

He has tried to catch, he says—and he has certainly succeeded—‘something of the mind of Augustine, and it was the mind of a bishop and a theologian’. How often this obvious truism is overlooked! The philosophic apparatus of Augustine’s mind was wholly at the service of his faith. There was no such thing for him as a philosophic discipline independent of theology—or of theology independent of philosophy. Christianity is the one true philosophy, Platonism, the Academy, Stoicism and all the other schools are false theologies, against which the *City of God* is a work of sustained polemic.

With a most disarming candour Mr Versfeld admits that he cannot appropriate that side of Augustine’s mind which interprets history by allegorizing Scripture, and he leaves the matter ‘without prejudice to some more sympathetic or more intelligent commentator’. Here he is being just neither to himself nor to Augustine. Not to himself, because his failure is due to want of information, not to a lack of either sympathy or intelligence, of which his whole book is redolent. Unfair to Augustine, because his exegesis in the *City of God* must be taken in conjunction with all his exegesis in his other works; above all it must be taken in the context of the whole exegetical tradition of his time. He did not learn to allegorize from Platonism, but from the Church, from the Fathers who went before him, right back to Irenaeus and Justin, and we may safely say from the Bible itself. Perhaps Mr Versfeld would appreciate Augustine’s very traditional allegorizing more sympathetically if he were to read some of the anti-allegorical exegesis of, say, Augustine’s contemporary Theodore of Mopsuestia. There is nothing like a diet of ship’s biscuit and salt pork to make one appreciate good food.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS. Edited and translated by K. Pond. Burns, Oates and Washbourne; 16s.)

This book of extracts from the Spanish spiritual writers of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries serves a useful purpose in introducing the general reader to the background from which the genius of St Teresa and St John of the Cross arose. It will certainly come as a surprise to many to find how numerous and how varied were the writers on spirituality during these three centuries. Their teaching follows the main line of Patristic and mediaeval tradition in the interpretation of the Scriptures psychologically, and in ascetical theology. As is well known, Laredo and Osuna derived some of their mystical teaching on prayer from Richard of St Victor, and St Teresa was deeply indebted to them for her doctrine on the prayer of Quiet. Among the other writers quoted we find some passages of fine prose

in Antonio de Guevara and the translator has brought out well that elegance of style which we find in the English writers of the period, such as More, Rastall and William Perin. Indeed, some of the works of Luis de Granada and others were translated and much appreciated in the seventeenth century in England.

The spirit of the Spanish spiritual writers is that of true realism, namely that attitude towards God and man which takes account of all God's creation; which combines a deep love of nature with the study of the mind and heart of man; which does not neglect the significance of the small details of life and yet can rise to the abstract heights of speculation and the warmth of contemplative devotion. The simplicity of St Teresa's common-sense counsels and the exaltation of her contemplative passages, the lyricism of St John and his logical methodology of ascetism can be found, albeit in a lesser degree and with far less felicity of expression, in many of these writers. Occasionally we find examples of an earlier mentality in the allegorical and symbolical commentary on Scriptural phrases, especially those used liturgically, such as Laredo's passages on the Fashionings of the City of God. Towards the end of the period the influence of St Ignatius' Exercises is very marked and one becomes aware of a formality of thought and expression which affected all European spirituality. The editor's notes on the life and works of each author provide a good and useful bibliography. It is a pity that the publishers chose the word *Mystics* in the title, for the majority of the writers are exponents of ascetism, spiritual devotion and the approaches to contemplation, but not mystics in the strict sense of the word.

C.K.

LE SACERDOCE DANS LE MYSTÈRE DU CHRIST. Par Joseph Lécuyer.
(Les Editions du Cerf.)

Le Sacerdoce dans Le Mystère du Christ is a prolonged commentary on the Scriptural texts, notably the Epistle to the Hebrews, concerned with the priesthood of our Lord. Père Lécuyer ranges far and wide and supports his thesis with numerous Patristic references. He shows how our Lord's priesthood is bound up with the whole of his redemptive work from the Incarnation to the Resurrection. Through the doctrine of the Mystical Body the priesthood of the faithful is seen as a continuation of our Lord's, whilst a detailed examination of the priesthood of the Apostles and the sacrament of Order clarifies the distinction between the priesthood of the laity and the priesthood of those who have been ordained.

H.N.