

say with Mr. Bellamy that all myths are but dim and distant recollections of a factual past, even "reports of eye-witnesses." And then, Hoerbiger's cosmological theories remain, as elsewhere, the basis and mainstay of the entire book. With considerable skill and ingenuity Mr. Bellamy transposes, re-writes, adapts the text of Genesis to conform with the basic assumptions. Love's labour is well nigh lost.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

SPAIN EVERLASTING. By S. F. A. Coles. (Hollis and Carter, 18s.).

It seems to be the property of *las cosas de España* to exert an unrelenting fascination over the foreigner who once touches them. The potency of the Spanish atmosphere is so intense—it would seem—that it converts into something in conformity with itself any sensibility that approaches it to savour its peculiar quality. He who begins as a dilettante ends up a fanatic. Mr. Coles is no exception. We watch with interest the process (not progressive chronologically through the book, but active all the time) of his absorption into the Spanish esoterics—the bull fight, the cult of death, solitude and the rest. This book, like so many of its class, is not so much what its writer makes of Spain as what Spain has made of him. And that is: sympathetic (as well as simpatico), understanding, not always accurate (but how Spanish, that!), rather long-winded (again an inescapable part of the magic transmutation); but the essential qualities are present in abundance and purity: first, the hyperacute sensibility to physical atmosphere, especially that which is the effect of air, aridity and height, and whose tautness is intensified by the stony beauties of architecture; and next, an intuition of the eternal drama present in isolated fragmentary moments of human life. It is perhaps this double richness which gives its acuity to Spanish natural religion—so often confused by native and foreigner alike with the Spanish acceptance of Catholicism—which it most certainly is not.

But Mr. Coles is not untouched by another vital element in this intense and potent sensibility which is the crucible of Spanish natural theology—the feeling for race, the captivation by blood. It is to be feared that Spain more than other nations has cherished a modern cult for race, though fortunately balanced by the Spaniards' oecumenical sense, and on p. 18 and elsewhere, Mr. Coles indulges in theories that are confused and unconvincing. But despite his over-identification with the place and people he describes, this long and pleasantly rambling travel book is always interesting and sometimes gives us his experience in the unminted gold of pure poetry. His excursion into morals is less happy, and his approval of what he alleges is the Spanish (and, astonishingly, the Jewish) attitude to adultery and, by implication, to sex irregularity in general, is justified neither by the legend he relates in chapter XXVIII nor by right reason. It is a pity that this discussion is linked with scriptural exegesis of very dubious quality, p. 117. (If it is adultery that is being condemned in the gospel text, (Matt., 5, 12) it follows that "woman"="wife", and Mr Coles exaggerates therefore the disasters that he supposes to have followed on the use of the former word. One wonders what the "original Aramaic text" of the Gospel of St. Matthew can be). As we have suggested, it is the pagan roots of Spain rather than the flower of her Christianity to which Mr. Coles' sensibility (with that of so many modern foreign observers) chiefly responds, and it is perhaps not without significance that the last two chapters of the book, in the concluding section, "At the Heart", give us first the bull-ring and then Don Quijote. It is possible to understand Spain and to learn from her inexhaustible nobility without giving equal value to these two expressions of the Spanish psyche. Mr Coles tells us that his book is "not about politics", and we may be grateful to him for keeping his word. The 32 full-size photographs are, with but one exception, beautiful. There are a number of small inaccuracies of language in the glossary and scattered through the book as well as on the confusing map which adorns the end-papers. There are more important errors of literary history on which Mr. Coles appears to follow doubtful authorities, e.g. on the subject of Cervantes' daughter. Mr. Coles' acceptance of the preaching of St. James in Spain will please the pious but not the historically-minded Spaniard. English Catholics will find the references to Dom Edmund

Gurdon of deep interest. One would like to read that MS. of his which Mr. Coles tells us of and from which he quotes. E. SARMIENTO.

SPEAKING OF HOW TO PRAY. By Mary Perkins. (Sheed & Ward; 10s. 6d.).

This book must first be commended for breadth and depth of outlook. Too frequently liturgical publications, unwittingly perhaps, but none the less effectively, narrow the Church's spiritual life to so called 'official' spheres, with the result that it would appear difficult to see how there could be any justification at all for the presence in the Church of what are loosely called popular devotions. When, therefore, the author includes in her survey of the Church's prayer everything from the Sacrifice of Calvary to the wearing of the Miraculous Medal, she is doing a great service to that balance and steadiness of outlook which is so important a part of the equipment of the theologian. In the first part of the book, just under a quarter of its total length, she traces the doctrine of the Mystical Body from the Creation through the Fall and the Atonement to the institution of the Seven Sacraments and the Sacrifice of Calvary. Each of the sacraments is then examined in detail and its impact on life here and now in the twentieth century shown by the study of its ceremonial. Naturally the longest chapter is devoted to the Sacrifice of the Mass, and a good practical chapter follows on how to use the liturgical year, i.e. the proper of the Mass, to deepen and strengthen our understanding of the central Mystery itself. Then it is the last two chapters which command admiration, for in 'Singing to the Lord' (Chapter XVI) we find the Rosary and private prayer at last given their rightful place alongside the Divine Office. That alone is enough to recommend the book apart from the last chapter on sacramentals, with its blessings of aeroplanes and miraculous medals.

It is therefore all the more regrettable that the style in which the book is written (and this is particularly true of the first three quarters) makes reading it unduly laborious, is an obstacle to appreciation. In the first place the excessively cumulative structure of the sentences induces monotony and causes unnecessary repetition, especially as there is little or no variation of sentence structure; in the second place the comparatively valueless adjectives 'beautiful', 'glorious' and 'wonderful', are distressingly overworked and combine to give an impression of shallowness which may or may not be altogether justified. One is forced, therefore, to conclude that while this book is an admirable ground plan, so to say, for a study of the Church's prayer, it has not, despite its almost two hundred and fifty pages, raised the plan above ground level, which means, paradoxically enough, that it has not probed its subject to any great depth.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

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