

that the tradition of his communion, which is one of 'moderation, discretion, balance and humaneness', needs to be complemented by the elements of the 'absurd, the paradoxical, the extreme' to be found in other churches. However, all contributors write in a conciliatory spirit, though ingrained prejudices do not easily die out. The first essay: 'Holiness in the Continuing Tradition' places the subject in a contemporary setting and calls for 'a new understanding of how the seeds of wholeness might be coaxed to grow amongst a much wider section of the population'.

Father Evdokimov's study of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox tradition is a great advance on Vladimir Lossky's *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (1944). It bears witness to the range and depth of ecumenical studies pursued since that publication. This has borne fruit not only in the author's understanding of the West, but also in his attempt to reach a standpoint whence historically based differences of approach to the Divine Mysteries can be seen

as complementary, notably in the *Filioque* controversy. The symbol of the Trinity (Fr Serge Bulgakov), a triangle inscribed in a circle, would obviate the danger of the Trinity being reduced to a dyad, as the triangle so easily suggests, and at the same time overcome the objection of Duns Scotus that the Holy Spirit alone is sterile in the heart of the Trinity. For the circle would denote the relationship of the Three Persons in both directions. A conciliation between freedom and grace, the tension between which has occupied many theologians, is effected by the Eastern interpretation of the term 'synergy': in the words of St Maximus: 'Liberty and grace are the two wings which raise men to the Kingdom.' With admirable clarity and a wealth of quotations from both Western and Eastern Fathers, the author presents the Orthodox interpretation of such terms as theology, hypostasis, nature and person. A fascinating study, every page of which provides food for much thought.

IRENE MARINOFF

**CREATIVE IMAGINATION IN THE SŪFISM OF IBN 'ARABĪ**, by Henry Corbin. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, 1969. 406 pp. £4.75.

Professor Henry Corbin has dedicated much of his life to the study of the Persian mystics of the twelfth century and after who wrote principally in prose (both Arabic and Persian) and who had been largely forgotten both in their native land and elsewhere. The centre of his studies has been the martyred mystic Shihābaddīn Yahyā al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl ('the one who was killed'), the founder of the so-called Ishrāqī school of mysticism who flourished in the twelfth century.

By any standards Suhrawardī is obscure, and this perhaps accounts for the fact that he has for so long been neglected. This has not deterred Professor Corbin who has, in collaboration with Iranian scholars of repute, produced a whole series of editions of authors of the Ishrāqī school under the auspices of the *département d'iranologie de l'institut français de recherche*. The present work is based on lectures delivered at the *Eranos Tagungen* and published in the *Jahrbücher* xxiv and xxv (1955-6). In these lectures Corbin turned his attention to Ibn 'Arabī, the great Andalusian mystic who was a later contemporary of Suhrawardī and who exercised a tremendous influence on subsequent mystical writing throughout the entire Muslim world.

Ibn 'Arabī is also a most illusive author and, despite his importance, no full-scale study of

him exists in any European language. What is needed is a clear account of the metaphysical system of this obscure but important writer. A modest attempt to supply this was made by Dr A. E. Afffi in a short but comprehensive study in 1939.

Afffi had stressed the 'monistic' and 'pantheistic' aspects of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. Professor Corbin dislikes both these terms and seeks to show that for Ibn 'Arabī the mystical union is rather a *unio sympathetica* in which the individual mystic realizes his union or even his identity with one of the 'names' of God, that is, the aspects of God: he is, then, God as uniquely expressed in himself.

So far, so good: but in this book, as in his other writings, Corbin is not really concerned with offering an objective interpretation of the metaphysics of whatever mystical writer he happens to be studying, he is offering a highly subjective and personal re-interpretation in a polyglot terminology that, one suspects, means nothing to anyone except to Corbin himself. How tired one gets of the pretentious neologisms—'theopathy', 'epiphanic forms', 'the Sigh of existentiating Compassion', '*fedeli d'amore*', '*Imagatrix*', and, worst of all, 'hexicity' (the supposed etymology of this extraordinary word is not given). All this makes the book exasperating reading and its texture is

glutinous. The following sentence (p. 206) may serve as an example of the author's thought and style:

This renewed, recurrent creation is in every case a Manifestation (*izhār*) of the Divine Being manifesting *ad infinitum* the possible hexeities in which He essentializes His being.

Few people will have learnt much about Ibn 'Arabi after reading 283 pages of this sort of thing. Ibn 'Arabi is quite obscure enough: Corbin succeeds in making him even more obscure. Some of his translations, especially from the Persian, are decidedly odd.

R. C. ZAEHNER

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**S. P. C. K.**

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