

auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews) by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in London in 1962 (ed. Gould and Esh, R.K.P. 1964) which really does consider what is happening in Jewish communities in this country.

There are a number of errors which remain in spite of the attached list of errata; and the layout of the book which attaches brief translations into English after each contribution, no matter how short, is irritating.

JOAN BROTHERS

BUDDHISM; THE RELIGION OF ANALYSIS. By Nolan Pliny Jacobson. (*George Allen & Unwin*. 25s)

A BENEDICTINE ASHRAM. By Abbé J. Monchanin S.A.M. & Dom Henri Le Saux OSB (*Times Press*, Douglas. 21s.)

It is perhaps no accident that the first of these books should have come out of America, that land above all others wherein men have made a society utterly dominated by the passion to spend one's life in producing or serving material needs, while failing to grasp the destructive power of this same passion. The Buddhist East, so our author tells us, has never fallen into that particular trap; hence perhaps its neglect of what we should call necessary social services.

Whether those who have spent a lifetime in the East would agree with this diagnosis there is little doubt that Mr Jacobson has put his finger on the root causes of much of our own malaise. His picture of modern man, rootless under the *depersonalising* pressures of our society, 'weak, defensive, under-developed and falsified' describes accurately enough the denizens of our own vast sprawling conurbations. In them, as indeed in ourselves the individual has the feeling that 'he is swallowed up in the quest for gratifications that have been determined *for* rather than *by* him'; that he is, in fact, the unwitting slave of a direction given to life by events which he is powerless to understand, much less to control. Hence the cult of the tranquilliser, which is specifically designed 'to help us tolerate good-naturedly the poverty of our stunted lives.'

What in fact do we do? Faced with this indeterminate emptiness at the centre of our being, refusing to accept it into consciousness, we take refuge in building up a sort of pseudo-Self, which soon, in its turn, becomes an intolerable burden because 'the pseudo-Self which now hides us from the truths must be protected and defended at all costs.'

From all this, Buddhism, 'which is not a teaching at all, but a technique for dealing with the anxiety-producing tensions of life' is here offered to Western man as the cure. And if the cure be one from which we instinctively shrink

away, then we shall certainly be told that it is this very shrinking (or rather the 'craving' from which it arises) *that is itself* the cause of our frustrations.

For the cure lies in the doctrine of *Anatta*, or the 'Not-Self'. This, according to Mr Jacobson, was the Buddha's great discovery, his priceless legacy to mankind. 'There is no thinker but the thoughts, no perceiver but the perception, no craver but the craving.' The severe conclusion that there is suffering but none who suffer is explicitly drawn. All this has to be gradually absorbed into the mind and realised; and the technique of Meditation (not to be confused with that discursive Meditation recommended to Christians) is the way of realisation. But full realisation is at the same time – release; release into Nirvana.

At this point a question may be put as to whether Mr Jacobson has correctly interpreted Gotama, or whether he may not, in fact, be to Buddhism something of what 'honest-to-god-dery' is trying to be to Christianity. There is considerable discussion at the end as to whether a 'self' may not after all persist; and also as to whether 'Nibbana' – as it is called on some pages – can be considered to have any ontological reality. More than one view is presented by Buddhists, some the exact opposite of the author's though it is perhaps significant that wherever a persisting 'self' is allowed for, we are then brought back to the old Eastern mesh of Karma and Reincarnation (from the toils of which it was the Buddha's very claim to have discovered release).

All this sounds somewhat bleak, to say the least of it, even to the post-Christian Western mind; yet we cannot dismiss it out of hand. Not only must the spiritual tradition of centuries be respected; not only is the analysis of our own condition so acute; there is a very large area of both thought and experience which does run

exactly parallel to the deepest levels of Christian thought. If, for instance, Gotama concluded that human nature itself is the cause of its own greatest *dis-ease*, he had surely discovered something which is just as truly, but much more hopefully, explained by the Christian doctrine of Original Sin.

