

It would be a help towards our relationship with the Oriental Christians if they could become familiar with a work like this, which shows how deeply the traditions of Eastern mystics such as St Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius have passed into our Western traditions. This profound continuity with the past is one of the most interesting characteristics of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It should be noticed, too, that although the author is dealing principally with interior prayer and that although his work does not show that striking emphasis on the approach to God through the Incarnation that we find in Walter Hilton, he does in fact give the greatest importance to the prayer of the Church: 'They that be true workers in this work, they worship no prayer so much as those of Holy Church. And therefore they do them in the form and statute that they be ordained by holy fathers before us'. This shows that even the author of *The Cloud* who leads us into what may seem to be the most abstract and imageless form of the mystical life sets primary emphasis on the corporate prayer of the Church.

DOM ODO BROOKE, O.S.B.

THE WESTERN LITURGY AND ITS HISTORY. By Theodor Klauser.  
(Mowbray; 4s.)

Professor F. L. Cross has translated this short work because 'it gives a lucid and comprehensive survey of these discoveries [of the technicians] in a form wholly free from technicalities and without ever losing sight of their practical implications'. It is indeed a very readable summary of the work of a great liturgical expert. The importance of the work may be gathered from the following quotation from the introduction: 'In deep and ineffaceable characters it (the Roman Liturgy) bears the marks of the spiritual development not of a single people, but of several. The most diverse influences, assuming ever new forms, have played their part in fashioning the structure and composition of our Liturgy.' The author throws in great contrast the earlier living spirit of prayer and devotion which moulded the Roman way of worship and the later 'unhistorical attachment to legality of the rubricists'. For this alone the book should be read by all who are trying to pray the Mass.

C.P.

AVICENNA: SCIENTIST AND PHILOSOPHER. Edited by G. M. Wickens.  
(Luzac; 15s.)

This book is an excellent introduction to Avicenna, being a series of lectures given at Cambridge in the spring of last year to mark the millenary of the Arab philosopher's birth. Although the lectures were intended to have a general appeal, the copious notes which have been added to the printed edition enhance its value for the scholar. A general introduction to Avicenna's life and times is given by Professor Arberry's vivid and enter-

taining commentary on the philosopher's autobiography. The second essay with the title 'Avicenna's Place in Arabic Philosophy' is not the historical study one might expect portraying the philosopher against the general background of Arabic thought. Professor Teiler is concerned to show us in Avicenna the forerunner of modern philosophy and to interpret his thought in terms of Kant's antinomies and Bergson's creative evolution. There is a gap here, one feels, which however is partly filled by Professor Wickens' admirable essay, 'Some Aspects of Avicenna's Work', which gives us a good idea of his originality as a thinker and explains some of the more fundamental positions he reached both in theology and philosophy. This, together with Fr Kenelm Foster's treatment of Avicenna's influence on Western thought in the thirteenth century, and in particular on St Thomas Aquinas, is perhaps the most profound and inspiring part of the book. In showing the influence which the Arab philosopher had on Jewish thought Professor Rosenthal brings out in particular what Maimonides owes to his predecessor, thus showing from a new angle his influence on the middle ages through this Jewish thinker. There is also an essay by Professor Crombie describing Avicenna's achievement as a scientist and stressing the place he occupies in the medieval scientific tradition. A useful index of names concludes the volume.

P.M.

RELIGIOUS DANCES, IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND IN POPULAR  
MEDICINE. By E. Louis Backman. (Allen and Unwin; 35s.)

When Nietzsche said that 'God is dead' he was saying something most significant—not about God, but about humanity. For when human beings get themselves into a sufficiently desperate psychological mess they become almost incapable of encountering the living God; the blockage at the human level is so fixed that only the most sincere surrender can remove it. By that time the mysteries of religion have begun to seem absurd. For instance, if a human being has never loved another human person so much as to want to cherish every object that the other has touched or handled, then the cult of relics of the saints is bound to strike them as odd—even superstitious. Similarly, anyone who has never jumped for joy, or wished to dance out of sheer gladness, will fail to understand why human beings throughout the ages have danced their religion. It is true, of course, that they will also be spared the disappointment of hearing the priest announcing '*et circumdabo altare tuum, Domine*' and then doing nothing of the sort! But that is little consolation for being cut off from the time-old human tradition of dancing one's faith and hopes. It is this tradition which forms the subject of Professor Backman's extremely interesting study.

His work is a documentary, rather than an inspired, account of the place occupied by the dance in Judaism, in the early Church and through-