

HAGIOGRAPHIA

MOSLEY, JOANNE, *Edith Stein, Woman of Prayer*. 2004, pp. x, 162. Gracewing, 2 Southern Avenue, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0QF. ISBN 0-85244-596-2. £9.99.

This is an introduction to the life and thought of Edith Stein. As the title indicates, it focuses on her prayer life and reflections on prayer, an aspect which is especially emphasised in the second part of the book. The first part outlines the life of Edith Stein, stressing her upbringing in an observant Jewish family, her relationship with her siblings and early approach to religion. Mosley highlights her studies in Göttingen, the university city in which Husserl, the father of phenomenology, lectured, and which represented the vanguard of philosophical investigation at the time. As Mosley explains, neither Edith Stein's Jewish upbringing nor her philosophical studies went to waste upon conversion to Christianity, rather they helped to shape her spiritual path, facilitating her conversion. For in Edith Stein's own words, she converted in the wake of studying philosophy. Conversely, her philosophy is enriched by her new life as a Catholic convert. The intersection between philosophy and theology in the life of Edith Stein is a constant theme in the book.

The first part anticipates the subtitle, describing an early desire on the part of Edith Stein to enter religious life, countered by her spiritual directors on account of the success she enjoyed in international Catholic conference circuits. This desire was initially only partly fulfilled during the several years spent teaching at a school run by Dominican nuns. The author notes the intensity of Edith Stein's prayer life even before entering Carmel, while sharing her life with Dominicans and during intensive spiritual retreats.

The second part of this work deals with personal models of prayer. The first is Jesus, and the relationship is drawn between prayer and the Eucharist. The following chapter is devoted to Mary as model of motherhood and religious life simultaneously. Old Testament saints such as Queen Esther and the prophet Elijah provide models of prayer and intercession that are particularly close to Carmelite spirituality. Other figures drawn from the Carmelite family include St. Teresa of Avila, whose biography prompted Edith Stein's conversion, and St. John of the Cross.

It is noteworthy that a recurrent theme in the book is Edith Stein's views on the feminine vocation within the Church, and her own role as a woman in the Church. This, as the author mentions, had been an early preoccupation in her reflections about the education of women in preparation for a professional life. The education of women was a subject on which Edith Stein lectured and wrote extensively. After entering Carmel, as a cloistered nun, she stressed the highest vocation of woman to be a spiritual mother and spouse of Christ. Mary

is the ideal of womanhood as both mother and spouse of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit.

This a compelling introduction to the life and works of Edith Stein, written in an accessible style for those who wish to become acquainted with her spirituality and thought.

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POSSELT, TERESIA RENATA, *Edith Stein: The Life of a Philosopher and Carmelite*, (eds.) Susanne M. Batzdorff, Josephine Koeppel & John Sullivan. 2005, pp. xix, 372. ICS Publications, 2131 Lincoln Road NE, Washington DC 20002-1151, USA (www.icspublications.org). ISBN 0-935216-36-7. \$15.95.

This is a fresh English translation of the very first biography of Edith Stein, Saint Teresa Benedicta a Cruce, written in 1947 by her novice mistress and later prioress of the Cologne Carmel, Sister Teresia Renata of the Holy Spirit (Teresia Renata Posselt), and first published in Germany in 1948. The original appears here in a revised edition, translated and edited by Edith Stein's niece Susanne Batzdorff, as well as Sister Josephine Koeppel of the Carmel of Elysburg, Pennsylvania, and the Rev. Dr. John Sullivan, Chairman of the Institute of Carmelite Studies, in collaboration with Maria Amata Neyer, of the Cologne Carmel, who also contributes the Foreword.

This biography describes the most important moments in the life of Edith Stein: her upbringing in a Jewish family in Prussia, her disengagement from religion as a teenager; the study of philosophy under Husserl in Göttingen, which paved the way for her conversion to Catholicism and active lecturing as a philosopher. Her entry into the Cologne Carmel is eloquently portrayed. We learn about Edith Stein's flight from Nazi persecution and death at the gas chambers shortly after arriving at Auschwitz.

Written by a fellow Carmelite who knew her well from the Cologne Carmel, and as the first testimony of Edith Stein's life, beatified in Cologne in 1987 and canonized in Rome in 1998, it remains a fundamental first hand account. Since this work was composed from memory and without the original documents, some of the missing information is supplied or corrected by the editors.

The work presents an array of narrators through letters written or received by Edith Stein. Chapter 4, 'My first semester in Göttingen', is an autobiographical account of Edith Stein's first semester in Göttingen, and describes her new acquaintances in the university town as she moved about its philosophical circles.

As the title indicates, the book focuses on the saint's philosophical and religious interests and pursuits. In philosophy her study of contemporary and medieval currents is highlighted, in particular phenomenology as taught by