But there is much more. As Dom Aelred Graham has reminded us, in *Zen Catholicism*, the whole idea of getting behind the aggressive, grasping 'ego-self' to the deeper reality within, is profoundly Christian. Our trouble *does* lie in our blowing up of this possessive self-centredness; what has to be 'blown out' is 'the flame of personal desire; wishes are gone for ever. Nibbana is released from the bondage to things.' Quotation after quotation could be made which needs only the slightest of twists to be understood in a thoroughly Christian sense.

'Buddha contends that the self is a false centre around which to organise life.' So certainly did Jesus, Who was also certain that 'salvation . . . means disengagement from ego-centred drives.' 'To expand the consciousness away from individuality means spiritual growth' sounds like a more metaphysically phrased version of Our Lord's remarks about saving one's life and losing it. Again, we are told that Buddha was convinced that the highest reality dwells deep within ourselves, that we have to transform our consciousness into a receptacle for such reality by overcoming 'the individual limitations of our consciousness'. This is indeed very close to mystical Christianity, except that it is described as if it were a purely automatic process.

At the same time there is a sharp contrast, which can best be seen if we compare the ideas which lie behind the Catholic Cult of the Sacred Heart with Mr Nolan's statement, on the very last page, that; 'The Buddha's compassion is without attachment; the anxieties of others . . . are not felt as if they were one's own.'

Yet once we accept the Christian doctrines of God and of Creation, once we allow that the 'Other' is *somehow personal*, and our release the result of a *personal* encounter, the whole thing can be transformed. The same things will be said, the same warnings uttered, but they will point now in an opposite direction – away from the 'Not-Self' to 'the Christ within'.

It may be that there are going to be many in our Western society who, having discarded that childish image which is all they know of Christianity, will seek release from the burden of personality in Zen or Buddhism. A book like this could be very useful to Christians, both in

showing what we may well find ourselves up against, and also in giving us some lines for dealing with the situation.

It can also serve as a salutary reminder of how utterly different the East is from the West in its approach to religion. Even if Christian missionaries do not, as Mr Nolan says of most Westerners, 'persist in believing that people who differ from them are but half-formed versions of themselves', yet the Christianity of modern times has always presented itself to the East in completely Westernised clothing. 'We tried to make the East pass through a foreign hierarchy and the Latin language . . . and the East did not pass' (Mgr Constantini, first Apostolic Delegate in China) is true not only of Roman Catholicism. Yet, amongst both Catholics and others, there has always been the realisation that Christianity, being itself as much Indian as it is Greek, or Roman, or Jew, must be capable of growing in an entirely Indian soil, and of taking into itself an outlook, spirituality, and a practical expression that are *completely Indian*.

The most typical expression of Indian spirituality is the monk, the wandering ascetic. If, then, there could be Christian monks who could make themselves *completely indistinguishable outwardly* from the Hindu *sannyasin*, two things might be expected to happen. The people of India, with their age-old reverence for the 'holymen' might be much more prepared to listen. And the monks themselves, by absorbing the Indian spiritual tradition into their own community life, might be able to pass this on to the Church at large.

There has been more than one attempt in this direction (one ought not to forget the Anglican *ashram* of *Christa Seva Sangha* of the early 'twenties), and the second book gives an account of the ideals and the *founding of one of them*. It is fascinating to see how the Christian idea of the Contemplative Vocation can merge into an altogether Indian setting; and challenging to see the greater demands that must be made in a land where 'boots, hats, trousers, fork and spoon' are luxuries, not necessities.

This is a reprint of a book issued originally in 1951; there is some execrable English in one or two places; the use of heavy type instead of italics is irritating; and the interesting photographs unfortunately lack any captions.

