

New Books

Reviewed by J. C. Cooper

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Crisis in Consciousness, by Robert Powell (James Clarke, 25s.), may be regarded as a development of the author's *Zen and Reality* the main theme of which was the importance of self-knowledge; now he continues with the need not only of self-knowledge but also for self-changing. He rightly maintains that the confusion and turmoil in which the world finds itself today is only a reflection of the same conditions in the minds of individuals and that it is useless to try to change external conditions without first changing the inner man since "eventually the inner will always overcome the outer", and that from confused minds only confusion can emerge. The book includes lectures given to the London and Cambridge Buddhist Societies and articles published in *France-Asie* and *Darshana International*.

Two books have appeared recently having the same Ramakrishna Order, non-dualistic Vedanta background. The larger work is *Religion in Practice*, by Swami Prabhavananda (Allen and Unwin, 40s.), and is a series of twenty-five lectures, given to the Vedanta Society of South California, on the practical application of religion, and there is also a section of questions and answers appended. The teaching is that man is fundamentally spirit, the Self, and that only in this realm will he solve his personal and intellectual problems and find the Kingdom of God within. Body and Mind must be used in so far as they serve to help the realization of the spirit. Religion must be practical since "you cannot appease your own hunger if somebody else eats for you". Nor, as history has demonstrated, can any world Utopia be established by material progress. "The ideal, the end of life, is the unitive knowledge of Godhead". The second book, *Man in Search of Immortality*, by Swami Nikhilananda (Allen and Unwin, 25s.) is a smaller volume and consists of five articles on the subject of the immortality of the soul. The nature of the soul, "The Unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval", and its immortality, is established from the authority of the Upanishads and the experiences of the sages and mystics. This immortality is no mere continued existence in time, but complete liberation from desire and illusion.

As Archie J. Bahm says in *The World's Living Religions* (Dell, paper-back, 75e.) there is a steady stream of books on Comparative Religion and he rightly refers to the "uneven quality in the fairness with which religious proponents deal with this problem of comparing religions". He is, therefore, careful to avoid sectarian bias in his own work and, while admitting the Christian and Western influences of his background, is successful in approaching other religions with sympathetic understanding. While realizing the weakness of any attempt to develop a "world religion", the book emphasizes the inter-relatedness and the unifying elements in all the great traditions. One would, however, query the validity of including Humanism as a world religion.

Another paper-back on the same subject is *The Meaning and End of Religion*, by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (Mentor, 75e.). Dr. Smith, a well-known Professor of

Comparative Religion, approaches the world religions from a different point of view, examining the meaning that each religion has for the individual committed to that particular faith in the present situation. He maintains that no founder of a great religion ever intended to found a religion, except in "the special case of Islam", to which he devotes a long section. His final conclusion is that the term "religion" should be abandoned and what is now called religion should be "conceived in terms of two factors, different in kind, both dynamic: an historical "cumulative tradition", and the personal faith of men and women". Written from a non-traditional Christian viewpoint there is little understanding of the non-theistic religions.

In *Movement and Emptiness* (Stuart and Watkins, 15s.), L. C. Beckett, having an avowedly scientific turn of mind, wanders in the fields of astrophysics and finds that the path leads away from material concepts to arrive at the point of view of the Lankavatara Sutra: "Analyzed down to atoms there is indeed no form to be discriminated as such; what can be established is the truth of Mind-only". The title of the book is based on the Yin-Yang duality of the manifest world, here defining the Yin and the Yang as "movement and emptiness".

Mouni Sadhu (a Westerner) has written a book called *Meditation* (Allen and Unwin, 40s.). Possibly *Clichés* would be a better title, as the word seems to occupy the central position. The first definition of "clichés" makes them differ little from archetypes, or Plato's Ideas, but later one finds that "a genuine occultist" creates "desirable and evolutionary clichés". It seems a pity that the wisdom of Ramana Marharshi should be quoted and confused with such aberrations. And how slipshod to have collections of words. That do not form a sentence!

Two books of limited appeal, the one to Presbyterians, the other to O. T. students, are *The English Presbyterians*, by C. G. Bolam, J. Goring, H. L. Short and R. Thomas (Allen and Unwin, 50s.) and *The Church Unbound* (J. B. Lippincott, \$4.95) by Norman K. Gottwald. The former traces the history of English Presbyterianism from its beginnings in Reformation Puritanism to its present day merging into Unitarianism with its anti-Trinitarianism, its mistrust of evangelical revivalism and its attempt to reconcile the new scientific outlook with religious faith. For his book Professor Gottwald uses as a subtitle "A Human Church in a Human World" and makes a study of the relationship between the church (Israel) and culture (the nation) in ancient Israel, and expands this to include modern secular and economic problems, urging the Jewish and Christian Churches to play a vital part in influencing secular culture.

Originally privately printed, in 1925, C. G. Jung's *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* has now been published by Stuart and Watkins at 30s. It is stated that these seven sermons to the dead were written at a time when Jung was subject to hauntings and visions and, in his own words, the sermons "began to flow out" of him and were written in three evenings, after which the phenomena ceased. In the thirty-four pages of the book the style is strange, archaic, Gnostic and aphoristic. The "sermons" deal with the Pleroma, the deity Abraxas, Eros and the Tree of Life, the duality of the Mater Coelestis and Phallos and, finally, of man as creator and destroyer of his own world.

Being-in-the-World is a paper-back edition (Harper Torchbooks, \$2.95) running to some 360 pages of selected papers from the works of Ludwig Binswanger on existential

psychoanalysis with a Freudian background, and proceeding to, and expanding on, the existentialism of Heidegger. The second half of the book deals with schizophrenia and the case of Lola Voss.

Two pocket paper-back editions have been published by Routledge and Kegan Paul: an abridged *Bible of the World*, at 6s., and *The Song Celestial*, the Bhagavad-Gita, at 5s., the latter a translation from the Sanskrit, by Edwin Arnold. These are both within, and should be in, the pocket of everyone.