

special devotions 'to which they are not bound'; and again from *Ara Dei*, the proper way of hearing Mass with its insistence that those who understand Latin and Scripture should attend 'discreetly and devoutly unto sense literal of the Mass', following at certain times not their own prayers but the words of the priest.

There is the inevitable disadvantage in any anthology of this kind that the extracts quoted are taken out of their context, which means especially in the case of the longer works such as the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Scale of Perfection* that the sense of continuity is lacking; and unless the reader is already familiar with these works, he is not brought into touch with the teaching of these writers taken as a whole. As if to compensate for this, the editor has tried the interesting experiment of arranging her selections according to the life of prayer as seen from various angles and according to a certain line of development. It may, however, be questioned how far this scheme has been successful, and whether these divisions do not tend to be somewhat arbitrary in character, giving a certain rigidity of distinction not entirely in accord with what the introduction describes as the 'simpler and less self-conscious spirituality' of these writers. This impression is further confirmed when we read in the editor's foreword that 'the majority of pieces in the first half are not mystical in any degree' and that 'a host of spiritual writers appreciated and were content to transmit the spiritual traditions handed down from Patristic times, through the great Benedictine age, even if their personal experience did not attain to the higher degree of prayer.' It is always difficult to judge of what the personal experience of a writer has been, but if he has handed down the traditions of the Fathers and the Benedictine age, it is hardly possible that his writings should not reflect something of the contemplative spirit which inspired those traditions. But even if doubts remain as to the success of this approach, we are bound to be grateful for this work, both as an excellent introduction to the more well known writers for those not familiar with them and for the work of research in new discoveries which should be an incitement to further efforts in this direction.

DOM ODO BROOKE

RIGHT AND WRONG. By Martin Buber, tr. by R. G. Smith. (S.C.M. Press; 6s.)

This is a series of short meditations on five Psalms, in which a modern Jew ponders their meaning in the light of the problems of today. The first, Psalm 12 (Vulg. 11, *Salvum me fac Domine, quoniam defecit sanctus*), represents 'the generation of the lie' as the root of calamity in the world, leading on to the second, Psalm 14 (Vulg. 13, *Dixit insipiens. . . Non est Deus: corrupti sunt. . .*), which emphasises what the author calls 'the Rift' in Israel, 'Israel torn in two' (p. 21). There are 'those who say in their hearts, there is no God. They do not say it aloud . . ., with their

lips they confess him. . . . Why should there not be a God—so long as he does not bother himself with what men are doing on earth! But the truth is that God watches . . .’ (p. 21): The ultimate rift is a lie about God. The third psalm, Psalm 82 (Vulg. 81, *Deus stetit in synagoga deorum*), is seen as an indictment of those rulers, called ‘gods’ because of their God-given authority, who have abused it by not recognising its origin, and not seeing themselves in the presence of God. In the fourth psalm, Psalm 73 (Vulg. 72, *Quam bonus Israel Deus, his qui recto sunt corde*), the heart of the matter is reached: the heart of Israel. It is not only the well-doing, or the public worship, but it is the heart that counts. And God is good: but the reward is not necessarily prosperity, for the psalm ends with *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est*. The last meditation is on the first psalm, on the two ways open to mankind, the *via peccatorum* and the *lex Domini*. The latter is followed in God’s presence, while the *iter impiorum*, away, apart from God, *peribit*.

The author himself in the foreword speaks of these meditations as distinguishing between ‘mere conscious being’ (on a purely human plane) and ‘true existence as the nearness of God’, adding that they ‘may therefore be described as an essay in existential exegesis’. This would seem to link them with a new and current mode of thought. Yet Christian writers have for centuries taught that the only true approach to living is to live ‘in the the presence of God’, and the fact that this idea is so strongly represented in the Psalms is surely the reason why the Church has always made the Psalms to be the core of her liturgical piety. The Christian reader may nevertheless be grateful to Professor Buber for having underlined the matter once again.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

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

Blessed Henry Suso is certainly one of the most human and lovable among the great mystics. Professor Clark has done him a real service among English-speaking people. There has been no translation of his life or *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* for the best part of a century. A few years ago the French Dominicans brought out a critical edition of Suso’s Life and writings in their entirety. An English counterpart has been long overdue; now that a portion of it has come, it has been well worth waiting for. Professor Clark has given us a masterly introduction and this is followed by a most delightful annotated translation of *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* and *The Little Book of Truth*. One has always been accustomed to think of Suso the poet and mystic, losing sight, to a great extent, of Suso the theologian, the trained thomist. Yet he himself says that when he had prepared for his degree, he did not take it solely in