

rightly so – to evidenciate any acritical approach to the saint’s life and its historical sources, in this case the 1615 collection of letters, the *Centuria*, of which the majority is indeed apocryphal. Time and again, Caridi makes it clear how in earlier Lives a certain episode regarding Francis of Paola, “riferito in modo sintetico dall’Anonimo ... viene ripreso poi dai successivi agiografi, che spesso vi aggiungono tuttavia, a evidenti fini devozionali, una serie di particolari volti a rendere ancora più prodigioso il suo operato, ma che non trovano alcun riscontro documentario” (p. 110).

The “aspetto fortemente miracolistico, che ha constellato la vita dell’eremita paolano” (p. 49), does have its basis in the documentary sources, however, especially in the aforementioned acts of the canonization processes that were instructed to prove precisely the many and varied miracles of the candidate saint. The author of the 1560 Calabrese *Vita*, for example, may not always have quoted his sources with the greatest precision, but he cannot be accused of having made the already stupendous miracles even more grandiose (cf. p. 59). Given St Francis’s reputation as a thaumaturge, Caridi’s book would have benefitted from a systematic discussion of the hermeneutics of the many miracle stories, instead of discussing them one by one (or not at all), also because those discussions do facilitate the reading, given the number of biographers, with whom he engages (“il Perrimezzi”, “il Roberti”, “il Toscano”, etc.). Were one as indulgent towards the embellished miracle stories as Caridi seems to be towards the loose transcription of the saint’s letters to make them more readable (e.g. to suit devotion), permitted as long as one is sure about their authenticity and remains faithful to their content (p. 144), one could almost understand those biographers who narrated the famous story of Francis crossing of the Strait of Messina by walking on the water (*sic*), transforming it in him sailing the Strait on his mantle in the company of one or two of his brethren – embellished, yes, but not substantially altered. The story is based on two hearsay testimonies given at the canonization process held in Calabria in 1516, but with all the legitimate doubts raised by Caridi as regards certain details, he does not go so far as to discredit the event itself (p. 73-76). Yet at the end of the book, where he discusses the various processes, he does quote – approvingly, one assumes – the cautious but critical opinion of F. Molinari that certain aspects of the testimonies, in fact, “fanno pendere la bilancia dalla parte del dubbio e della problematica” (p. 256). Occasionally, there are coeval sources that can help to corroborate or not some seemingly impossible stories (e.g. p. 120), but more often one is simply left with the figure of the wonderworking hermit as it emerges in particular from the Calabrese processes (cf. S. Boesch Gajano, p. 255). In that sense, the 1560 Calabrese *Vita* and Caridi’s 2016 critical biography may well be, in their own way, equally valid as a source of knowledge.

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Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola. Dialogus de adoratione (= *Studi Pichiani*, 18). A cura e con un saggio introduttivo di Alessia CONTARINO. Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 2017, XII-170 p. [ISBN 978-88-222-6533-3]

Analecta Bollandiana, 137 (2019).

Giovanni Francesco Pico (1470-1533), Lord of Mirandola, will probably always be seen only as the “nephew of” the famous humanist Giovanni Pico, to whom he openly refers, not without pride, as the “zio paterno” (p. 135) and whose biography is among his earliest works (1497). A dilettante philosopher and a militant Catholic of the Savonarola bent, he seems to have exhorted Pope Leo X and the Fathers of the Fifth Lateran Council, shortly before its closure in 1517, to reform the Church and return to the Christianity of yore, thus making himself “l’ultima voce di protesta contro gli abusi ecclesiastici prima dello scoppiare della Riforma” (p. 8). When, a few years later, things got out of hand in Germany, with the more radical Reformers denying the value of the sacraments, destroying the sacred images, and prophesying the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth, while in Rome a new pope was elected, Clement VII (1523-1534), who had joined his predecessor and cousin Leo X in the fight against Savonarolism, the younger Pico was faced with “l’impellente necessità di allontanare da sé qualsiasi taccia di eresia, unitamente all’esigenza, in lui ancor viva, di una restaurazione dei costumi ecclesiastici primigeni” (p. 25). The result was a thirty-page text, finished in early 1524 (p. 3), dedicated to Clement VII, and most probably never published (p. 81), presented here for the first time, in both the original Latin and an Italian translation, with the text-critical notes in the former and the explanatory notes in the latter. As the title, *Dialogus de adoratione*, makes clear, the topic is a defence of the cult of the sacred images, against pagan practices in general and Lutheran reform in particular (it is difficult to agree with the editor that Pico’s five pages against ‘the monster’ of Wittenberg are quantitatively marginal [p. 25]), and its form a fictitious dialogue between one Nicolaus, i.e. Nicolaus Schönberg, OP, Archbishop of Capua (1472-1537), and Lilio, that is, the humanist Giglio Gregorio Giraldi (1479-1552), both of them good friends of the author; the second had the pope’s esteem, but the first was too much associated with Savonarolism and with imperial German politics to have been appreciated by Clement, which may well be one of the reasons why the *Dialogue* was never published (p. 13-15, 81). Would the Church have been better by its publication in 1524? As the editor shows well, contextualizing Pico’s text in the humanistic, philosophical, and theological currents of his time, there are few original thoughts to be found in it and none that would have convinced the German reformers of the legitimacy of worshipping sacred images. In fact, his aim “di ritrovare il vero senso spirituale delle immagini, al di là del loro aspetto materiale” and his assertion that “le immagini dichiarate necessarie sono puramente interiori, mentre delle rappresentazioni materiali si sostiene, più che altro, la non dannosità” (p. 64; cf. *Dialogus*, f. 20^v), border on spiritualism and would have brought more than one wavering Catholic into the iconoclastic camp. It also sits awkwardly with the notice – casually brought but undoubtedly with apologetic motives – of the “miracoli che rifulsero innumerevoli per intervento della Vergine Madre di Dio, davanti alla Sua immagine posta fuori della città” (p. 135), i.e. Mirandola, which makes one wonder whether the *Dialogue* is not as artificial in its content as it is in its form. This being said, it still has all the historical importance of its author Gianfrancesco Pico, ‘nephew of’, and could not have been served better than by the editor, who has enriched it with an exemplary 80-page presentation and analysis that will not easily suffer the fate of the manuscript itself, namely of being forgotten for five centuries.

