

Alex Kurian. Ascent to Nothingness, London: St. Paul's, 2000, pp. 240. Price £8.99

The works of John of the Cross are not easy nuts to crack even for those who are established on the path of the Spirit. Fr. Kurian's *Ascent to Nothingness*, is a surprise gift to the admirers of the mystical Doctor as well as to all those who take their spiritual life seriously. Two main blocks that hold one back from laying hand on Sanjuanist literature are his seemingly tough and hard-core dealing with the beginner and the lack of co-ordination between his writings. An earnest and persistent effort is required to crack the nut and enjoy the sweet nectar within. However, to the Christian as well as non-Christian scholars of spirituality, John of the Cross is a reference point in the matter of in-depth spirituality. Moreover, John's spirituality of nada (nothingness) has many things in common with the insights of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, etc., and could serve as unifying factor among various world religions.

Ascent to Nothingness opens to the reader the great treasure house of Sanjuanist literature. The first chapter provides an adequate knowledge of the background and foundations of John's mystical vision. The second and the third chapters explain the various stages of John's spiritual itinerary, the important steps, which are to be taken, the possible failures, causes and their remedies. In the fourth chapter the reader is taken for an in-depth search of John's nada (nothingness), the 'womb' of the 'awakened self.' This exploration enables the readers to acquire an insight into the genius and uniqueness of the contribution made to this subject by the Spanish Carmelite John of the Cross.

Thomas Kochumuttom cmi.