

THE ANCRENE RIWLE. Translated by M. B. Salu. (Burns Oates; 15s.)

DEONISE HID DIUINITE. Edited by P. Hodgson. (Oxford University Press; 30s.)

These two works should greatly interest students of medieval English mysticism. Miss M. B. Salu's modern English translation of *The Ancrene Riwle* is based upon the Corpus Christi Cambridge manuscript. As a translation, this is most commendable. Though occasionally it seems inadvertently to omit a short but telling phrase (on page 7, for instance, we should know that the anchoress is to begin the *Veni Creator Spiritus* 'with eyes and hands raised towards heaven') or slightly to misrepresent (on the same page we should read 'the Body and precious Blood of God *above* the high altar', that is, the commixed wafer reserved in a pyx), generally we find that Miss Salu has either followed her original closely, or departed from it on good and defensible grounds; and at all times she has been first concerned to produce a lively and readable version, such as may attract and hold the attention of readers unversed in the arcana of medieval studies or in the niceties of early Middle English. Miss Salu does much to show why the *Riwle* was, for three centuries, so constantly copied and read, by the laity as well as by religious; Dom Gerard Sitwell, in the Introduction which is his contribution, quietly takes to task those of us who tend to prize such works as it merely because they are genuine antique pieces. The medieval passion for discovering allegory and moral sense in every object he finds somewhat irritating (and Miss Beryl Smalley has reminded us that there were medieval biblical scholars who deplored this tendency, as it concerned the study of the Scriptures, as obsessive and tendentious). Although Dom Sitwell refrains from making odious comparisons, he does not conceal his opinion that those seeking spiritual guidance today can find more practical aids than some of the most highly praised spiritual classics of the English Middle Ages; he particularly mentions *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written at least a century and a half after the *Riwle*, and he finds that the enthusiasm and praise generally lavished upon it are excessive. 'It has been called the most penetrating treatise that the fourteenth century produced on the subject (of mystical union), but it is in fact more concerned with the attainment of the experience than with the experience itself' (p. x). We should keep this judgment in mind as we read Professor Phyllis Hodgson's new work in which she has added to her edition published in 1944 for the Early English Text Society of *The Cloud* and *The Book of Privy Counselling* a critical edition of the other minor treatises found often in medieval manuscripts of *The Cloud*, and very probably the work of the same unknown author. *Deonise* itself, an English version of a Latin translation of the *Mystica Theologia* of pseudo-Dionysius, is

perhaps the least interesting and important of them: it is found in only two manuscripts, and it is significant that it alone is omitted from the Carthusian codex owned and annotated by the famous James Grenhalgh, whose considerable library of mystical theology included a Latin text of *Mystica Theologia* which has also been preserved. Similarly, although twelve medieval copies survive of the next treatise, *Beniamin Minor*, a translation of Richard of St Victor's work, only four of these are found together with *The Cloud*. It is in the more original works, *An Epistle of Prayer*, *An Epistle of Discretion of Stirrings* and *A Treatise of Discretion of Spirits*, that we must look for traces of the interests and preoccupations and experience of the author of *The Cloud*; and we shall find that Dom Sitwell's stricture applies as much to them as to it. The psychology of prayer and contemplation is of deep interest to the writer: though he has learned much from Dionysius, it was not what Aquinas and Ruysbroek learned. When one compares him with Ruysbroek—and the comparison is inevitable—the impression remains that in the Englishman we see separated the elements which in the Dutchman were perfectly fused in a divine fire. Even so, these minor treatises make an interesting contribution to our knowledge of medieval English spiritual thought and teaching; and Professor Hodgson has produced a second work which adds distinction to what no less a critic than Fr Paul Grosjean has recently called 'la perfection d'une collection comme celle de l'Early English Text Society'.

ERIC COLLEDGE

SPIRITUAL HEALING. By D. Caradog Jones, with a 'Doctor's Comment' by J. Burnett Rae, M.B., CH.B. (Longmans; 10s. 6d.)

There cannot be any doubt that this book suggests very strongly the efficacy of prayer for healing—and if of prayer, of intercessory prayer too, as some of the patients included among the cases were too young to understand what was happening. None of the cases, however, appears to have undergone anything like the stringent scrutiny applied at Lourdes. Indeed, they do not go beyond what has been claimed before for other lay healers, who did not consider their healings to be spiritual.

It seems relevant to ask, to whom the book is addressed. In the Foreword Canon Craven states that it 'does not profess to answer the sort of questions the sceptical enquirer will raise'. Any believer will necessarily agree with the argument of C. S. Lewis in his book on that subject, that if we admit God we must admit miracles; for him this collection of interesting but non-conclusive cases will bring no additional evidence or special message. On the contrary one should always be careful not to support a claim for something to be out of the ordinary if any