

he happens to accept. This may be partially true but it seems to imply ultimately that the success is in essence the same and that there is really not much to choose between nirvana and transforming union. There are many remarkable and delightful passages quoted from every source. Hafiz, Shelley, Wordsworth and Eckhart are companions, in that order, on two pages. The quotations, too, are all of the same nature, comfortable and poetic. On the other hand it should be said that the compiler gathered them together for his own personal benefit, and with no thought of publication. Many of the passages, too, are of exceptional beauty and profundity, as for example: 'If thy soul is a stranger to thee, then the whole world becomes unhomely', which is taken from Kabir.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE UNCURTAINED THRONE. By Warner Allen. (Faber; 12s. 6d.)

This is the final volume of the trilogy of an author who claims to expound a mystical experience without the limitations either of creed or of the heights of saintliness. What he writes carries with it the fire of conviction pacified by the quiet of intelligent reasoning, and therefore this volume, like its two predecessors, is pleasurable and instructive to read. The analysis of the mystery of consciousness leads on to the establishment of the subject-object relationship discovered in self. But in effect this analysis concludes in the adoption of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the divine spirit within the Self, a doctrine which has played so large a part throughout the history of Christian spirituality in terms of the 'Divine Spark' or *Synteresis* but which here appears to be shorn once again of its Christian clothing and reduced to the natural and poetic mysticism of the Greeks. It should be said however that the book is well worth reading, though the frequency of italics hinders rather than helps.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE VENTURE OF PRAYER. By Hubert Northcott, C.R. (S.P.C.K.; 14s. 6d.)

The main teaching of this book on prayer is excellent. It should be widely spread, and will then encourage many to persevere in the way of prayer, which in turn will mean inevitably that they come under the powerful influence of that first grace which is necessary for an understanding and acceptance of God. On the whole, the teaching is orthodox, being based almost exclusively on Catholic Mystics, Saints and ascetical writers. It is odd, and a pity, that the author does not seem to include Fr Eugene Boylan's excellent books among his bibliography. In the main, he works through the classification of S. John of the Cross, in some places over-psychologising prayer, perhaps, concentrating more upon earlier stages than the later. He is generally clear, readable

and to the point. The greatest thing about the book is that it can claim to be one of the first thorough expositions of the Catholic teachings on prayer written from outside. As such, it necessarily points to the growing realisation of the necessity for prayer and grace, the reaction of the small hard core, crystallising its understanding of the essentials, while the majority, alas, drop into paganism. Hence the greater power of the High Church Movement, hence the reintroduction of 'the priest' and 'the Mass', because 'It is, of course, of first importance to remember that all the Christian mystics held firmly that it was only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross and His redemption of mankind that such union with God was possible at all'; and this statement is only half made, if you ignore the continual renewal of that Sacrifice 'from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof'.

But the great weakness of the book lies in its doctrine of the Church which underlies the whole exposition. The author takes all he likes and wants from the Church, including the title Catholic, yet he discards the very obedience he advocates.

M.H.

PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY. A Study in the Care of Souls. By Göte Bergsten. (Allen and Unwin; 15s.)

This book by a Swedish pastor is an effort to assist his non-Catholic colleagues in their ministrations as spiritual counsellors. The author is generous with advice, some excellent, some more doubtful, which would perhaps have been more helpful had he adopted a less assertive style and taken more pains to meet his readers by explaining the why and wherefore. Catholic priests and social workers may find it of some assistance only on condition that they are already equipped to winnow the grain from the chaff.

V.W.