

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Dear Sir,

In almost every article on the Lay Contemplative that has appeared in *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* it appears to be assumed that the Lay Contemplative can follow his vocation no matter what his worldly employment may happen to be. This I feel is a mistake.

We need to distinguish between living a devout and holy life in the world and living as a Lay Contemplative in the world, and that difference turns upon this question of employment.

The man (or woman) who desires to live a devout life in the world will make that life fit round his (or her) daily life. They have other interests besides religion, although religion enters into and controls the other interests.

But the Lay Contemplative on the other hand has but one single interest—God. He is in fact in love with God and that all-powerful love alters his entire outlook on life. Everything must give way to the Beloved. Nothing must come between him and God. Therefore whatever earthly employment he has must be such that he can weave into his life of contemplation. It cannot be an unwelcome break in that life.

That being so the scope of employment for the lay contemplative must be very limited and the remuneration will also be limited.

To my mind the life of the welfare worker mentioned in the August number of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* is that of a devout person living in the world but not that of a Lay Contemplative.

But perhaps I have misunderstood what you are driving at.

Yours faithfully,

V. DE CETTO.

R E V I E W S

THREE BYZANTINE SAINTS. Translated by Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes. (Blackwell; 21s.)

The history of the Byzantine empire having been written too much in terms of war, court intrigue and diplomacy, Dr Dawes and Dr Baynes have translated the biographiēs of three Byzantine saints 'to suggest the significance as historical sources', especially for 'the thought and the life of the common folk of East Rome', of this class of literature. The lives chosen are those of St Daniel the Stylite, St Theodore of Sykeon and St John the Almsgiver, for all of whom the documents are contemporary. Daniel, who died in 493, was a stylite outside Constantinople—the most outstanding successor of

St Simeon; Theodore (d. 613) founded a monastery at Sykeon and became bishop of Anastasioupolis in central Asia Minor; John, a Cypriot, while still a widowed layman, was elected patriarch of Alexandria, and governed that church for eight years until his death in 619.

This is a good well-balanced selection (it is to be hoped it is only the first), and different readers will have different preferences among the three biographies. To some, that of Theodore of Sykeon will be too much a succession of wonders, anecdotes, and encounters with demons; the translators have summarised here and there, but even so it is the longest of the three and is not free from that 'portentous rhetoric, which often makes the reading of Byzantine hagiography a weariness of the flesh'. Many readers on the other hand will be agreeably surprised by the life of St Daniel. A pillar-saint is unfamiliar, rather frightening and perhaps repellent. But in fact the narrative is a fascinating one, and in character Daniel is found to be as simple and practical as his way of life was bizarre: when he taught the crowds that flocked to him, he said nothing 'rhetorical or philosophical' but spoke about 'the love of God and the care of the poor and almsgiving and brotherly love and of the everlasting life which awaits the holy, and the everlasting condemnation which is the lot of sinners'. There is a pleasant ironical touch here and there, as when Daniel prophesies sore difficulties for Zeno going on a military expedition into Thrace. 'Is it possible, I beg you', asked the emperor, Leo I, 'for anyone to survive a war without some labour and trouble?'

John of Amathus, coming to a church eaten up with Monophysism, and memories of Dioscoros, Timothy the Cat, Theophilus, Cyril and the Parabolani still lively, chose a different way, and is remembered as 'the Almsgiver'. His feats of generosity were no less remarkable than Theodore's or Daniel's in other directions, and his approach to the problem of the indigent poor was not spoiled by too much finesse: 'For the man was exceedingly well-to-do, and the saint took pleasure in getting money out of him, and he used to say that if with the object of giving to the poor anybody were able, without ill-will, to strip the rich right down to their shirts, he would do no wrong, more especially if they were heartless skinflints'. Incidentally, he had a tenuous link with our own country, for he furnished one of his beneficiaries with a ship and a cargo of corn, which was traded for tin in the Isle of Britain (and the tin proved to be full of silver, which of course was attributed to the virtue of the saint).

The translators have done an excellent job, and Dr Baynes has provided introductions and notes which are useful and adequate for intelligent reading of the texts. Two points may be mentioned. A syncellos (pages 233, 247) may well have been a patriarch's confidential adviser, but his office was surely to accompany a bishop day and night as a witness to his behaviour. And on page 260 it is quite all right to translate *schema monachikon* as 'monastic discipline'. *Schema* was used both for the dress and the life, as in the Treatise

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

DONALD ATTWATER.

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