

life of a hermit, as often happens in eastern monasticism, and lived at a place some five miles away from the monastery. After forty years as a solitary he returned to the mother house where he became abbot. Little is known of his origins or even of the exact span of years covered by his life. The various problems connected with the writing of his biography are discussed by Dr Heppell in the introduction. It would seem that the saint lived towards the end of the sixth century.

The *Ladder of Divine Ascent* is divided into thirty chapters or steps. These in turn are split up into numbered paragraphs which vary in length, some being no more than pithy sayings after the fashion of the Wisdom literature such as 'a malicious hermit is an adder hidden in a hole'. There are also a number of stories designed to illustrate the author's teaching. Those familiar with the quotations from the eastern ascetics to be found in *The Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtue* of Father Alphonsus Rodriguez, S.J., will know the style. Some of the sayings are extremely shrewd, while others, perhaps because of the translation, are rather obscure. Interesting side-lights are given on oriental monastic life. We read that a penitentiary, separated from the main building, existed where recalcitrant monks were kept in solitary confinement to weave baskets of palm leaves. This book, which has had great influence on Greek and Slavonic monasticism, should be read by all those interested in the eastern Church.

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SYMBOLISM IN THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH. By Gilbert Cope. (S.C.M. Press; 30s.)

One of the most vital questions in theology at the moment is the subject of Christian symbolism. What is the symbolism of the Bible and the Church? And what is its relationship to all the other forms of symbolism, such as those we find in the cosmic pagan religions, and those archetypes which Jung claimed to discover as the inheritance of the collective unconscious of mankind? This is the nucleus of the problem raised in this book. The author shows us how deeply symbolic thought pervades revelation and the whole traditional presentation of Christianity. He is alive to the real difficulty as to how the man of today can enter into modes of thought and expression which are alien to our scientific contemporary civilization. He is right too when he says that it is possible to re-awaken the response of man to these symbols, through an appeal to that whole inheritance of the non-primitive mentality, which lies buried below the level of conscious thought.

The worship of the liturgy, as he says, should appeal to man as a whole, not only to the rational aspects of his nature, but to everything in him which responds to the sacramentalism of signs, images, and

symbols. In this way the liturgy has the power to canalize even the non-rational and unconscious energies of man in the service of God.

This is all very true. But does this book penetrate to the real meaning of *Christian* symbolism? We would suggest that the author fails to reach a true insight into this question by approaching it too much from the purely psychological angle. It is not just a question of a need to respond to the impulses of the human *psyche*. If this were so, we should be looking at Christian symbols too generically, and we should not discover how they are uniquely and specifically Christian. The cause of this fault can be seen in the author's rationalistic approach to some of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. He gives a purely mythological value to Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden, without believing in the objective historical event of the fall of man. On the subject of the virginity of our Lady, he says that the question to be asked is not: Did Jesus have no human father?, but rather: What is the significance of the presentation of Mary as both virgin and mother? The inspiration of scripture is dismissed as unimportant. What matters, he says, is the effect of the imagery of the Bible, the doctrinal and ritual pattern of the Church in the orientation of the human *psyche*. But this is not Christian symbolism. It is something utterly different.

Here the author has missed the point. The symbolism of the Bible and the Church takes its meaning from the supernatural plane of the Christian history of salvation, not purely from its psychological efficacy. This is what makes it unique. It is not symbolism in opposition to history. It is an *historical* symbolism. As Père Daniélou has shown so well in his admirable essay on 'Symbolism and History' in *The Lord of History*, the specifically Christian example of this kind of symbolism is given in typology. This is of its very nature a person or event in the history of salvation, prefiguring another person or event, and can perhaps be more truly called a 'sense' of history than a sense of scripture. Only from this basis can we understand the relationship of Christianity to the symbols and myths of the pagan cosmic religions, and to the archetypes of Jungian psychology. We touch here on a particular aspect of the mystery of the relationship of grace to nature. Grace is of another order, yet perfects and fulfils nature. The symbols and myths of the pagan cosmic religions are fulfilled by being taken up into the Christian supernatural history of salvation, as, for instance, the antithesis of light and darkness is the image of Christ the light of the world and the Christian struggle against Satan and his forces of darkness. True Christian symbolism is the reverse of the transformation of Christianity into a myth. It leads to the transformation of myths into the Christian history of salvation.

D.O.B.