

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism, by Salvatore R. C. Lilla. *Oxford University Press*. 234 pp. £3.50.

This is a work of solid learning and in the first 117 pages several dead horses are flogged expertly. It is rightly emphasized that Clement was not Eclectic and that in his conception of Greek philosophy, as in so much else, he is dependent upon Philo. Then after some careful scholarship and many acute observations Dr Lilla commits himself to two conclusions which are as inadmissible as any of the theories that he has discarded. It is not tenable to assert that 'Clement gives a "Christian" solution to Neoplatonist problems'. Clement was a Middle Platonist not a Neoplatonist and between him and Plotinus lay the chasm of the third century transition. It is fundamentally anachronistic

to state that 'he wanted to transform his religious faith into a monumental philosophical system to which he allotted the task of reflecting the absolute truth'. Harnack could think in such categories but not a writer of late antiquity. Clement's Hellenism has so often been emphasized that it is easy to ignore the essential Jewish elements in his thought. His doctrine on the ascent of the soul has close parallels in Jewish apocalypses and perhaps the ultimate source of his Gnosticism lay in a union between Philo and the books of Wisdom. Clement was still a Judaeo-Christian though an Alexandrian one.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

MUDRA, by Chögyam Trungpa. *Shambala*, 1972. 105 pp. £1.75.

This latest work by the distinguished Tibetan refugee leader and meditation teacher, Chögyam Trungpa, is delightfully and significantly unclassifiable. On the one hand, it looks like (and *is*) a typical expensive 'arty' book, complete with chaste oriental plate in pale blue, and two pages of exquisite Tibetan script (which, actually, I quite fell in love with at first sight, possibly for some perfectly straightforward occult reason); on the other hand, it contains good translations of very high-quality Tibetan spiritual writings (which are termed 'self-secret', because they will only disclose their message to readers who are ready for it—and surely this is the only legitimate sense in which we should talk of an 'esoteric' tradition; the mumbo-jumbo of most so-called 'esoteric' schools is plain nonsense, hiding behind a cultic and élitist *disciplina arcana*). There are original works by Trungpa, written in a fresh and intensely personal idiom; yet there is a strong sense of tradition and orthodoxy, and the 'Glossary of Terms' is the best I have ever seen, giving excellent explanations of the significance of important Buddhist terms. As one might expect, there are searingly beautiful eulogies of solitude and total—and literal—detachment. But there are also passionate love poems.

In fact, the book exemplifies what it teaches: that detachment beyond detachment, which leads to the spontaneity of those born of the Spirit 'blowing where it wills, and you know

neither where it is coming from nor where it is going to'. Underneath the exotic figure of the oriental guru, full of occult lore and preternatural powers (what everyone expects from a Tibetan Master), there emerges the unexpected, but absolutely right, figure of the little child (for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven). The book clearly reflects the author's own rather extraordinary career; but it also testifies to (as well as articulating) a serious and important spiritual doctrine—as taught in the famous 'Oxherding' pictures, reproduced here from Paul Reps' *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Bones*, though with a new, original, text to accompany them. The saint gets beyond the dualism of action and contemplation, discipline and autonomy, detachment and involvement, nirvana and samsara. He simply is what he is.

And for those with ears to hear it, this is an essential doctrine in the spirituality of all religions and peoples. As St Gregory Palamas taught, it is only the spiritual man who can really enjoy bodily delights; and St Paul's 'whatever you do' (Colossians 3, 17) is to be taken seriously. *Mudra* teaches and manifests this same doctrine in a beautiful and original way, against a background of rigorous Buddhist training and orthodoxy.

The opening prayer, 'Homage to the Guru of Inner Awareness', is quite lovely. It is altogether a remarkable book.

SIMON TUGWELL, O.P.