

and diaries left by Fra Jerome, the name he adopted as a hermit, quotes from them frequently and is illustrated with the hermit's own vivid and amusing sketches as well as a number of photographs of churches he designed and built. The tang of the hermit's personality is borne across strongly; three glimpses will show what I mean—the young Anglo-Catholic parson wandering as a tramp to satisfy his longing for Franciscan poverty—the parish priest in Western Australia breeding horses, riding them and even winning once in the local races to the great delight of his parishioners—the old hermit dragging himself out despite sickness to build churches and even a monastery elsewhere in the Bahamas, but still longing for the ascetic solitude which his own innocent flamboyance and his obedience seemed to prevent him achieving. These are all the same man. But this is more than a story of physical adventure: in the chapter 'Soliloquies of a Solitary' we see something of his spirit and his plan for the eremitical life and it is enough to fill one with admiration.

B.W.

NATURE INTO HISTORY. By Leslie Paul. (Faber and Faber, 21s.)

Mr Paul's autobiography, with its first-hand understanding of the intellectual and spiritual values of the urban poor earlier in the century, gave an account of the growth and testing of his very humane principles and convictions. The upbringing which he there describes explains why he came to be, in these Brains Trust days, an unusual kind of popular philosopher and moralist—unacademic in the best sense, critical of much that passes as scientific humanism, and dissatisfied with the view of man's nature which scientific humanists have made so widely acceptable. *Nature into History* is an attempt to clear the way for a more traditional, religious view of human nature by a reassessment of evolutionary philosophy, and an examination of evidence from anthropology, archaeology and psychology.

It should be said at once that this is not one of those contentious intrusions into the purely scientific work of zoologists, biologists and others, which have always tended to discredit the religious views they have been intended to support. Mr Paul has clearly gone to some trouble to acquaint himself, as far as a non-specialist can, with the nature of that scientific work, but only in order to see whether it *must* carry the implication that 'man is just a beast writ large', and that human history is only a continuation of an universal evolutionary process. His conclusion is that so many great differences of degree are found between the characteristic activities of man and of other animals that man, while having his part in their natural world, has entered, or at

least is in, a world with other dimensions. The information upon which he draws to urge this point—the difference between human and natural history, the uniqueness to man of the incest taboo, the transcendence of merely lived experience made possible by language, the non-natural customs so strongly valued even in the simplest cultures—these will be, for many, part of a familiar argument—but of one which just those who find it familiar and acceptable would be unlikely to put forward at length. For this reason alone, it would have been worthwhile for Mr Paul to write this book. But the work has a further value and quality, which readers of Mr Paul's other writings will recognize as part of their virtue. The problems he raises, however much he generalizes them in the end, are clearly suggested initially by the habit of intense reflection upon questions which he has urgently wished to settle for himself. Consequently the book, apart from any intrinsic conviction carried by its arguments, demonstrates something of the very process by which a kind of religious belief can emerge from a consideration of the modern knowledge by which it had seemed to be supplanted.

GODFREY LIENHARDT

**SIGNPOSTS TO PERFECTION.** Sermons of Johann Tauler, selected, edited and translated by Elizabeth Strakosch. (Blackfriars; 15s.)

*Signposts to Perfection* is a title with no germane nuance for this excellent translation of twenty sermons by John Tauler, the fourteenth-century Dominican mystic of the Rhineland. They are mostly the notes of conferences he used to give to nuns—their notes, not his. In a much too diffuse introduction the translator draws attention to these remarkable women and their activity of instigation and response within the great movement of the spirit, more familiarly represented by Eckhart and Henry Suso, which flowed from the Dominican *studium* at Cologne.

The connection with scholasticism—indeed, with St Thomas himself, who once taught at Cologne and whose teaching became the norm of Dominican studies in 1309—is important. It opens an easily ignored depth in scholasticism and also places Tauler in the only context in which he cannot be misunderstood. More salience might have been given to this in the introduction, though the point is usefully made that Eckhart and Tauler were creating in German the words and concepts to share the Latin patrimony of the spirit in which they were trained. The richness of their language, with its dense physical imagery and hypnotic use of words like *Grund* and *nichts*, must be controlled by this context—which is also that of religious life. The life of the