

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

spirit is not a cult of vertigo, and it is important to insist on the presence of theological and community sanctions at every point in reading Tauler. It will not be easy to transpose his spirituality either in lay Catholic life or even in the religious life. We have to be chary, because our idea of the spirit is so intimidated that it might quail at meeting Tauler, or else become delirious. Even that accommodating notion, 'the Dominican spirit', becomes formidably more demanding when one sees how he belongs to it.

Sanctioned by all this, reading Tauler is a liberating experience. His language restores a plenitude and freedom to our notion of perfection. The Christian life is seen as ultimately a return to the ground of our origin—to the Father's heart (Trinity Sunday is the crown of Tauler's liturgical year). This return begins as a sinking down into the dark ground of one's interior—an immersion in one's nothingness. 'When God created all things he was faced with the sheer void; he did not form things from something else but made them from nothing. God can only dwell and work in the nothingness, and your response to his work is most intense when you suffer in order to be nothing.' Inner tranquillity is a primitive state of openness to divine creation. It is a lifetime of immersion in silence and solitude—'Learn to be calm, to suffer and withdraw into yourselves'. And Tauler can be very practical—'Go to a place where you can sit in comfort, so that your body is at ease, either by or on your bed, and there you may turn your mind to your inner being'. It is in the stillness and gentleness of the Spirit, as St Peter says, that we find the hidden man of the heart, and it is good that Blackfriars Publications should be making more available this way of silence and solitude for the fertility of our spirit.

F.K.

LE TEMPS DE L'ESPÉRANCE. By A. M. Roguet. (Cerf.)

These fourteen sermons, although televised, were not studio pieces, but actual Sunday sermons preached by Père Roguet during Mass during Advent 1954 and 1956, January 1957, and two of Eastertide of the same year.

In comparison with faith and charity it is rare to hear sermons on hope, which is the unifying theme of these sermons, each of which is rooted in the liturgical text of the Mass of the day. They serve to give us new perspectives on hope, not so much as the virtue of the individual Christian, but as a quality of the mystical body of Christ, the Church. They show how this hope, though phrased liturgically in the terms of the Christ born and risen two thousand years ago, is a hope in the Christ yet to come in his glory.

R.D.C.