May it also contribute, as Pico himself did for his famous uncle, to a proper biography of this emblematic figure of the early Italian reform movement, conceivably under the auspices of the Centro Internazionale di Cultura “Giovanni Pico della Mirandola”, which made this admirable text edition possible. M. LINDEIJER

Saint Pierre Favre. Lettres et instructions. Traduites, annotées et présentées par Pierre EMONET (= *Collection de la revue Christus*, 8). Namur – Paris, Lessius – Éditions jésuites, 2017, 397 p. [ISBN 978-2-87299-311-6]

Ce recueil, qui contient les 95 lettres conservées de Pierre Favre, plus quatre «instructions» spirituelles, apparaît comme un excellent complément à son *Mémorial* – journal spirituel –, largement diffusé depuis le milieu du XX^e s. Si le *Mémorial* dévoile la vie intérieure du premier compagnon d’Ignace de Loyola, qui fut son maître spirituel, les *Lettres* montrent Pierre Favre en pleine activité apostolique: en Italie du Nord d’abord (Parme, Brescia) en 1539 et 1540, en Allemagne (Worms, Spire, Ratisbonne) à la fin de l’année 1540 et en 1541, et ensuite sur les routes d’Espagne (Madrid, Galapagar, Tolède, Barcelone) fin 1541 et début 1542. Au mois d’avril de cette dernière année, on le retrouve à nouveau en Allemagne (Spire, Mayence, Cologne) jusqu’à la fin de 1543, avec un bref passage à Louvain à la charnière des années 1543-1544, après quoi il retourne à Cologne jusqu’à son départ pour le Portugal fin 1544 (Coïmbre, Evora). Du mois d’avril 1545 jusqu’à juin 1546, il parcourt l’Espagne (Valladolid, Madrid). Il quitte l’Espagne pour se rendre au Concile de Trente, mais meurt, épuisé, à Rome le 1^{er} août 1546 à l’âge de 40 ans.

Pierre Favre sur les routes d’Europe est l’exemple-type de ce qu’était un jésuite aux premiers temps de la Compagnie de Jésus, approuvée par Paul III en septembre 1540. Les premiers jésuites étaient avant tout des missionnaires itinérants envoyés là où le besoin le plus grand ou le plus urgent se faisait sentir. Ils étaient envoyés soit par le pape, soit par Ignace, souvent à la demande d’évêques, de princes, de rois. Quand Ignace, à partir de 1548, accepte d’ouvrir des collèges, une certaine stabilité tempérera quelque peu l’itinérance primitive. Les lettres de Favre montrent bien cette mobilité initiale du missionnaire jésuite.

51 lettres sont écrites depuis divers lieux d’Allemagne. Le travail apostolique dans une Allemagne où le protestantisme gagne constamment du terrain est au centre de ce recueil. Favre se montre très préoccupé par la situation de l’Église, comme en témoignent ses lettres. Il n’avait cependant pas été envoyé dans la région comme théologien à proprement parler, mais pour y pratiquer les ministères apostoliques habituels de la Compagnie: prêcher, confesser, faire la catéchèse, et surtout donner les *Exercices Spirituels*. Favre y est véritablement l’apôtre des *Exercices*. Il les donne à des prêtres, des évêques, des gens de la cour de Charles Quint, ainsi qu’à des candidats désireux d’intégrer la Compagnie. Beaucoup de prêtres qui les ont faits, commencent ensuite à les donner à leur tour. Les *Exercices* de la Première Semaine sont donnés à un grand nombre. La demande est grande. Favre devient l’accompagnateur spirituel d’un grand nombre d’hommes, de femmes et de prêtres.