

spirituality and to Rahner's roots in classical apophatic theology. With regard to the latter, Dych recalls us to some of Rahner's great but often neglected late essays—'The Hiddenness of God' in the *festschrift* for Yves Congar and the study of divine incomprehensibility in an Aquinas centenary volume, for example (both in volume 16 of *Investigations*)—but especially to 'The human question of meaning in face of the absolute mystery of God' (in volume 18): originally a lecture delivered at the University of Bamberg on 20 November 1977, three days after Cornelius Ernst died as it happens. Rahner certainly read Ernst's contribution on 'Theological Methodology' to the encyclopedia *Sacramentum Mundi* (1970). It is nice to think that Ernst's insistence on 'the schema of God as Meaning of meaning as a possible perspective for theology' played some part, however seminally, in Rahner's great late essays on the *Deus absconditus* theme by which he and his first English translator were both fascinated. Ernst always had doubts about Rahner's philosophy; it was his theological vision that drew him to start translating him into English. William Dych brings out Rahner's continuing significance with affection and exemplary clarity—Rahner, one might add, though he may not always be clear, is (unlike certain other great modern Catholic theologians) entirely free of *odium theologicum*.

FERGUS KERR OP

**JULIAN'S WAY: A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON JULIAN OF NORWICH**, by Ritamary Bradley. London: *HarperCollins*, 1992. 231 pp. + xvi. £7.95.

The anonymous fourteenth-century recluse called Julian of Norwich (for the church where she was immured) is now unarguably the best known and best loved of the English mystics. Among recent books on 'Dame' Julian, this commentary by Ritamary Bradley stands out for a number of reasons. Professor emerita at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, Bradley cofounded with Valerie Lagorio the Fourteenth-Century English Mystics Society at the University of Iowa. For many years coeditor (also with Lagorio) of its *Newsletter* (now *Mystics Quarterly*), Bradley nurtured both scholarly and popular interest in Julian and other mystics of the medieval period. Her own articles on Julian are well-known. And Bradley's insights into Julian's theology and spirituality, very much at home within the academy, achieve even greater point in the context of current interest in women's studies, both medieval and contemporary.

Not everyone may welcome Bradley's portrayal of Julian as an advocate of women's ability entailing a right to teach theology and direct souls. But the textual evidence she marshalls is persuasive. Judged in light of Julian's obvious theological authority, her medieval feminism seems not only warranted, but also as subtle as one might expect from such a teacher.

Bradley's stated aim is 'to reconsider the backgrounds from which

Julian's treatise comes, and by reflection and study to take seriously her own practice of probing ever more deeply into the text' (p. xi). In assessing the meaning of Julian's *Revelations* for today, Bradley succeeds admirably, generally avoiding technical controversies concerning textual detail to concentrate on Julian's overall method and message. She does not hesitate, however, to differ on points of interpretation with other commentators, e.g., Colledge, Walsh, Watkin, Molinari, Pelphrey et al.

Bradley fundamentally interprets Julian as a profoundly original theologian as well as a solidly orthodox spiritual guide. The biblical basis of Julian's doctrine is particularly well-treated. As a commentary, Bradley's exploration is thematic rather than sequential, which permits the complexity and coherence of Julian's teachings, e.g., the Motherhood of Christ and of God, to appear in bolder relief. The first two chapters consider who Julian was and her reinterpretation of the anchoritic life, which is to say, the place of women in English spirituality at the time. Here, Bradley's focus on the themes of prayer, laughter, and bliss (blessedness) is especially rewarding. Next, she investigates Julian's view of reality—creation, human sin and redemption, Christ and the Virgin Mary, and with particular interest, God as mother, including a significant contemporary 'aside' (pp. 143-49). She also provides an extensive exegesis of Julian's parable of the Lord and the Servant. The climax of her account is the fourth chapter, Julian's Way to God—the overcoming of sin and the devil's assaults, the achievement of compassion, and 'cleaving' to God through reverential fear, longing, and desire. Finally, in chapter five, Understanding Humanity's Pilgrimage, Bradley supplies an excellent discussion of the vexed issue of sensibility and sensuality. Julian's way, she reminds us, is ultimately that of love, as the title of her book states—God's maternal love for us, and our responsive love for God and our 'even-Christian.'

As a 'practical' commentary, *Julian's Way* provides little to quarrel with. Bradley's use of the word 'fulsomely' (p. 84) to describe the bounty of divine response may be questioned on the basis of a curious reversal of meaning between the fourteenth century and today, but this is a quibble. The notion that Eve was somehow the mother of Adam (p. 92) is more worrisome. I was most dismayed to find Bradley inserting the strange notion of 'self-forgiveness' into Julian's teaching (p. 180). A peculiarly contemporary 'heresy' lacking any support in either Scripture or spiritual tradition, 'self-forgiveness' runs counter to the grain not only of Julian's views on repentance (see chapter 82 and the following), but strikes at the foundation of Jesus' teaching as well. Fortunately, such eisegesis represents a very brief departure from an otherwise superb introduction to one of the greatest of the medieval mystics. I highly recommend it as a text for classroom use and adult education courses, as well as for individual benefit.

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