

old person (p. 279: "People raised with androgynous role models will be able to bring more of their personality resources into play at each of these stages than those raised in stereotypical sex roles"), and so forth, not that my mind has always been able to absorb some of the only too non-differentiated *Concilium* discourse, refer constantly to what "we" think—and here "we" are usually middle-aged, middle-class, very western-civilized Roman Catholics.

Avery Dulles suggests in his contribution that if Vatican III is necessary it would be to bring us back to Vatican II and to make us pass through that experience, on the grounds that most of us have

never done so. It certainly does seem, in Britain anyway, that many Catholics, clergy and people, have by-passed Vatican II and gone off into theological modernism and ecclesiological liberalism (ready to ordain women priests, practising intercommunion and so on), while many others have retreated from Vatican II, back into that far distant world, twenty years ago, when Catholics were Catholics, with no meat on Fridays, contraception a sin and "intrinsically evil" at that, and every prospect of another demonstration of Marian devotion. But it is too late for *Concilium* discourse to heal this bifurcation of Catholic consciousness.

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THE WISDOM OF THE ENGLISH MYSTICS by Robert Way. *Sheldon Press*. 1978. pp. 86. £1.75.

THE WISDOM OF ST FRANCIS AND HIS COMPANIONS by Stephen Clissold. *Sheldon Press*. 1978. pp. 90. £1.95.

These two volumes in the "Wisdom" series follow the usual pattern: after a fairly short introduction, we are given a collection of snippets.

The English mystics, in the traditional sense of the phrase, do not lend themselves to this kind of treatment—indeed, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* expressly forbids it; and anyone wanting a serious introduction to their teaching will be disappointed by Way's volume. But then that is not what Way is trying to offer. He has taken English mystics in a much wider sense, including Aelred at one end, and writers like T. S. Eliot and Rupert Brooke at the other end, with, believe it or not, even one poem by Augusta Drane (Mother Margaret's successor at Stone). From this wide range of material he has culled a variety of more or less spiritual messages. There is little or nothing which is, in any strict sense, mystical. Nor can I discern any very deliberate pattern of doctrine implicit in the selection. But there is good fun to be had from browsing through, and it would be a hard heart that was not touched and edified by at least one or two of the 149 texts.

The introduction, though brief, is useful. The author rather exaggerates the importance of "darkness" mysticism, as if it alone constituted the authentic mystical tradition of Christendom. His own anthology does not really bear him out on this. And it seems unduly sceptical to claim that it has not yet been proved that the pseudo-Dionysius was not in fact St Paul's disciple; and unduly unsceptical to say that "it is generally accepted that he was a fourth-century monk". At the very earliest he cannot be dated before the end of the fifth century. But these are minor nuisances.

St Francis definitely lends himself to this kind of selection; most of the original material is anecdotal in any case. Stephen Clissold's anthology is quite delightful. There are a few historical mistakes in his introduction, however. It is now established fairly certainly that St Francis did not found a Third Order; it has also come to be appreciated that the Albigensians were more of an evangelical movement than Clissold would suggest. It is also now generally accepted that the founder of the Waldensians was called Waldes, not Peter Waldo, and it has, to my mind, been shown that preaching was always an integral part of their programme. But, again, these are only minor nuisances.

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