

THE UPANISHADS. By Swami Nikhilananda. (Phoenix House; 16s.)

Swami Nikhilananda ('Rev. Perfect Bliss') is a Hindu missionary, living in New York State. He is a member of the famous Ramakrishna Mission of Behur (Bengal), founded by Vivekananda four years after he had attended in 1893 the 'Parliament of Religions' in Chicago.

As the author tells us, he has written a treatise on *The Upanishads* of which the present book forms the first volume. On pp. 1-24 he discusses the Upanishads and their philosophy in general, and on pp. 25-106 their psychology ('the Brahman and the Upanishads'). There follow translations of four upanishads, forced by a commentary, based on that of Cankara: *Katha*, pp. 109-194; *Ica*, pp. 195-220; *Kena*, pp. 221-252; *Mundaka*, pp. 253-312. In a promised second volume the author is to treat of 'the ethics and practical spiritual disciplines' (*yoga*) of the upanishads. 'The incorporation of the relevant portions of Cankara's commentary' in the present volume, says the author, 'is one of the distinctive features of the present work.' It certainly is, but 'relevant' of course means 'selective'.

Cankara (born 788 A.D.) is certainly one of the greatest Hindu philosophers, and it is to his school (or sect) that the Ramakrishna Mission belongs. There is therefore necessarily a *parti pris*, which one is far from deprecating, if one holds, as does the reviewer, that an absolutely 'objective' approach to any intellectual problem is impossible: the very pursuit of truth being coloured by the pursuer's belief or disbelief in the attainability of truth by man. Swamiji has written, not as an Indologist, but as a devout Vedantic Hindu, and he therefore means to help 'the average Western reader interested in the sacred books of India', to evaluate the ontological worth of modern Vedantic Hinduism. The book is very well written and very fair—in particular one notes with relief the absence of that theosophical humbug (if I may be allowed to say so) which is the bane of so much that has been written for Occidental devotees of Neo-Hinduism.

In his preface the author states that 'the purely materialistic interpretation of man and the universe has been found as inadequate as the old sacramental interpretation given by the orthodox religions', and he therefore opines that 'a *rapprochement* of the two is what is required'. A Catholic cannot grant the premiss and will continue to believe that 'his own synthesis of *Creation* and *Uncreated Being* is more realistic and better grounded in reason than the Vedantist's'—to use the words of that excellent and sympathetic Catholic scholar, Fr Georges Dandoy, S.J. (p. 22 of his *L'ontologie du Vedanta*). But anyone desirous of understanding the modern Vedantic Hindu's interpretation of Ultimate Reality will find the present volume a great help. The 'historical and critical method' is deprecated by the author; but to understand at least

the form in which his whole ideology is expressed, it surely is also indispensable to know what the writings on which he bases himself—Upanishads and Cankara's *bhasya*, separated as they are in time by a millenium and a half—meant to contemporary thought, and how they, and Neo-Hinduism, have come to be what they are.

There are a few minor blemishes—e.g. the fanciful etymology of the word *upanishad* (p. 11), and the explanation that Buddhism disappeared from India, because of its accretion of 'grotesque religious ideas and ceremonies' of medieval invaders (p. 10), instead of the fact that Hinduism incorporated so much of Buddhism that there was nothing left for Buddhism to continue in India as a separate and rival religion. More important, there is no index—but perhaps this lack will be supplied, as it ought to be, for both volumes when the second one is published.

'The good is one thing, the pleasant another. . . . It goes well with him who of the two takes the good, but he who chooses the pleasant misses the end.' (*Katha Up.* I. 2. 1.)

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS

BISHOP HEDLEY'S RETREAT, 16th edition. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

It is with a sense of filial piety that I set going my typewriter to review this great book. My novice-master pressed it into my hand as a guide during the first retreat. As I re-read it, the atmosphere of that distant past returns: death, prayers of aspiration, the Divine Office, obedience, and all the fundamentals of the spiritual life. It is therefore difficult to write about this book without a sense of awe and also of gratitude.

But a sixteenth edition needs no praise nor indeed exposition, for we all know what it contains: the finest statement on the spiritual life made by any of the generation in which the fervent bishop lived. He represents the flower of a century of English Catholicism, the last flash of the counter-Reformation, with something besides. Perhaps it is this element that readers might wish to ponder.

At the time the book was written, before 1894, it must have been something of a novelty—I speak under correction—a retreat organised not precisely on the Ignatian lines. The stresses were somewhat different, less on the virtues and the struggle to acquire them; more on the liturgy and the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer is not organised in meditations but in aspirations. But the saints of his predilection were counter-Reformation saints, Saint Alphonsus and the Glories of Mary, Saint Francis of Sales and the Devout Life, Saint Ignatius himself. Strangely enough, though the book is thick with the thought of Fr Baker, he is not once quoted directly—unless I have missed it. It is