

proven. One of the most felicitous parts of this translation is the restoration of 'all things will be well' (p. 225) for 'alle maner of thynges shall be wele' (crit. ed. p. 405) after the bathos of the best-known of Modern English translations and its 'everything is going to be all right'. (Clifton Wolters, Penguin, 1966, p. 103).

One criticism which might be levelled at the preface to this volume is the kind of emphasis it gives to the imagery of motherhood in Julian. This has been widely and mistakenly seen in certain circles recently to be a statement about the nature of God as 'mother'. Julian's 'insistence on referring to God as Mother' (p. 8) is here compared to the 'presence of God as Mother in other religious traditions, especially Hinduism' (p. 10); another presupposition which cannot be established from the text. Julian is a careful and orthodox theologian, and though, like St Anselm, she can describe the action of God in Christ towards the human race in terms of the imagery of

motherhood, this is in no sense a statement about the essential nature of the Trinity or any Person of the Trinity as feminine. It is both less and at the same time very much more.

But these are details and perhaps irrelevant in comparison with the value of this translation which makes available the texts of the *Revelations of Divine Love* in an accurate and readable version which is both true to Julian's text and a proper medium for the prayer and meditation which she should draw forth. The impact of the details of the revelation of the crucified Jesus which is the foundation of her writings is presented in its true light, as essentially of its time, and equally clear is the relevance and truth of the wisdom she drew from it. This is one of the greatest of spiritual writings in any age and the presentation of this new translation is a matter for congratulation.

BENEDICTA WARD S.L.G.

BONAVENTURE: THE SOUL'S JOURNEY INTO GOD; THE TREE OF LIFE.

THE LIFE OF ST FRANCIS translated and introduced by Ewert Cousins with a Preface by Ignatius Brady O.F.M. SPCK pp. xx + 353 £6.50

This is one of a sixty-volume series, 'The Classics of Western Spirituality', published originally in America by the Paulist Press, an undertaking which demands much gratitude. A great deal of care and industry has gone into the producing of this book, and there is much in it that should benefit the class of reader which the editors seem to have in mind. But I cannot help wondering whether a good many may not be put off by some features of these three works. This is to suggest, not that it would have been better to choose others, but that it might have been more useful to publish selections from the *corpus* as a whole. The main trouble is that medieval piety tends to be fancifully exuberant in a way that many of us find merely embarrassing or to be scholastically abstract. Professor Cousins, in his generally helpful Introduction, writes that *The Tree of Life* is free from 'the sentimentality and flights of fancy that characterized much of the later writing in the same genre' (p. 12) – which is, of course, strictly

true. But then it may be surprising to find in the Prologue, for instance, a description of the tree which can be thus illustrated: 'The fruit of the tree of life, therefore, is pictured and is offered to our taste under twelve flavors or twelve branches. On the first branch the soul devoted to Christ perceives the flavor of sweetness by recalling the distinguished origin and sweet birth of her Savior ...' (p. 121). In *The Soul's Journey into God* (I am not convinced by Cousin's argument for translating *in* by 'into' rather than 'to'). We read, for instance, that 'just as absolute nothing has nothing of being or its attributes, so contrariwise, being has nothing of non-being either in act or potency, either in objective truth or in our estimation' (p 91) and, still less acceptably: 'Our intellect perceives this necessary relationship not only in existing things, but also in non-existing things. For if a man actually exists, it follows that if he is running, he is moving; the same conclusion follows even if he does not exist' (p. 82).

It will have been noticed that the translation does not always read well; it must be borne in mind that St Bonaventure's Latin, which can be magnificent (as in his prayer for use after Mass, once upon a time well-known), is very often impossible to render in any really satisfying way. Cousins breaks up long sentences and lyrical passages into 'sense-lines'. Sometimes this comes off, but sometimes one has the sense of being spoon-fed in a quite absurd way. *The Life of St Francis* begins thus:

1 *There was a man*
in the town of Assisi
Francis by name,¹
whose memory is held in benediction²
because God in his generosity
foreordained goodly blessings for him³
— phrases which can be found in the Bible are italicized throughout with references in footnotes. In this translation of the *Legenda Maior* the miracles attributed to the Saint after his death are omitted, but there are still many stories of marvels; people who read books on spirituality nowadays (if one may judge from the large sales of *The Cloud of Unknowing*

in recent years) are not looking, usually, for that kind of thing. Father Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. in his authoritative Preface, describes Bonaventure as 'devoted from childhood onward to his Seraphic Father in very deed and truth'. It might have been pointed out that, although Bonaventure was thoroughly imbued with the 'Franciscan spirit' he did not feel called upon to imitate him in everything. Let us grant that the clericalization of the Order was a necessary and therefore a legitimate development of the Franciscan idea: it remains that Bonaventure recognized in himself a sub-vocation to the academic life which differentiated him sharply from Francis. To adapt some remarks of Gilson's in this connection, you may be able to pray well when you are frozen and starving, but you will not be able to write good lectures. Since I have confined myself largely to criticisms of the book, I must emphasize, in case it should not be obvious, that there are many fine things to be found in it.

ILLTYD TRETOWAN O.S.B.

THE LADDER OF MONKS AND TWELVE MEDITATIONS by Guigo II. Translated by Edmund Colledge OSA and James Walsh SJ. *Mowbrays*, 1978. pp. 157 £3.95

In 1970 Colledge and Walsh published a critical edition of Guigo II, with a French translation by a Carthusian, in *Sources Chrétiennes*. The present volume in English gives English readers access to this work. The Introduction is basically the same; the Latin text is not given, but the editors give us their own translation into English.

There can be no doubt about the importance and interest of Guigo II. His *Scala Claustralium* is one of the most attractive short works of medieval monastic spirituality, and in its day it enjoyed a considerable vogue, as the manuscript tradition shows. The Meditations were not so popular, but they retain their value as first class specimens of a kind of reflection on scripture at which medieval monks (and some modern evangelicals) excel, in which texts galore are woven into a richly suggestive, if quite unsystematic, whole.

The editors' introduction in the English volume differs from that in the earlier

French volume in two ways. First of all, the detailed and useful account of the textual tradition is omitted, and this is sensible, since there is to be no presentation of the Latin text. And the report of the fourteenth century English translation is expanded, containing much longer quotations (modernised) than the French version did. This too is an obvious improvement for the English edition. Apart from this, there are only minor alterations in the new introduction, mostly due to reviewers' comments on the French.

Since the introduction is not, then, a new work, it calls for little comment now. I would only mention one point: it seems to me that the editors exaggerate the anti-intellectualism both of Guigo himself and of the so-called Western mystical tradition.

The English translation is curiously uneven. It is a much looser rendering than the one given in the French edition, and at times the translators seem rather to have lost their way. But on the whole it is