

informative, has no scientific pretensions. It is of the broken relics of English myths and traditions that he writes, and it is as 'oddities' rather than as the debris of a vital cultural force that he presents them. Michael Ayrton's accompanying 'illustrations' enter happily into the spirit of this erudite small-talk; but as we compare them with Mr Burland's selections from the Mexican painters, or with Miss Deren's impressive photographs, we are aware that we have passed from life to death, from reality to whimsicality.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

HENRY SUSO: *LITTLE BOOK OF ETERNAL WISDOM, AND LITTLE BOOK OF TRUTH*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by James M. Clark. (Faber; 18s.)

This is a further volume in the series, *Classics of the Contemplative Life*, edited by the late Professor Allison Peers. The *Book of Eternal Wisdom* is not mystical in the sense that this term applies to some of the other books in the series. Its claim to be included here in a new translation rests rather on the fact that Blessed Henry Suso was himself a mystic and a visionary, though this is more evident from his autobiography and his letters. *Eternal Wisdom* is a practical ascetical treatise written in vivid dialogue form and deriving its unity of theme from meditations on the Passion. The *Book of Truth* is a short treatise on the theme of mystical abandonment. It is a rigidly scholastic work of little distinction or originality, written with the practical aim of exposing the false mystics of the time and of distinguishing their position from that of Eckhart, who had been Suso's teacher. Suso's mind was not primarily speculative, and his attitude to the problems which beset the contemplative may best be summed up in his final words in this treatise, addressed to his inquisitive disciple: 'Let this suffice for thee, for one does not attain the hidden truth by asking questions, but . . . by true self-abandonment'.

For this reason the preface to this translation which seeks to establish the body of Suso's mystical doctrine where there really is none, is rather misleading. What it amounts to is that Suso was an orthodox scholastic and followed St Thomas at every turn. Nor is a comparison of this German Dominican of the late Middle Ages with St Teresa of Avila really helpful. The best approach to him is surely *via* the attitude and personality of his English contemporaries, notably Richard Rolle of Hampole. Like Rolle, Suso is learned and yet a poet, writing for the benefit of all in the vivid vernacular of his day, bursting spontaneously into lyrical and alliterative forms, meditating affectively and tenderly on sublime truths, Suso's style has the same spring-like freshness and fervour; Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion* and his *Amending of Life* might have come from the same pen as *Eternal Wisdom*. Indeed, a fourteenth-century

translation of the chapter on death (from the *Horologium*, Suso's own expanded Latin version of *Eternal Wisdom*) is actually attributed to Rolle in a later hand in an MS at the Cambridge University Library. The English (I have modernised the forms) has the authentic ring of our own mystics:

'And even as a travelling man standeth by the haven and beholdeth a ship that swiftly saileth toward far countries that he should go to, . . . right so stand thou stably in virtues, . . . so that thou mayest at the last come to the place of immortality and everlasting bliss.'

The *Horologium* was immensely popular all over Europe (Caxton printed it in 1490, and there is a fine copy at the British Museum), while *Eternal Wisdom*, being written in a Middle High German dialect, remained comparatively unknown. Professor Clark now inclines to the opinion of recent French critics who maintain that Suso first wrote this book in Latin and then translated it into the vernacular. The question arises, why should the translation of a translation appear once more in English, instead of a version of the much fuller Latin text which yet awaits translation? Perhaps Surius, the sixteenth-century Carthusian translator of Suso, can speak for Professor Clark who does not himself raise this issue. Surius says that he chose to translate the German rather than the Latin, *cum sit Germanico succinctus, purus, mire efficax, ne lectori prolixitate moveat stomachum, et nihilominus id, quod vult, in eius animo efficiat.* (From the preface to the edition of 1555.)

The present translation is meticulously accurate, and scholarly as well as eminently readable on the whole; but the task is a hard one and no version can really hope to convey the full lyrical and emotive power of Suso's language. There are several misprints. The footnote on p. 15 should read 'p. 203'; p. 39, for 'Leipzig' read 'Stuttgart'; p. 49, for 'though' read 'through'; p. 55, chapter heading, for 'inner' read 'outer' to translate 'ussren'; p. 70, footnote, read 'destroy'; p. 87, footnote should be 'Germania VIII'.

ELISABETH STOPP

THE FURTHER JOURNEY. By Rosalind Murray. (Harvill Press; 12s. 6d.)

Those who have travelled 'from utter non-belief into the Church' seem to their former fellow-pagans to have passed an 'Iron Curtain' into a wholly different world. Miss Murray has written this sequel to *The Good Pagan's Failure* with the idea of carrying out the duty of being 'a link or bridge between the separated worlds'. Her concern is not with intellectual difficulties in the doctrines of the Faith but with the ethical barrier: the difficulty of surrendering natural for supernatural values, the difficulties created by the failure of good Catholics to satisfy the exacting ethical demands of good pagans. Her wish is primarily to communicate across the frontier to