

into so brief a study. Two points which call for disagreement have already been indicated, and one might add to them. Thus, for instance, Krishna was not *the* incarnation but *an* avatar of Vishnu; and again Aldous Huxley did not 'reject with loathing the Christian God' but the distorted

image of him presented by the Victorian evangelicals. By and large, however, the book is illuminating, and deserves a large and critical audience.

Renée Haynes

THE PERSIAN SŪFIS by Cyprian Rice O.P., *Allen and Unwin 15s*

'If God (in the *Surat an Nur* – Sura 24 of the *Qoran*) is compared to the light in a lamp set in a niche, the niche, we must know, is the believing and loving heart'. Thus, on page 85 of his admirable little book, does Father Cyprian Rice give the vital Sūfi gloss on that text of the *Qoran* which is central to the Sūfis' grounding of themselves upon Muslim Scripture: 'God is the Light of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Light is like a niche wherein is a lamp . . .'. This and similar passages which convey the majesty of God, passages like 'Wherever you turn, there is the face of God', are for the Sūfis, in the words of Professor A. J. Arberry, 'the subject of constant meditation and commentary'. For however much Sūfism, *Taṣawwuf*, may be regarded as the attempt by Muslims, particularly non-Semitic converts to Islam and notably those of Iran and India, to read into their faith some possibility of a link, vitalized by love offered and reciprocated, between God and each of us; however much this Islamic 'mysticism' may be seen as an accretion to the legalistic and awe-inspiring, the fundamentalist, unitarian Qoranic basis of Islam; and however much it may be said to bear the marks of Neo-Platonic influence or Buddhist, Hindu influences or Manichaeism, or be a growth out of all of these, Sūfism is a Muslim religious phenomenon and Sūfis were members of a strictly Muslim society. Therefore, both from an innate desire to exalt the faith of their fathers and with the wish to avoid a schism and strife so con-

trary to Sūfi practice, the more responsible among them strove always to find sanction for their gospel of love, of tolerance and of grace in the revelation of the Prophet Muhammad and the sayings ascribed to him.

Neither Father Rice nor Professor Arberry, the latter in his *Sūfism*, published by the same publishers in 1950 and a book to be read in conjunction with that under review, hesitates to emphasize this Muslim basis for Sūfism and certainly Professor Arberry gives a lucid account of how al-Ghazzali sought to legitimize Sūfism by giving it a 'theology' parallel to the conventional Muslim 'juridico-theology' of the Schools. But significantly Father Rice calls his illuminating hand-book *The Persian Sūfis*, for he in the main confines himself to the most extensive manifestations of the 'mystical' spirit in Islam, which were Persian in the first instance, but latterly, and still today, Indian. However, neither Egypt nor Spain failed to provide Sūfi teachers of passing eminence, so that it will be noted that, taking Arabia as the core of pristine Islam, it was on the fringes, the Fertile Crescent, the cultivated Nile Valley and the Mediterranean shores, that Sūfism took root; in areas primarily less harsh than the Arabian desert by nature but ultimately challenged by conquering encroachment and devastating invasion, while anciently they had been the seats of older and more subtle lore than any known directly by the Prophet.

Father Rice's book is of special importance because, where the workings of the spirit and where doctrinal issues are concerned, his vocation and the training it has brought him do ensure that he knows the nature of what he is handling. What a boon to the student is this fine distillation of years of reading in the texts and poetry of Persian and Arab exponents of their unusual spiritual experiences, and how much greater is it for the irenic and yet thoroughly objective way in which it is written! He gives the answers to questions which the serious, as opposed to the dilettante or obscurantist, student might ask. Take for example the vexed question of *fanā*, the Sūfis' objective of 'annihilation' in God, with the concomitant suspicion of pantheism *et cetera*: 'Above all, it is one's own self that has to be forgotten, renounced, outpassed. . . . This does not mean the elimination or destruction of the human personality. Indeed, the human personality *must* survive if it is to keep up this never-ending act of adoration and self-transcendence. It survives, one might say, rather as hydrogen or oxygen survive in water, by a sort of virtual substantiality. Henceforth, the life of the self is to live in and for

another . . . ' Assuredly after this any genuine Sūfi would declare that this author had certainly 'arrived', traversed the stages, the valleys and mountain-tops of the Way.

As for the host of non-genuine abusers of the Sūfi Path and its habit, they form no part of Father Rice's business and must be relegated to the works of those more interested in the purely social and political aspects of societies than the religious. The works of Father Rice and Professor Arberry are essential for the historian who should now be at hand to discuss what kind of social conditions were conducive to Sūfism's rich development in medieval Persia and what this development in the end did to, or for, Persian and Muslim society. But in an age of concentration mainly on the fluctuations of the saliva content in a creature's mouth and the state of the pupils in the devotee's eyes, the clarity of exposition Father Rice has accorded to Sūfism, purely as a spiritual quest and a way of life practising love and inculcating humanity and patience, is welcome and refreshing.

P. W. Avery

MARTIN LUTHER, a Biographical Study by John M. Todd, *Burns and Oates 30s.*

There are several close parallels, between the careers of Martin Luther and John Wesley. Both began their work as devout members of their respective Churches, and in both these churches spiritual life was at a low ebb, not wholly moribund, but with much in the way of torpor, distortions of truth and abuses of custom, that badly needed reform. Both men started their ministries by new insights into the gospel, that were denied or negated by religion as it was commonly presented and practised around them. Both set their world alight with new life by their preaching

and both, in the end, were forced by circumstances, and without explicit intention to create a breach in their parent bodies, which resulted in the formation of wholly new churches to add to the divisive tendencies of an unregenerate Christendom.

Mr John Todd has written (1958) *John Wesley and the Catholic Church*, a biography which underlines the ecumenical aspects of Wesley's life and work. This led him to undertake the task of doing the same for Martin Luther, and with equal or even greater success, especially from