

'religion of the people' and against the liberalism of Cavour and the 'free Church in the free State', and he shows that between the first and the last some accommodation was always possible, given more favourable circumstances and perhaps a little more straightforwardness on the part of the Piedmontese ('If we were doing for ourselves what we are doing for Italy, we should be called great scoundrels'), but that between Pius the pope and Mazzini the high priest of a new religion, no reconciliation could ever have been achieved.

Mr Hales' book is not only important; it is fair-minded. It is fair, for example, to Cardinal Antonelli: he acquits him of having unwashed ears but not of having doubtful morals, and he shows, at the same time, why a man of Pius's integrity could yet employ so dubious an agent.

Above all the figure of the pope himself comes through with convincing clarity, in his shortcomings and in his greatness—for greatness he had. Certainly not an intellectual, hardly a statesman, he was at all times and in all places a true man of God, with what the man of God sometimes lacks—a saving sense of humour: witness the story told by Mr Hales of the pope writing at the foot of a particularly atrocious picture of himself which had been presented for his autograph the words of the Gospel, 'It is I: be not afraid'.

To those who have been brought up on the cartoons of Tenniel and the echoes of the polemics of 'Janus', the portrait of Pius IX which Mr Hales paints will come as a surprise and, it is hoped, as a correction, for the pope who emerges from these pages is not the medieval obscurantist of that legend, with the thirst for spiritual domination: he is the ruler who, among all the rulers of the nineteenth century, saw furthest into the future.

WILLIAM PRICE, O.S.B.

MYTH AND RITUAL IN CHRISTIANITY. By Alan W. Watts. (Thames and Hudson; 25s.)

FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS. An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford. By R. C. Zaehner. (Geoffrey Cumberlege; Clarendon Press; 2s. 6d.)

SACRED BOOKS OF THE WORLD. An Anthology. By A. C. Bouquet. (Pelican Books; 3s. 6d.)

The comparison of religions has become a task of widespread interest and considerable urgency, but the problem of the method to be adopted is seldom squarely faced. All comparative studies involve a preselection of the material to be compared and the postulation of a standard of comparison. Whether the comparison itself yields more 'likenesses' than 'unlikenesses' will depend on nothing so much as this

preliminary selection which will itself, consciously or unconsciously, be guided by some standard. The student of comparative religion, unlike the student of comparative anatomy or comparative philology, is confronted with the additional problem that he deals, not merely with fixed, measurable, objective facts, but with subjective beliefs, understanding of which differs widely from person to person within the same group, and even within the lifetime of one individual. Comparison of the utterances of a Hyde Park apologist with those of a Hindu sage, of a Hindu outcast with those of a profound theologian, can engender only confusion.

Professor Watts' principle of selection (which is also for him a principle of evaluation) is at least frankly stated, even if somewhat vague. It is the *philosophia perennis* whose discovery he attributes to Coomaraswamy; but interpreted evidently in the light of Aldous Huxley, René Guénon and the benign, indifferentist views of the swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission. According to this, all religious myths and rituals are imaginative presentations of this supposedly universal philosophy, and the Christian *mythos* and ritual are expounded accordingly. Professor Zaehner goes altogether too far when he just says of this *philosophia perennis* that 'it would be difficult to fall into more manifest error': the evidence of striking parallels between the accepted *philosophical* teachings of Christian and Oriental sages is altogether too overwhelming. But Professor Watts' method calmly ignores the evident fact that the very Christians, whose 'myth and ritual' he sets out to expound, would unanimously agree that, whatever *philosophia perennis* they may share, their religious beliefs and practices are not an allegorization of it, but something over and above it. It is hardly surprising that his method lands the author into difficulties so soon as anything distinctive of Christianity is touched upon; e.g. its dealing with the problem of evil. The difficulty is overcome by the simple method of attributing such inconveniences to the folly of theologians. It had been well had this volume of the 'Myth and Man' series followed the excellent example of its predecessors and confined itself to straightforward description of its subject-matter, and left criticism and 'assessment' to the reader. There are many chapters in which Professor Watts shows that he can fulfill this more modest function very imaginatively and instructively, if not always quite accurately. Known hitherto for his studies of Zen and oriental religions, his peculiar angle on Christianity is not without interest. But the 'equal familiarity with both Christian theology and oriental philosophy', attributed to him by his publishers, is very effectively dissembled.

It is somewhat of a relief to turn from Professor Watts' cheery syncretism to the prosaic pessimism of Professor Zaehner. The Spalding

Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics not only sees no true resemblances between Christianity and Eastern religions (unless in their more popular and unorthodox forms); he will not even allow them to be comparable. This startling conclusion he reaches inevitably—but seemingly unconsciously—by selecting incommensurables for comparison, or by isolating his specimens from their total context in their original settings and their wider implications. We are not however always sure how far he expects us to take his arguments seriously: we sometimes suspect that he is, in a way which engages our sympathy, out to shock the wishful thinking of the ‘all religions are the same’ school.

Dr Bouquet’s curious anthology could be read as an unsatisfying synthesis of the Watts-Zaehner thesis-antithesis. It is curious, because, brief as it necessarily is, it includes much material from sources which by no stretch of the imagination could be called Sacred Books, however edifying they may be. It is intended as a companion to his *Comparative Religion* in the same ‘Pelican’ series, and eventually illustrates the same theme of a ‘new’ Liberal Christianity as the embodiment of the ‘best’ in all religions. It concludes with a hymn to an unspecified ‘Love that fillest all’:

Thine is the mystic life great India craves;
Thine is the Parsee’s sin-destroying beam;
Thine is the Buddhist’s rest from tossing waves;
Thine is the empire of vast China’s dream.

The taste that can set this alongside extracts from authentic Sacred Books is questionable; but it may express genuine faith or bland sentimentality. The *science* of comparative religion, alas, has much work to do before it has much to sing about.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

ORIGEN’S TREATISE ON PRAYER. Translation and Notes with an account of the practice and doctrine of prayer from New Testament times to Origen. By Eric George Jay. (S.P.C.K.; 27s. 6d.)

Origen’s treatise *On Prayer* is one of the first Christian writings on this subject. Dr Jay’s concern in this book is to place it against the background of the traditional doctrine. In the first part of his long introduction he summarizes the teaching of Origen’s predecessors concerning prayer, in the second he gives a brief account of Origen’s theology and of his teaching about prayer in particular. He seeks to show that notwithstanding the suspicion which Origen has incurred in the eyes of later theologians, as an allegorical interpreter of Scripture and for his daring speculations, as a practical guide to Christian devotional life he stands in the central line of Christian tradition. Dr Jay