Being fifteen years old, and closing with the official setting up of the *ashram*, it cannot tell us the very thing we most want to know – how the experiment has worked out in practice. One has been told, for instance, that Dom Bede

Griffith's somewhat similar Community found that it was only when it was transplanted to Kerala, where Catholics and other Christians already exist in sizeable numbers, that it could flourish. In other words, the Religious Commun-

ity needed to be *geographically* inside the larger Community of the Church.

But as a venture for God, an attempt to make Catholicism really Catholic, it is full of inspiration and interest.

WILLIAM P. WYLIE

VITAL WORDS OF THE BIBLE, by J. M. Furness. *Lutterworth Press*. 13s. 6d.

CONCISE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE, ed. by Stephen Neill, John Goodwin, Arthur Dowle. (*World Christian Books*). 2 vols. *United Soc. for Christian Literature (Lutterworth Press)*. 17s.

The Catholic biblical *aggiornamento*, after a century of stop-go and of cold feet in high places, has at last acquired a momentum that should ensure its continuance. The problem now is to communicate its insights to the man in the pew and the man in the presbytery, who in England at least seem to know little more about the movement than the Ephesian elders did about the Holy Spirit. The best hope lies perhaps in the proliferation of Bible study groups, as already fostered with success by some few Catholic organisations. There is a great need, felt by such groups as I have encountered, for more works of *haute vulgarisation*, and any nourishing pabulum that publishers have to offer the hungry sheep, such as the Jerusalem Bible, with its excellent introductions and notes, and the word-books, of which the most remarkable instances to date are perhaps the Kittel word-books and X. Léon-Dufour's *Vocabulaire de théologie biblique*, 1962, deserves a warm welcome. Unhappily the two works under review are remarkable chiefly for their deficiency in vitamins.

The contents of Mr Furness' little book first appeared in article form in the journal *Advance* as a guide for local preachers. The significance of fifty-one Greek words common in the NT, from *agapan* to *zoe*, is explained, and their OT Hebrew counterparts indicated. It is surprising to find that *soma* (body) is not included in the list, and that the articles on *sarx* (flesh) and *pneuma* (spirit) do not attempt an adequate explanation of human nature as understood by the NT writers (the reading of the NT is, notoriously, often vitiated for the beginner by the importation into the text of preconceptions based on the modern usage of these terms). Scant attention is also paid to the co-existence of

different literary traditions and outlooks in both Testaments; I hope I do not do him an injustice in saying that Mr Furness seems to think in terms of the old Evangelical slogan 'The Bible Says . . .' The fact is that the Bible does not, on many, many issues have one, straight-forward, take-it-or-leave-it line; often the real message of the Bible is to be divined through studying the tension between various divergent positions (priestly and prophetic, synoptic and Johannine, Pauline and Jacobean, and so on). One could wish also that Mr Furness had taken more pains to show how the OT background constantly controls the meaning of NT words, clinging to them on all sides and giving them a theological quality which in many cases just cannot be defined without reference to the OT (take as an example the way OT *kabod*-theology pervades the Johannine idea of *glory*).

The *Concise Dictionary of the Bible* casts its net much more widely over key Bible themes. That is the trouble. It discourses very informatively on how parchment was made, and glass, and bricks; it gives excellent potted biographies of OT personages; unlikely headings, such as 'Cucumber', prove – as, to one's delight, is often the way with dictionaries – a mine of useful knowledge (I was always puzzled as a child by Isaiah's cucumber garden); unfortunately, though, the articles on Bible themes are, though usually good as far as they go, so brief as to be of little use. The editors have fallen between two stools: either they should have omitted theological terms, or they should have given them the more extended treatment that their greater importance than cabbages and kings demands.

BERNARD ROBINSON

JUDAISM, by Stuart E. Rosenberg. (*Deus Books*). *Paulist Press*, New Jersey. \$0.95.

This little book can be warmly commended to the attention of anyone who is looking for a

simple exposé of what it means to be a traditional Jew. Rabbi Rosenberg's method is to give a very