

truth that is) it would always have the advantage of being indigenous spiritual pabulum, with a special worth in being so much part and parcel of our English roots and heritage.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to say all this, but the reason why I say it is because I feel one cannot have enough of the kind of material that Eric Colledge has brought into his *Medieval Mystics of England*. I would have liked to see the book brought out as volume one of a series that could go on indefinitely. His introduction and his bibliography provide fascinating vistas of our less familiar forbears—Godric of Finchale, the solitary of Farne, Christina of Markyate, Stephen of Sawley . . . even a snippet of conversation that Margery Kemp had with Richard of Caister 'who wrote no word which is known to posterity', is enough to create an image in the round, so real and so tangibly English are the personalities involved.

The anthology begins with a set of excerpts from the first book of St Aelred's *Speculum Charitatis*, a work which will be new to many readers. It has obviously not been easy to do justice to this rather extravagant piece, and one would have thought that Aelred's third book, on the sabbaths, would not only have been easier to translate and to summarize, but would have given a synthesis more truly Aelredian. And why call it *The Mirror of Love* when Aelred, like all the other Cistercians, was trying so hard to prove that love and charity are not the same?

St Edmund Rich's *Mirror of Holy Church*, ponderous and thoughtful, is followed by *Ego Dormio*, so typical of the best of Rolle. Then comes the *Book of Privy Counsel*, and a very good digest of the *Scale* that takes in nearly forty chapters. The extract from Julian is sufficient in itself to show what a perceptive editor Dr Colledge is, for he has chosen the vision of 'the Lord that hath a servant'. He concludes the anthology with Julian's unforgettable words to Margery at Norwich, and could not resist, for colophon (who could?) the little parable that the Archbishop thought was so good, about the bear who ate the pear blossoms then 'did horribly void them from his tail end in front of the priest'. All in all a splendid, a thoroughly representative mixture.

GEOFFREY WEBB.

MYSTICS OF OUR TIMES, by Hilda Graef; Burns and Oates, 25s.

This study of ten saintly Catholics almost contemporary with ourselves, illustrates and proves Miss Graef's thesis that a truly mystical experience of union with God far from being incompatible with an active life may be its source and support. Her examples include two Jewish converts, the lively and attractive Irish girl Edith Quinn, an apostle in Africa of the Legion of Mary, an Italian professor of law of exceptional attainment already beatified, the Jesuit scientist and philosopher of science Teilhard de Chardin, a mystical bank manager, a married French lady whose evident holiness led her unbelieving

husband to priesthood as a Dominican friar, a martyr in Morocco from whose blood apparently sprang the orders—male and female—which he had envisaged and for which he had offered apparently fruitless prayer, the American founder of the Paulists, suspect for advocating what today is generally accepted, and the Polish apostle of the printing press who died a voluntary martyr of charity in the hunger camps of Auschwitz.

All these experienced union with God and found in it the wellspring of amazing activity and superhuman endurance. In her Introduction Miss Graef raises the question so often debated, whether all saintly souls must or in fact do experience it. Certainly all the ten here studied did so. My personal belief on this difficult matter is that the substance of the mystic's prayers is his union with God in and by charity. Whether this union is experienced and at what degree of intimacy it is experienced largely depends on the subject's psychological temper, the degree to which he is aware of what passes in the central depths of his spirit. The extent and nature of his external activities, as this study suggests, are of lesser importance in this respect. Most of the men and women selected for treatment here were plunged in external activities without apparent detriment to their life of prayer. Even in this life Mary and Martha may be reconciled. Miss Graef tells their stories well and even in the restricted space at her command conveys their personalities so diverse yet concentric, the centre God Incarnate. That she can write so well in a language not native to her demands our admiration. She always conveys her meaning, and normally as if English were her mother-tongue. Nevertheless the book could have been improved by the revision of an Englishman. We say, for example, 'cater for' not 'cater to'. And 'Great Rabbi' should be 'Chief Rabbi'.

Of Teilhard de Chardin's personal holiness there can be no question. Neither is it doubtful that a reconciliation of the world as made known by science and as seen by Christian faith is the paramount need of our time. Only too truly does Père Teilhard observe: 'I thought of the abyss which separates the intellectual world to which I belong and whose language I understand from the theological and Roman world whose idiom I also know' (p. 224). And he was surely right in saying that the necessary synthesis of those two seemingly antagonistic worlds must be effected by 'a mystical perspective which alone could lead to a true communication between souls'. (*ibid*). This is not however to say that the synthesis proposed by Père Teilhard is acceptable. I do not in fact believe that it is. Quite apart from any other objections which may be raised by the scientist or the theologian, and Miss Graef is well aware of these, my primary objection is Père Teilhard's strange combination of a scientific understanding of evolution and what amounts to an unscientific and Ptolemaic astronomy. Evolution as he sees it is not simply a process on this planet, infinitesimally small in the universe, though similar evolutions presumably occur elsewhere, but as a unilateral evolution of the universe as a whole. 'The universe culminates in man'. The earth no doubt, possibly the solar system, not the universe as a whole. To me the notion is utterly preposterous. How much more truly scientific Alice

Meynell's view of divine Incarnations throughout the universe. The Christian revelation concerned inevitably with the geocentric world and its recipients' belief has and can have nothing to say of God's action in worlds whose existence was utterly beyond the apostles' ken. Moreover, as these studies abundantly establish, the significance of human life is not as a stage on the journey to some remote super-humanity, but as the deification of the individual soul as by God's grace in Christ it receives God.

This in fact is the aim and significance of all the active mystics here studied—to receive God here and now and communicate him here and now to others. How successfully they achieved this vocation despite frustrations which sometimes, as in the case of Elizabeth Leseur or Charles de Foucauld, continued to the end of life is the theme of these illuminating biographies. Once more Miss Graef has put us in her debt.

I cannot however subscribe to her undue disparagement of Islam as 'appealing to the lower instincts' and making 'far less stringent demands' than Christianity on the moral life (p. 148). In the domain of sexual morality this certainly is true. Today however the feast of Ramadan is far more stringent than the token abstinences required by the Church and alcoholic drinks are totally forbidden. Nor should we forget that it was the spectacle of Moslem devotion which first turned back De Foucauld's (p. 120) and Massignon's thoughts to the religion they had lost.

E. I. WATKIN.

PRAYERS FOR MEDITATION, by Hugo and Karl Rahner; Herder Nelson, 9s 6d.

ON THE THIRD DAY, by Georges Chevrot; Scepter (distributed by Thomas More Books), 16s.

The first of these, an attractively produced little book, was initially the cause of some embarrassment, not merely because of the eminence of the authors, but rather because it is a book of prayers and, further, a translation from the German (*Gebete der Einkehr*). One book of prayers by Karl Rahner has already appeared (*Encounter with Silence*; reviewed in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, May 1961), and this collection by the two brothers, though suffering from similar limitations, has the advantage of containing prayers written specially for public use, so that the form they take is not so difficult to cope with. The uneasiness felt might be attributed to their being a translation—'they'd sound much better in German'—but Newman was writing very similar prayers not so long ago, and Rosaleen Brennan's English reads well. No; the embarrassment is of another kind. These meditations were written for a University Mission in the Cathedral of Freiburg-im-Breisgau and were used each evening at Benediction to sum up