

**THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM**, by H. Gaubert (*THE BIBLE IN HISTORY*, edited by J. Rhymer, Vol. 6). *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1970. 212 pp. £1.40.

It is impossible to state with any confidence quite what public this author had in mind when he compiled his volume of commentary, photographs, charts and maps, but it becomes clearer every day that we are all of us so higgledy-piggledy in our knowledges, having an exact command of some science and hardly the rudiments of another, that any book must simply be accepted as written for those who find it pleasing.

Those will like this volume who enjoy clearly-drawn plans and maps, who require straightforward accounts of battles long ago, and especially those who want to know something of the literary relationships of the scriptural histories, for there are good summaries of the scribal origins of the narratives, particularly of the work of 'the men of Hezekiah'.

Those will be disappointed who are looking

for some help in putting the scriptural histories into relation with contemporary notions of what a history should be doing. There is, for example, no discussion of the religious biases of those who put together the account of Jeroboam's shrines at Bethel and Dan, and no discussion of what we may understand by the sign of the shadow that delighted Hezekiah, and worse than no discussion of the Immanuel prophecy, for we are told to be content that 'theologians state quite clearly that we have here a messianic prophecy'.

This is a book, then, which prompts the Garter-like motto: 'Useful be to him who useful thinks it', and those responsible for its appearance should congratulate themselves that many will think it so.

HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

**MAN'S CONCERN WITH HOLINESS**, edited by Narina Chavchavadze. *Hodder and Stoughton*, London, 1970. 188 pp. 35s.

**L'ESPRIT SAINT DANS LA TRADITION ORTHODOXE**, by P. Evdokimov. *Les Editions du Cerf*, Paris, 1969. 111 pp. 12,50 F.

In our ecumenical age any attempt to present a specific subject in the light of different Christian traditions is of great value. The editor of the symposium *Man's Concern with Holiness* is to be congratulated on his choice of theme, which transcends the narrowing confines of theologoumena and reaches the heart of Christianity, the 'I live, no, not I, but Christ liveth in me'. It is evident that the phenomenon of holiness studied by Orthodox, Anglican, Calvinist, Lutheran and Catholic experts is identical, whether it is defined in the succinct manner of the Jesuit as 'the perfect relationship between creature and Creator', or by the Orthodox as 'the healing of nature' and the saint as the 'new creature', whether the Lutheran speaks of 'participation in the Holiness of Jesus Christ, the Holy One', or the Calvinist refuses to define it: 'Holiness or sanctity means a growing and increasing conformity to what God reveals of his own character, and therefore it can never be defined.' The Anglican only hints at the mystery: 'For holiness is about God giving his life and love to men, and men giving their life and love to one another in a movement of joy which overflows in thankfulness to God the giver.' Yet differences immediately appear when the phenomenon of holiness is under-pinned doctrinally. The Lutheran will write of

justification by faith alone, yet he will correct our too onesided view of his tradition by pointing to the elements of mysticism in the Lutheran Church, that *resignatio ad infernum* which, in human terms, corresponds to the dereliction of Christ on the cross. The reader will share the surprise, voiced in the introduction, at so many unexpected graces in a tradition of which he had only a distorted view: that Catholicism is not merely a juridical system but could produce 'a concise and inspiring apotheosis of charity, of charity perfected in suffering through the indwelling Christ'; that English spirituality, while owing a debt to the Celtic elements in its tradition, possesses 'a profound if hidden affinity with Eastern Orthodoxy'; that prayer at all times is advocated by Martin Luther, and that the Calvinist has much to say about 'the merriment of the Saint'; that finally 'the Eastern Orthodox tradition should be large enough to englobe all these lights and yet in cosmic perspective to transfigure all with radiance from above'. It is here that the Catholic regrets the choice of a Catholic contributor from the ranks of a post-Reformation religious order.

