. Conv.

CASSAR PAUL, *The use of wood as a writing medium in Medical History*, Vol. X, No. 3, July 1966.

This booklet gives an account, as the Author says, of the outbreak of the Plague occurred in 1813. As people were cautioned against the use of paper

believed to be dangerous fomites of the disease, wood were used as a writing medium.

In this work, Dr. Cassar describes six wooden manuscripts, which seem to be unique in Malta. The Author deserves credit for his research and we are grateful to him for this new contribution to the Medical History of Malta.

F.B.
