

our centre of awareness away from the grace-sin axis on to the gno-sis-ignorance axis. When this happens we begin to deplore our mistakes instead of confessing our sins. It is then that we become such a real menace both to ourselves and other people; for, limited creatures that we are, we can never know all the effects of our behaviour on other people or ourselves, and if we think we know then we create Hell all round. The sure way to stop creating Hell all round is to have Heaven within, and not all our creaturely wisdom can do that for us. Which is why I fervently hope that all who are interested in psychology will meditate long over Fr White's pages on Gnosticism (especially on the Knowing One . . . who sees that 'Inner World of Man' which is hidden from Tom, Dick, and Harry . . . and is in danger of becoming increasingly mastered and possessed by it). And the pages on *malum culpae* as against *malum poenae* (162-173) deserve the attention of us all.

The problem of evil seems to be the main bone of contention between Jung and Fr White; and we learn that their discussion has so far 'generated more heat than light' (p. 75, n.). This is not difficult to believe if St Thomas is correct when he tells us that you cannot profitably dispute about metaphysical principles with an opponent who refuses to take up any metaphysical position whatsoever. Jung does not acknowledge any metaphysical position (though if his refusal to equate evil and *privatio boni* is not a metaphysical position, I don't know what is!). Therefore the discussion has come to a deadlock.

However, there is a different discussion running through the book which we may hope has not come to a deadlock—that between the author and the Freudian school. Over the years there were significant, if subtle, changes in Freud's position which many of us have failed to take into account—partly influenced, I suspect, by Fr White's championship of Jung. If this inadequate account of *God and the Unconscious* does no more than stir its author to further reflections on Freud's development it will not have been fruitless.



REVIEWS

THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING and Other Treatises by a Fourteenth-Century Mystic. Revised, edited and introduced by Abbot Justin McCann, O.S.B. (Orchard Series; Burns Oates; 16s.)

A recommendation of a further edition of this great work should perhaps be prefaced with the words of the author: 'I pray thee, for God's love, that thou let none see this book unless it be such a one as thou thinkest is apt for the book. Those who do read it should read it as a whole for if a man saw one part and not another, peradventure he might

lightly be led into error.' Father Baker completes this advice with the further warning: 'observe your own way, spirit and call: and of books, take and practise according as you shall find to be proper and answerable to such way, spirit and call of yours and no further'. We are reminded of the reluctance of the primitive Church to present indiscriminately the deepest mysteries of the Faith to people still unprepared to receive them. In these days of popularised mysticism, in an age when quick and facile judgments take the place of a gradual preparation forming the right disposition for the reception of great truths, such warnings are more than ever necessary.

But given the correct disposition, much good will come from a knowledge of the teaching of this book, and it is important to realise that it is rooted in the oldest Christian traditions. Together with Father Baker's commentary and the *Epistle of Privy Counsel*, this edition includes the translation by the author of *The Cloud* of the mystical theology of Dionysius. This shows the basis of the author's teaching on prayer. The absolute transcendence of God and the impossibility of our knowledge of him giving us an insight into his very inmost nature, implies that we know him in prayer in proportion to our transcendence of distinct concepts and images. These must give way to the simple direction of the will towards God and the work of the understanding which sees only obscurely, without clear knowledge. We know him most intimately through the way of unknowing.

If this paradox should seem to be a stumbling-block, it must be recalled that this teaching is in line with the metaphysics of St Thomas, who places at the height of metaphysical knowledge the knowledge of God as unknown, quoting Dionysius: '*in finem nostrae cognitionis, Deum tamquam ignotum cognoscimus*'. When the mystics state this truth—which seems at first so bewildering—they are simply penetrating, on the deeper level of contemplative prayer, that same truth which has, on the philosophical plane, the strictest metaphysical precision.

This fourteenth-century English mystic has the support, not only of St Thomas, but of the oldest traditions of the Greek Fathers—above all, of St Gregory of Nyssa, who shows as the highest point of knowledge that obscure union with God unknown which Moses experienced when he entered the cloud. This shows us that the deepest roots of this doctrine are to be found in the Word of God revealed through the Scriptures, which are penetrated through and through with this imagery of *the Cloud* and the luminous darkness, as at the Transfiguration: '*Ecce nubes lucida obumbravit eos*'. The author of the introduction illustrates this excellently with such texts as: 'He hath made darkness his hiding place. Clouds and darkness surround him', and '*Ego dormio, sed cor meum vigilat*'.

It would be a help towards our relationship with the Oriental Christians if they could become familiar with a work like this, which shows how deeply the traditions of Eastern mystics such as St Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius have passed into our Western traditions. This profound continuity with the past is one of the most interesting characteristics of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It should be noticed, too, that although the author is dealing principally with interior prayer and that although his work does not show that striking emphasis on the approach to God through the Incarnation that we find in Walter Hilton, he does in fact give the greatest importance to the prayer of the Church: 'They that be true workers in this work, they worship no prayer so much as those of Holy Church. And therefore they do them in the form and statute that they be ordained by holy fathers before us'. This shows that even the author of *The Cloud* who leads us into what may seem to be the most abstract and imageless form of the mystical life sets primary emphasis on the corporate prayer of the Church.

DOM ODO BROOKE, O.S.B.

THE WESTERN LITURGY AND ITS HISTORY. By Theodor Klauser.
(Mowbray; 4s.)

Professor F. L. Cross has translated this short work because 'it gives a lucid and comprehensive survey of these discoveries [of the technicians] in a form wholly free from technicalities and without ever losing sight of their practical implications'. It is indeed a very readable summary of the work of a great liturgical expert. The importance of the work may be gathered from the following quotation from the introduction: 'In deep and ineffaceable characters it (the Roman Liturgy) bears the marks of the spiritual development not of a single people, but of several. The most diverse influences, assuming ever new forms, have played their part in fashioning the structure and composition of our Liturgy.' The author throws in great contrast the earlier living spirit of prayer and devotion which moulded the Roman way of worship and the later 'unhistorical attachment to legality of the rubricists'. For this alone the book should be read by all who are trying to pray the Mass.

C.P.

AVICENNA: SCIENTIST AND PHILOSOPHER. Edited by G. M. Wickens.
(Luzac; 15s.)

This book is an excellent introduction to Avicenna, being a series of lectures given at Cambridge in the spring of last year to mark the millenary of the Arab philosopher's birth. Although the lectures were intended to have a general appeal, the copious notes which have been added to the printed edition enhance its value for the scholar. A general introduction to Avicenna's life and times is given by Professor Arberry's vivid and enter-