

on the Schema of Monks of Nicodemus Hagiorites, translated in Robinson's *Monasticism in the Orthodox Churches* (London, 1916; pages 129-140).

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LES PARADOXES DU BOUDDHISME. By Fr Taymans d'Eypernon, S.J. (L'Édition Universelle, Bruxelles; n.p.)

Buddhism in the last half-century has taken on a new lease of life in the countries of its adoption. In Ceylon for example, the Catholic missionaries assert that apart from a miracle the conversion of the island to the Christian faith has become a remote dream. The reasons for this religious revival are extrinsically: the rise of nationalism and the growing disgust of western materialism; intrinsically: the indeterminate nature of Buddhist doctrine which makes it easily adaptable to modern scientific, social and religious theories. As an instance of this some monks affirm that the historic Buddha was the first communist and that if an anti-religious campaign is conducted in the name of communism, Buddhism must be excluded. To this doctrinal suppleness another cause of popularity must be added: the paradoxes which appear on every avenue of approach to Buddhist wisdom and which supply the mystery which those seeking spirits (and among them many westerners) who fight shy of clear ideas, find so attractive.

Fr Taymans d'Eypernon in his penetrating and infectiously sympathetic study of Buddhism sets out to analyse and disentangle these paradoxes in their historical, doctrinal and religious aspects. The result is a remarkably comprehensive survey of his subject based on real scholarship, but never pedantic, and eminently readable to anyone interested in the teaching of Sakyamuni and its later development. The wonder is that he has covered such a vast field so intelligibly in a bare three hundred pages and it is sincerely to be hoped that an English translation will eventually be available. Father Taymans d'Eypernon is indeed carrying on the noble tradition of his society in India and greater India which has, from the days of St Francis Xavier, made so many valuable contributions to oriental studies. One has only to remember the work of such men as Fr Roberto da Nobile of Madura, and in our own day of Fr Pierre Johanns of Calcutta, to appreciate the depth of scholarship and understanding which the Jesuits have brought to the study of the profoundly religious Indian mind.

The introductory section of the book under review consists of an exposition of the Buddhist scriptures: the early Pali canon of the southern school (the Hinayana or lesser vehicle), and some of the later Sanskrit writings of the northern school (the Mahayana or Northern Vehicle), the Pali tongue bearing somewhat the same relationship to Sanskrit as Italian does to Latin. This is followed by a moving account of the life of Prince Siddhartha, the historic

Buddha (and in spite of the inevitable legends surrounding his birth scholars today agree that all the evidence goes to show that he was certainly a historic character). This Indian prince, who was destined to influence for good such a large section of his fellow beings, was born in the obscure Nepalese town of Kapilavastu in the sixth century B.C. Destined to inherit his father's little kingdom, he led a life of luxury and ease until, fulfilling a prophecy, he made the great renunciation after seeing successively an old man, a sick man and a corpse which brought to his mind the inescapable fact of human suffering, and then finally the sight of a wandering ascetic filled him with a desire for the religious life. After seven years, during which time he decided to adopt a middle way between sensible pleasure and the extreme mortifications of the Hindu gurus, he attained enlightenment and preached his famous first sermon at Benares on the four noble truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the road which leads to the cessation of suffering, the noble eightfold path: right seeing, speaking, thinking, conduct, way of life, effort, recollection, contemplation. This sermon forms the doctrinal basis of both the northern and southern schools and of the numerous sects which grew out of them.

Briefly the Buddha (i.e. the Blessed One) maintained that salvation came by works and not by faith: from below and not from above; that it is in no sense a privilege but a *conquest* won by man's entirely personal effort to practise the virtues. The idea of grace, of any sort of supernatural gift from above, is totally absent from Hinayana literature. And this is not surprising as the Buddha denied the existence of a creator God such as the Hindus of his time acknowledged in the person of Brahma. And here we come up at once against one of the principal paradoxes of Buddhism: how, in the face of this apparent atheism, can one account for the fact that the mass of the faithful expects from the Buddha all that the Christian hopes from God? Monier Williams traces in a precise manner the evolution of Buddhist thought from the primitive rationalism of the little vehicle to the deification of the Buddha in the great vehicle. Fr Taymans d'Eyperson regards this simplification of the problem as artificial. Having lived in Ceylon, where the little vehicle flourishes, he has himself seen the faithful prostrate themselves before images of the Buddha; he has watched them pray with every sign of devotion and intense interior life; and his observations have led him to the following conclusion: as soon as Buddhism offered a doctrine of salvation to all men and gave an answer to what lies beyond the cycle of rebirth, even though under the appearance of a philosophical system, Buddhism became a religion in spite of itself. The Buddha was not a saviour because he was God: he became God in popular thought because he was a saviour. This may explain why the monks of the little vehicle who

actually deny the divinity of Buddha, can nevertheless kneel before his image because they venerate the *liberating power* which emanates from him. Is it possible that this vague belief may sooner or later find concrete expression in the materialisation of the object of faith and hope?

