

attitude to perfection is so refreshing and encouraging. Rarely do we find an explicit quotation of any sort because the whole is so logical and common sense. This book is essentially realist in character and for this very reason is sometimes almost frighteningly humiliating. 'Or, beaucoup de religieux, quand on les retrouve à quarante ans, n'ont acquis aucune perfection et en sont moins préoccupés qu'à leur entrée en religion.' (p. 99.) The recurrent theme applied to the religious vocation is that it is essentially the total giving of self to God. Touting for vocations to a particular order is quite foreign to the thought of the author, and quite rightly too. The book is full of sound reasoning and sanity stressing again and again the positive nature of the religious life and its vows. The author prefers the obedience of the living human being to that of the corpse. 'Et si l'obéissance passive est bonne pour le jeune enfant incapable de raisonner . . . il n'en est plus ainsi pour l'adulte. . .' (p. 177.) It is a pleasure to think that someone has had the courage to say what has here been said and so unequivocally. The pity is that so many will miss this book unless it be translated into their own language.

D.J.S.

POEMS OF ST JOHN OF THE CROSS, Spanish Text, with a Translation by Roy Campbell. Preface by M. C. D'Arcy, S.J. (Harvill Press; 12s. 6d.)

This belated review has nothing scholarly to add to such careful judgments as those of Professor Sarmiento in *Blackfriars* (July-August, 1951), who will allow me, I am sure, to record his comment on the translation of the seventh strophe of the 'Noche'. Professor Sarmiento points out that 'the antecedent of *su* is *aire* and it is the hand of the wind that strikes the bride's neck'. (p. 357.)

Considering the difficulties of rendering St John of the Cross' poetry into English, Mr Campbell has done an admirable work. In the first place the Commentaries on the greater poems make the precise meaning of almost every word perfectly clear. Then there is the endless variety in the rhythm in each line of classical Spanish: the syllables are fixed in number, but where the stress comes is not fixed. Mr Campbell in this matter has done his best. English tends to fixed positions for the beats in a line, and consequently that elusive, mysterious element in the Spanish vanishes away. Of course the poetic element, of which that is a constituent part, cannot be translated into English. A new poem is created, and quite certainly new poems and good ones have been created in this case.

One of the beauties of this book is that you can see and judge for yourself. The Spanish is on one page, the English on the opposite one.

To illustrate the beauty of both, and the differences in stress, take these lines from 'The Song between the soul and the bridegroom' (pp. 18, 19):

Mi Amado, las montañas,	My Love's the mountain range
Los valles solitarios nemorosos	The valleys each with solitary
Las insulas extrañas	grove,
Los rios sonorosos	The islands far and strange,
El silbo de los aires amorosos.	The streams with sounds that
	change
	The whistling of the lovesick
	winds that rove.

The varying position of the Spanish stress is part of its beauty, the steady beat of the English its equivalent; and that change makes something new. Never, sad to say, can English read like this Spanish verse. The wonder is that Mr Campbell has transposed into the English medium this essentially Spanish melody and devised something beautiful too.

The buyer of this book, then, has a rich feast; the greatest mystical poet's complete corpus of poems in the original and a moving and accurate translation by one of our most distinguished modern poets. There is, besides, a searching preface by Fr Martin D'Arcy, S.J., wherein he discourses wisely upon the possibility of translating mystical experiences into human language.

The poems are not by any means self-explanatory; to prove it I showed them to an educated person. And when I said 'Well, what do you think of them?' (namely I and II) the answer was: 'wonderful love poems'. St John really *loved* God. Another was rather shocked that one should really love God. Worship, yes; adore, yes; admire, of course. But love! This Doctor of the Church leaves us in no doubt and Mr Campbell's translations have preserved that essential core: the *love* between the soul and God.

COLUMBA CARY-ELWES

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS. By Omer Englebert. Translated by Christopher and Anne Fremantle. (Thames and Hudson; 25s.)

The handsome volume consists principally of one or two brief accounts of the life of a saint for every day in the year. There seems to be a good many people who would like such a daily reading, but do not find it conveniently provided in any modern book. The obvious place to look for it is in the second-nocturn lessons at Matins; but (even if one has an English translation of the Breviary) it is unfortunately equally obvious why those lessons are often found to be hardly what is required. On the other hand, though the revised 'Butler' usually provides