

REVIEWS

WRITINGS FROM THE PHILOKALIA ON PRAYER OF THE HEART. Translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer. (Faber; 30s.)

The original Greek *Philokalia* was an anthology of the Sayings of the Fathers compiled on Mount Athos in the second half of the eighteenth century by the monks Macarius and Nicodemus. At this period 'the Fathers' remembered on Mount Athos were primarily the leaders of the Hesychast movement in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: mystics and ascetics like St Gregory of Sinai and the patriarch Calistus. The compilers combined extracts from their writings and sayings attributed to them with the 'Precepts' of the greatest of all Byzantine mystics, St Simeon the new theologian, and an earlier collection of the 'Sayings' of the Desert Fathers. The fact that the *Philokalia* so composed forms an obvious unit is further evidence that Hesychasm is a natural development in East Christian spirituality. The Greek *Philokalia* was first printed in 1782. This was a period when the monasticism of Mount Athos was coming to gain a predominant influence among the reformers and 'spiritual minded' in all Orthodox monasteries. Before 1794 the *Philokalia* had been translated into Slavonic by the Moldavian Paissy Velichkovsky, extracts were translated into Russian throughout the nineteenth century, and finally Bishop Theophan the Recluse compiled from it his *Dobrotulubiye*. This was published after his death, between 1896 and 1901.

Dr Kadloubovsky and Mr Palmer have translated a selection from this larger version of the *Dobrotulubiye*. It is apparent throughout that their source is Russian and not Greek. The term 'staretz' is used for each holy man, the term 'prelest' is preserved for the world of illusion, the heresy of Aphthartodocetism stays transformed into the individual Aphthartodocetes 'whom the Emperor favoured'. Perhaps all this might have been made clearer in title page and Preface. But it does not detract from the value of their work which remains the most useful introduction in English to the spiritual teaching in those nineteenth-century Russian monastic circles which had been revitalised through the use of the Jesus prayer. It also provides a commentary on the religious background of some of the greatest nineteenth-century Russian novels. For the spirituality of the *Dobrotulubiye* is essentially Christo-centric. Asceticism gains its meaning through a concentration on the Person and the Name of Jesus, and through the secret life of the ascetic in Jesus, and Jesus in the ascetic. There is much in the detail of the teaching which seems at first curiously Western and post-Tridentine: a conception of religious obedience which seems identical with

that of the Society of Jesus, the emphasis on detachment and on meditations upon hell and judgment. It is significant that the first edition of the Greek *Philokalia* was printed at Venice '*Con Licenza de Superiori e Privilegio*'. Careful reading of even the present volume will disprove many current generalisations on the antithesis between Eastern and Western spirituality. But its primary value for the twentieth-century English public is the same as that for its readers in nineteenth-century Russia: the emphasis and re-emphasis on the closeness of the Person of Christ. 'We should always be turning the Name of Jesus Christ round the spaces of our heart, as lightning circles round the skies before rain.'

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

STUDIES OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS. By E. Allison Peers. (S.P.C.K.; 22s. 6d.)

With this volume, Professor Peers begins the re-issue of his well-known and useful book which, this time, is to be completed with a third volume. The chapter on St John of the Cross has been re-written. It is a very readable account with copious quotation from the works of this writer. One notes that the author agrees with Abbot Chapman in partly rejecting the idea that St Teresa excels in the description of initial states of prayer while St John excels in the final states. Professor Peers does not go quite so far as Chapman, who held, I think, that the reverse was the case—as it surely is? A comparison, however, might be made between them in regard to subject-matter. St Teresa's is pre-eminently psychology and St John's theology. Professor Peers is unduly hard on the latter's doctrinal ballads. Mr Campbell's recent translation will show readers with no Spanish some of their good qualities.

Professor Peers remains puzzling on Fray Luis de León. Briefly, one finds the insistence on the love of nature in that famous writer rather overdone; the statement that there is an almost total absence of asceticism in his writings is very difficult to square with the texts and the insistence that he is a mystic at all is unconvincing. We are told that León was a nature-mystic, but we are given no definition of this nor any description of its relation to mysticism in the other sense that is in question in the remainder of this volume. León was a mystic only in a sense of the word that exists, certainly, but with a different connotation altogether from that of a recipient of infused contemplation.

The Bibliography, as is well-known, is a model of its kind and endlessly useful. It will receive the augmentations of a quarter of a century in Volume III.

EDWARD SARMIENTO

RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE. By Ferdinand Valentinc, O.P. (Burns Oates; 9s. 6d.)

This is a very thoughtful and thought-provoking little book and the fruit of a very wide experience in a particular field. Though written for