Father Taymans d'Eypernon examines many other apparent paradoxes, notably that of Nirvana, which there is unfortunately no space to go into here; but mention must be made of the absorbing section on the Buddhist interior life in which he gives a detailed analysis of the four degrees of contemplation: mystical states to which the saint must attain *by his own natural powers of concentration*, that he may forge for himself his liberation from samsara, the cycle of rebirth. Fr Taymans d'Eypernon maintains that the ecstatic description of these states could only be given by people who had actual experience of them and he asks whether it is possible to admit of a state of purely natural ecstasy. Having closely examined the nature of Buddhist contemplation he thinks that it is possible: that a supernatural force plays no part in it but that a man can and does give himself these states of psychological rapture by his own efforts in achieving stability of thought and unity of will. This synthesis in fact enables him to acquire a philosophic intuitive contemplation as opposed to a gracious contemplation depending primarily on the activity of God.

The Buddha, who arrived at creating a kind of superman without any help from above, would surely have endorsed these views himself. Some Catholic theologians on the other hand would argue that a good Buddhist, who led a life of devotion to the Truth as he knew it, and reached a state of contemplation by the methods set down in his sacred books and taught him by his spiritual director, was receiving Christian grace in spite of himself, and was automatically incorporated into the Mystical Body without knowing anything of such a doctrine.

In conclusion Fr Taymans d'Eypernon insists that in missionary work *contact with the other man's method of thought* must be established before everything. Sympathy with his point of view is more important than a zealous plan of methodical evangelisation. He recalls the case of a devout missionary who planned a systematic method of attack to deal with Buddhists of the lesser vehicle. The primary fact to establish, he argued, is that of the existence of God. So he set to and diligently revised the five ways of St Thomas and, armed to the teeth, he entered into the campaign. But his carefully laid plan collapsed at the outset when he realised that to a Buddhist the idea of causality is strictly empirical and that he will not go back farther than the first egg.

Points of contact between Buddhism and Christianity are numerous and it is these which the missionary must search out and use. Above all there is the sense of sin. Outside of Christianity there

is no other religion which has insisted so much on the fact of sin and on the development of the moral virtues to counteract it. It imposes on its disciples not only the whole of the natural law, but the founder repeatedly extols and insists on the virtues of chastity and humility. Pride is one of the three capital sins which render a person completely incapable of starting out on the road of salvation. And to show that humility among the Buddhists is not merely a theoretical ideal Fr Taymans d'Eypernon recalls one of the many intimate conversations he had with different monks. When asked what his desires actually were this particular monk replied:

'I would like to be able to pass a day without having anything to reproach myself with by the evening.'

'And after this life you hope for Nirvana?'

'Oh, Nirvana is not yet for me. I still have many existences to pass through, and then, perhaps?'

M. PENMAN

HOW TO WALK WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. By Dr James, O.F.M.Cap. (The Mercier Press; 9d.)

A helpful little book full of sound theology. It would perhaps be even more useful if it contained practical directions on how to recognise the inspirations of this interior guide.

S. M. C.

ANGELS COME TO MASS. By Sr Mary Ansgar, O.P. (Bloomsbury Publishing Co.; 2s.)

May God bless and reward Sr M. Ansgar for this beautiful Mass book for children. It is certainly the best ever yet published, and will be much appreciated by all who have to teach small boys and girls about the Holy Mass.

S. M. V.

THE SAINT OF BETHARRAM, St Michael Garicots. By P. E. Collier, S.C.J., B.A. (Sacred Heart College, Droitwich; 2s. 6d.)

Hats off to the devoted and unappreciated grandmothers! It was his grandmother in the eighties who discovered a vocation in St Michael Garicots and whose energy and influence arranged for his education. Owing, under God, to her, this poor shepherd boy became a priest and the founder of an ecclesiastical 'flying corps'.

He 'has seen Bishops weep' and so his priests 'should be at the disposal of their Bishop to fulfil his every desire . . . the mark of the Betharramites was to be their readiness to undertake work which others did not want.'

It is comforting to read of these zealous priests with their excellent schools and vigorous missions extending largely in S. America and even to China.

Missionaries, nuns and especially lay-brothers will all find St Michael Garicots, the farmer's son, a ready and understanding patron.