

addition to the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction does not defend the monolithic State, but it does not think that the social and political group is just a convenient corollary to personal rights or that the judgment of conscience makes any sense apart from reference to law.

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

THE WAKEFIELD PAGEANTS IN THE TOWNELEY CYCLE. Edited by A. C. Cawley. (Manchester University Press; 18s.)

This is the first of a new series of Old and Middle English texts to be published by the Manchester University Press. Judging from this example, we are likely to have some volumes attractive to the eye, with well-printed uncrowded pages and offering good value for money. So much for minimal considerations.

These six pageants from the Towneley cycle are edited from photographs of the MS which is in the Huntingdon Library, California. Previous to this edition, ever since 1897, the text of every edition of any of these pageants had been based on the E.E.T.S. text of the cycle published in that year.

The aim behind Dr Cawley's selection has been to 'group off', to extricate from the whole cycle, and then to bring together within a pair of covers, just those pageants which can, in varying degree, be more or less confidently attributed to the Wakefield Master—attributed not in the sense that he wrote, but that he wrote *over*, or revised, an earlier version—or parts of a 'register'—in his own highly individual manner. For, at least, everyone has sensed an easily distinguishable manner, operating at certain sections within the Towneley MS, even though the exact limits of where this Master began his activities and where he left off will remain in dispute despite this present volume. Some of us would have preferred, for example, that pageant XXX had been included in this edition, or that II, the *Mactacio Abel*, had been rejected, despite the tone of Cayn's speeches, because of the absence in the latter of the famous strophe which has been accepted *in lieu* of a signature. Yet we have little to complain about, and we can either suppose that the Master only hit upon his stanza with his second piece, the *Processus Noe*, or that the local references to Wakefield in Dr Cawley's selection are certain enough to establish a real homogeneity within the larger scheme, that is the Towneley cycle.

The essential question to ask about this publication is, of course, this: What are we to make of the Wakefield Master? (The attempt to identify him with one Pilkington has not succeeded. Fortunately, perhaps. Who would not rather be remembered as The Wakefield Master than as Pilkington!) Here is a poet with a pronounced person-

ality in a century where the obtrusion, even evidence, of a definable personality in verse was a rare thing. Now we are presented with his 'Works'. What critical place are we to give their author in the history of poetry between the death of Chaucer and the rise of Wyatt? Set him against Hoccleve or Barclay, and it is a very high place. To this it might be argued that he belongs to what Mr Speirs calls the non-Chaucerian tradition. However that might be, we shall have to turn to contemporary Scotland for a genuine comparison in terms of a sheer originality combined with force.

The stamp of the Wakefield Master, in five of six of these pageants, and fragmentarily—sometimes extensively—elsewhere in the cycle, is his nine-line stanza containing thirteen rhymes. That a poet of genius, set to write *over* or to revise a tired script, should coax embers into a really swaggering blaze (for what a lean and rakish humour this poet has! how piety blends with brawling invective! and how a homely Yorkshire eye and ear for folk-ways—with his 'hob over the wall' or his game of Hot Cockles in *Coliphizacio*—merge naturally into his participation in a cycle dramatizing the whole history of the one Big Experiment!) by turning eighty or so lines, or forty or so couplets, into three of his stanzas remains a marvel. Certainly, by over-layering stuff, roughened but still dull, with his intricate and wheeling stanza, he imposes an order. But, in imposing an order, he also strikes his material into life. Dr Cawley, in a note on the stanza, writes well, but even he does not say all that could be said towards advancing an answer to this mystery of how elaborate pattern made for freedom and the discovery of new relations between the characters of a drama.

This admirable volume, besides the texts of the pageants, is equipped with an introduction, a bibliography, appendices, notes and a full glossary.

FRANCIS BERRY

PIERS PLOWMAN AND THE SCHEME OF SALVATION. By Robert Worth Frank. (Yale University Press; 32s.)

This is a scholarly study of the form and meaning of *Piers Plowman*. Mr Frank reads the poem as a literal rather than an allegorical poem, and does not seek to place it in any particular doctrinal, religious or political movement of the fourteenth century. He does not, however, study in a vacuum; he interprets the poem in the light of fundamental Catholic theology. Without detracting at all from his own interpretation one may feel that he strains too hard to discredit the allegorical interpretations of scholars like Nevil Coghill. These surely can exist side by side with his own. He maintains that *Piers Plowman* dramatizes