

Raymond Macken. **Een Levenswijsheid in Spreuken.** Leuven : Uitgaven Anima, 1984.

The author is a priest of the Franciscan Order in Belgium. He is usually referred to as a scientific researcher, his main scholarly projects being the critical edition of the **Opera Omnia** of Henry of Ghent (in forty-six volumes) and a **Bio-Bibliography of Medieval Philosophers of the Low Countries** (seven volumes) which, when completed, will contain a very detailed description of all the manuscripts of medieval philosophers in the Low Countries, wherever those manuscripts happen to be located. Besides his considerable scholarly work, Macken has been a parish priest and is also an accomplished musician, both as a composer and as an organist. He has given organ recitals in St. Peter's Cathedral in Louvain.

His book of Flemish sayings shows the results of a lifetime of acute observation and meditation. It is a mixture of the traditional folk wisdom and his personal insights. Father Macken has not only collected hundreds of proverbs and sayings typical of Flanders, but he explains them and comments on them in the light of his academic knowledge and his experiences of a world in transition. In this respect, the book is reminiscent of Erasmus' **Adages**, even though the great humanist's name is not invoked, and really constitutes a continuation of the Erasmian genre, which was quite popular in its day.

More than a mere enumeration of folk wisdom expressed in proverbial form, it is a work of rare density. In fact I found the copious notes of Father Macken far more interesting than the proverbs themselves. However, the notes could have been written in larger print and on the page facing the proverb, rather than at the bottom of the page and on to the next page. Father Macken, the Christian scholar, blends his own philosophy and faith with good humour, good Flemish common sense and a mystical touch. Written in a vivid flowing style, the book will provide pleasure for anyone interested in the Dutch-Flemish tradition. It is informative, then, but better than that, it is enjoyable. The book is available from Dr. Raymond Macken, O.F.M., Vlamingenstraat 39, B. 3000 Leuven, Belgium.

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