

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES AND HUMAN FACTS. By Frithjof Schuon-  
(Faber; 21s.)

In an earlier book on *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* M. Schuon defined his position as a believer, like René Guenon and Coomaraswamy, in a metaphysical tradition, which underlies all the great religious traditions of the world and gives them an essential unity. The present work is a study of this 'essential doctrine' as it appears in the light of the different religious perspectives of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The first chapter recalls the fundamental distinction between philosophy considered as a system of discursive thought, and metaphysical knowledge conceived as a higher mode of contemplative wisdom. In the next chapter on 'Aesthetics and Symbolism in Art and Nature', M. Schuon develops this 'metaphysical' conception of art on the lines of Coomaraswamy, showing a remarkable insight into the fundamental nature of religious art in east and west, and developing a most interesting theory of the symbolism of colours. But it is in the third chapter on 'The Contours of the Spirit' that he reveals the full extent of his insight into the different religious perspectives of east and west. It seems to us that this marks a considerable advance on his earlier work in the understanding which he shows of Christian doctrine.

He is at his best, however, in the exposition of Islamic and Hindu doctrine, which he develops further in a special chapter on the Vedanta; and he tends to regard Hinduism, like all writers of his school, as the 'norm' of religious doctrine, precisely because it is most open to the kind of gnostic interpretation which he favours. His failure to understand the Christian perspective comes out particularly in his conception of faith, as he has no place for a supernatural mystery which can only be known by faith and to which metaphysical knowledge can never of itself attain. But apart from this one cannot but admire the depth of his penetration into the spiritual life. The last chapters, on 'Love and Knowledge' and 'The Spiritual Virtues', reveal indeed a mature wisdom which it would be hard to parallel in modern times. The accusation which would be generally levelled at René Guenon would be that he was deficient in love and above all in humility. But no one can say this of M. Schuon. These chapters show an insight especially into the nature of humility which can only be the fruit of genuine spiritual experience, and the whole book is written in a pregnant and incisive style which makes it most memorable. The translator must have done a good job, as it reads like original and excellent English. It is a book to which one will return again and again, and perhaps its inner spirit cannot be better summarized than in the concluding words, 'He who lives in prayer has not lived in vain'.

SIMONE WEIL. By E. W. F. Tomlin. (Bowes and Bowes; 6s.)

Now that the first impact of the personality of Simone Weil has spent its force and her life and work have become generally known, it is possible to see her in a better perspective. No more sober and balanced estimate could be asked than this short study by Mr Tomlin. Simone Weil stands out as a somewhat eccentric character, a lonely and tragic figure, who reminds one now of Pascal and now of Kierkegaard. There can be no doubt of her genius and of her spiritual insight, but it can no longer be a cause of surprise that she never became a Catholic. She is a person apart, 'Europe's displaced person', as Mr Tomlin calls her in a brilliant summary of her character and significance. There is no doubt that she was a portent, a solitary genius, thrown up from the conflict of war, witnessing to the truth of spiritual reality in the midst of intense suffering, and perhaps a symbol, as Mr Tomlin suggests, of the new world which is being born from the breakdown of the old. She left no disciples, but her example may well endure for generations.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

THE LEAVEN OF LOVE. By Izette de Forest. (Gollancz; 15s. od.)

The author of this book was a patient and pupil of Ferenczi and has been a practising analyst for twenty-five years. But the book is by no means addressed to her colleagues only. It is a sober and valuable account of the process of healing through the relationship which is established between an analyst and his patient.

Ferenczi, Jung, Adler and Rank were all pupils, and then colleagues, of Freud, and they all broke away from him on differing fundamental issues. Ferenczi's disagreement was mainly on the question of the relationship of analyst and patient. He discarded the view that the analyst should be 'passive' and consciously assumed an 'active' role. He treated his patients *vis-à-vis*, as also does Jung, and this at once establishes an entirely different relationship from the one that results from the analyst sitting hidden behind the patient and unseen by him.

Mrs de Forest gives an account, with illustrations from her own experience, of the 'transference', which is the emotional attitude of the patient to the analyst, and the 'counter-transference' which is the response of the analyst to the patient. Both, she regards as of equal importance in the process of successful analysis. The difference between the two is that the attitude of the patient contains a great deal of matter which is unconsciously motivated and which needs to be made conscious, while the analyst, who has undergone a long personal analysis before beginning to practise, is aware of his attitudes and does not use them to carry illegitimate matter. This sounds specialized and