Each writer elaborates the unique aspects of his particular tradition and chooses different saints to illustrate his point. It is the Anglican contributor who seems to realize most clearly

that the tradition of his communion, which is one of 'moderation, discretion, balance and humaneness', needs to be complemented by the elements of the 'absurd, the paradoxical, the extreme' to be found in other churches. However, all contributors write in a conciliatory spirit, though ingrained prejudices do not easily die out. The first essay: 'Holiness in the Continuing Tradition' places the subject in a contemporary setting and calls for 'a new understanding of how the seeds of wholeness might be coaxed to grow amongst a much wider section of the population'.

Father Evdokimov's study of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox tradition is a great advance on Vladimir Lossky's *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (1944). It bears witness to the range and depth of ecumenical studies pursued since that publication. This has borne fruit not only in the author's understanding of the West, but also in his attempt to reach a standpoint whence historically based differences of approach to the Divine Mysteries can be seen

as complementary, notably in the *Filioque* controversy. The symbol of the Trinity (Fr Serge Bulgakov), a triangle inscribed in a circle, would obviate the danger of the Trinity being reduced to a dyad, as the triangle so easily suggests, and at the same time overcome the objection of Duns Scotus that the Holy Spirit alone is sterile in the heart of the Trinity. For the circle would denote the relationship of the Three Persons in both directions. A conciliation between freedom and grace, the tension between which has occupied many theologians, is effected by the Eastern interpretation of the term 'synergy': in the words of St Maximus: 'Liberty and grace are the two wings which raise men to the Kingdom.' With admirable clarity and a wealth of quotations from both Western and Eastern Fathers, the author presents the Orthodox interpretation of such terms as theology, hypostasis, nature and person. A fascinating study, every page of which provides food for much thought.

IRENE MARINOFF

**CREATIVE IMAGINATION IN THE SŪFISM OF IBN 'ARABĪ**, by Henry Corbin. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, 1969. 406 pp. £4.75.

Professor Henry Corbin has dedicated much of his life to the study of the Persian mystics of the twelfth century and after who wrote principally in prose (both Arabic and Persian) and who had been largely forgotten both in their native land and elsewhere. The centre of his studies has been the martyred mystic Shihābaddīn Yahyā al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl ('the one who was killed'), the founder of the so-called Ishrāqī school of mysticism who flourished in the twelfth century.

By any standards Suhrawardī is obscure, and this perhaps accounts for the fact that he has for so long been neglected. This has not deterred Professor Corbin who has, in collaboration with Iranian scholars of repute, produced a whole series of editions of authors of the Ishrāqī school under the auspices of the *département d'iranologie de l'institut français de recherche*. The present work is based on lectures delivered at the *Eranos Tagungen* and published in the *Jahrbücher* xxiv and xxv (1955-6). In these lectures Corbin turned his attention to Ibn 'Arabī, the great Andalusian mystic who was a later contemporary of Suhrawardī and who exercised a tremendous influence on subsequent mystical writing throughout the entire Muslim world.

Ibn 'Arabī is also a most illusive author and, despite his importance, no full-scale study of

him exists in any European language. What is needed is a clear account of the metaphysical system of this obscure but important writer. A modest attempt to supply this was made by Dr A. E. Afffi in a short but comprehensive study in 1939.

Afffi had stressed the 'monistic' and 'pantheistic' aspects of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. Professor Corbin dislikes both these terms and seeks to show that for Ibn 'Arabī the mystical union is rather a *unio sympathetica* in which the individual mystic realizes his union or even his identity with one of the 'names' of God, that is, the aspects of God: he is, then, God as uniquely expressed in himself.

So far, so good: but in this book, as in his other writings, Corbin is not really concerned with offering an objective interpretation of the metaphysics of whatever mystical writer he happens to be studying, he is offering a highly subjective and personal re-interpretation in a polyglot terminology that, one suspects, means nothing to anyone except to Corbin himself. How tired one gets of the pretentious neologisms—'theopathy', 'epiphanic forms', 'the Sigh of existentiating Compassion', '*fedeli d'amore*', '*Imaginatix*', and, worst of all, 'hexicity' (the supposed etymology of this extraordinary word is not given). All this makes the book exasperating reading and its texture is