

Reviews

PSALM 23: AN ANTHOLOGY, compiled by K. H. Strange and R. G. E. Sandbach, *St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1978. pp. 116 £2.45*

Quite a nice little bedside book for devout visitors. It is an expanded edition of a collection of versions of Psalms 22/23, 'The Lord is my shepherd', first published in 1969. There is the Hebrew text at the beginning, with a literal translation, the Latin Vulgate, wrongly attributed to St Jerome in the introduction, and a large number of English and Scotch, versions, some of them translations from Japanese, American Indian and so on, and one of them, more incomprehensible even than the original American Indian or Japanese would have been, in Papuan pidgin.

That's about it. It is a pity that in writing their introduction the compilers did not seek some professional advice, as they make a number of little mistakes that they need not have made. I have already referred to one. A trifling matter, no doubt, that Jerome did not write the Vulgate version of the psalms; but had the com-

pliers been informed of why his translation from the *Psalterium juxta Hebraeos* was *not* accepted as part of the common Latin Bible, along with his translations of the rest of the Old Testament, it would have added an interesting little point to their introduction. It was because the people were so familiar with the existing translation from the Greek, not directly from the Hebrew, that they refused to accept a new and no doubt better one. The same kind of quasi-popular idolatry that today keeps the old prayer book psalter going in Anglican Churches, though it is in fact, in its turn, not a translation from the Hebrew, but from the Vulgate – and looked at quite dispassionately (which of course can scarcely be done by bred-in-the-bone Anglicans) not a particularly good translation at that.

EDMUND HILL O. P.

HEAVEN IN ORDINARIE by Dermot O'Donoghue. *T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh pp. xx + 201 £5.95*

Before the publication of this book most of Fr O'Donoghue's work had appeared in periodicals which are not much read in this country. But his article in *The Irish Theological Quarterly* for April 1977, 'Vision and System', should have attracted attention. It is published here along with sixteen other articles, five of which have not appeared before. 'Vision and System' reveals a vigorous writer who, like his heroine Julian of Norwich, must be forgiven for occasional extravagances. He makes no bones about Julian's 'double vision', her acceptance of the Church's teaching and her assurance that 'the Great Deed by which God makes all things well will bring

every human being at last to God's love'; he is content to say about this difficulty that Julian is speaking not of a general wiping-out of debts but of 'a very long and hard road, in which the sinner has a terrible price to pay'. What does concern him is the danger of obscurantist persecution 'implicit in any theology of the revealed word which is not constantly purified by direct experience of God as Lover'. That is a note too seldom heard.

The prospective reader must be warned that some of these articles are of the retreat-conference kind and that there are some themes to which objection may be taken, in particular that there is 'infinite sorrow'

in God, that 'the infra-human has all the characteristics of the human embryonically', and that there is something called 'infinity-thinking' in which 'the logic based on the Principle of Non-Contradiction is itself secondary and derivative'. One may endorse the view that freedom and necessity coincide in God, but anything like a doctrine of 'two truths' must surely be avoided. There is much talk about 'being' and 'nothingness' which seems unconvincing. Proper names abound, but there is no index. There are many misprints. Yet there is compensation for these drawbacks. The chapter on loneliness is impressive, and the references to poets and other artists (a feature of the book) are effective. The chapter entitled 'The Jonas Experience', on Therese of Lisieux, is a fine study of the Saint's ordeal and final victory; that on 'the dynamism of tradition' urges us persuasively to 'assimilate the past creatively'. The spirit of the book may be suggested by quoting a paragraph from the chapter on playfulness:

Frivolity as such is negative and destructive and has to give way to seriousness as reality breaks in. It is the enemy of seriousness or else the servant of seriousness. Playfulness, on the other hand, is the companion of seriousness. Neither can function without the other. Without seriousness playfulness descends into frivolity; without playfulness seriousness imprisons and deadens the spirit. So it is that it is only the serious man who can be truly playful and only the playful man who can be really serious, for the two qualities support and reinforce one another. Together they reveal our basic attitude to the challenge of reality.

The response to reality is the underlying theme throughout. However puzzled one may be at times by Fr O'Donoghue's metaphysics, this comes powerfully across – at least to a sympathetic reader.

ILLTYD TRETHOWAN

GURUS, ASHRAMS AND CHRISTIANS by Vandana. *D.L.T.* 1978. pp. xi + 129 £3.10.

RETURN TO THE CENTRE by Bede Griffiths. *Collins.* 1978 pp. 154 95p

UNSEEN WARFARE, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H Palmer. *Mowbrays.* 1978. pp. 280 £3.25.

Sister Vandana is a Sacred Heart nun who has spent most of the past ten years exploring Indian traditions of spirituality and in particular trying to further the establishment of Christian ashrams. She has herself been in charge of one such ashram. In the first part of this book she outlines her own understanding of what an ashram is, laying great stress on the spiritual influence of the guru. The second half of the book describes various ashrams throughout India, both Hindu and Christian, which she has visited. Occasionally she is mildly critical, but on the whole it is an enthusiastic record. At times she seems a little too keen to admire things Indian at the expense of things western, rather oversimplifying the contrast—using the same ploy as that once favoured by exponents of "Hebrew thought". And I suspect that she has been unduly influenced by only one kind of Hinduism, neo-Vedanta,

which is not as purely and typically Indian and unwestern as some people would have us believe. She does not follow Panikkar in his attempt to broaden the Indian basis for Christian interpretation of Hinduism. In particular she does not seem to allow for the more cultic manifestations of Indian religion, There is, perhaps, a slight danger that Indian Christians will seek to develop indigenous styles on the basis of a kind of Hinduism which is, in part, the product of European influence. Even worse, they could fall a victim to the rather naive spiritualism of western countercultures, which is not necessarily going to help anyone to be truly spiritual. But then India has a long tradition of spirituality, and ought to be able to weed out the phony gurus. If those whom Sr Vandana writes about are half as good as she describes them to be, religious life in India must be in quite a healthy condition. Her