

PIPINO DEFENDS HIS VERSION AND THE BOOK OF MARCO POLO
read it with more pleasure or take it in more readily. Moreover they could have performed this labour which they have compelled me to undertake more fully by themselves, but giving their leisure to higher contemplation and preferring the sublime to the most lowly, as they refused to know earthly things so also [they were unwilling] to describe things of earth. But I obeying their command have translated the contents of the book faithfully and completely into simple and clear Latin, the style which the matter of this book required. And that this labour may not seem too vain or useless I considered that from the reading of this book faithful men can win from the Lord the merit of manifold grace, either because observing the wonderful things of God in the variety of the things said and the greatness of the creatures they will be able to wonder with more wonder at his power and wisdom, or seeing the gentile peoples wrapped in such darkness of blindness and in such uncleanness may give thanks to God who lighting his faithful with the light of truth has deigned to call them from so dangerous darkness into his wonderful light; or pitying their ignorance shall pray the Lord for the illumination of their hearts, that the faithlessness of undevout Christians may be confounded because the infidel people are more ready to worship idols than are most of these who are signed with the mark of Christ ready for the worship of the true God. Or even the hearts of some devoted to religion could be provoked for the spread of the Christian faith to carry by the favour of the divine Spirit the name of the Lord Jesus Christ among so great a multitude of peoples given over to oblivion, to the blinded nations of the infidels, where the harvest truly is great but the labourers are few. Lest however the many unheard of and to us unusual things which are told in very many places in this book may seem incredible to the inexperienced reader, let it be known to all who read in it that the aforesaid Sir Marcus, the relater of these wonders, is a man prudent, faithful, and devout, and adorned with pure morals, having good testimony from all his familiar friends, so that by the merit of his manifold virtue his story may be worthy of trust. His father moreover, Sir Nicholas, a man of complete prudence, used to tell all these things in the same way. And his uncle, whom this book mentions, a man indeed mature, devout, and wise, asserted in familiar talk to his confessor, when he was on the point of death, with unwavering firmness that this book contained the truth in every way. For this reason I undertook the labour about the translation of it with the securer conscience for the comfort of the readers and to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ Creator of all things visible and invisible. Now this book is divided into three books, which are divided up into their proper chapters. And the titles of the chapters are prefixed at the beginnings of the books for the easier finding of the contents of them.