

Dr Robinson is an excellent scholar, and his book is valuable in the emphasis it puts on the final, the crucial, importance of Christ's first coming: that his life, death and resurrection were an 'inaugurated eschatology', that his Parousia is a present fact. Moreover, he would allow, even insist, that it was *only* inaugurated, that there was, and is, still a manifestation to the world, still a final summing-up of all things, to take place. Yet in refusing to Jesus and the earliest Church tradition an expectation of a Second Coming, the author seems to go too far. For one thing, his extreme radical criticism defeats itself: no doubt there are secondary strata in the Gospels; but he ends by giving the impression that every text that does not suit his thesis must be explained away. He lands himself in difficulties: for instance at the trial before the Sanhedrin he is driven to reconstruct Mark's text (xiv, 62) to provide a (for him) more primitive source for Matthew and Luke. Our Lord's warnings, he would say, were addressed to his own nation and time; his teaching was indeed eschatological, but ethical, like that of the prophets; not apocalyptic. One can reply that the prophets, even of the Golden Age, were not infrequently apocalyptic. And if their message was primarily to their own generation, that did not prevent its having also a fuller, distant and universal fulfilment. Surely we can allow as much to our Lord, and that he foresaw such a fulfilment. Because his words and acts are divine, and their deepest significance spiritual and timeless, so on the widest stage of world history his warnings are still relevant and his coming to be looked for at the end of this age. If his language concerning that future event is apocalyptic, we need not label it merely mythological. There are real events at the end of human history both general and individual, so alien from experience that plain terms fail us: apocalyptic is their natural expression. That Christ did not himself include among them his own return in glory, this book has failed to prove.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

SAINT JOHN AND THE APOCALYPSE. By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

This book is a reprint, it was first published in 1922; but that is now a long time ago, so there may be many who now come across it for the first time; to some of those many it is likely to be a great discovery. It is only a small book (150 pages) and it is, therefore, neither a complete commentary nor an exhaustive exegesis of the symbolism. It is, however, also not a mere introduction. It will introduce the reader to the Apocalypse, certainly; but it will do far more, it will help him to get to know and understand the mind of St John and the context in

which he writes; it will, I hope, start in him a real appreciation of this work as an historical document, as great literature and as essential and significant revelation. St Augustine said that an eloquent scholar should speak to instruct the inexperienced, to delight the bored and to prevail upon the reluctant. In this Fr Martindale has succeeded to perfection.

There must be very many people who feel that for them the Apocalypse were better left unexamined. Whilst indeed there are some for whom the imagery has great attraction, for the majority it seems coarse and even at times repulsive. Also whilst the other books of the New Testament are regarded as being extremely relevant to the life of the Church at all times, people tend to regard the Apocalypse as having significance only when the last trump actually sounds, and then perhaps only as a sort of 'I told you so'. Finally there are those who think this book inhuman, and by comparing the St John it portrays with the St John of the fourth gospel or of the epistles they either deny his authorship, or at best they turn their minds from the difficulty and try to ignore the book's existence. For any who feel like this, this book of Fr Martindale's is to be highly recommended.

The book starts by introducing the reader to apocalyptic literature as a whole, showing what place it has in religious expression and development. He examines the circumstances under which St John was writing and the immediate significance it would have had for its original readers. One's initial appreciation of the Apocalypse may well be formed by seeing the work in this light, and this introductory part of the book could to advantage have been treated more thoroughly. Fr Martindale then proceeds to lay open the pattern and message of the Apocalypse, and as he does so his own enthusiasm makes itself very much felt. He shows how it is no hotch-potch of visions, but a beautifully planned and worked-out whole. He constantly insists on the richness and depth of meaning conveyed in the symbolism, being very much against a narrow 'prophetic' interpretation which is liable to rob the whole work of its significance. As he explains the formation and presentation of the message in its symbolic form he lays open the mental processes of the Apostle and enriches our appreciation of him as a man as well as our understanding of his message. The symbols used are shown to be no mere fancies of the imagination but a carefully chosen and connected language with a thoroughly respectable (for the most part biblical) background. There are few people who could continue to regard them as grotesque after following this book. From Fr Martindale's exposition comes a realization of the great importance of St John's Revelation for the full understanding of Christ and of his Church—not only as it was and as it will be but also as it is now. Further, we are now able to understand more of the fulness of the depth

of the personality of St John, who both saw and handled the Word of Life and took his mother to his own, and who was shown him as the Son of Man with eyes as a flame of fire and in his mouth a two-edged sword.

Those who up to now may have been reluctant, inexperienced or bored with the Apocalypse, through reading Fr Martindale may well find a treasure which enriches their life.

G.R.H.

BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM. By Maurice Percheron. (Longmans; 6s.)

The *Men of Wisdom* series is now sufficiently well-known to make it unnecessary to say more in general about this recent addition than that it maintains the high standards of its predecessors. The reproductions which make this series so remarkably telling are once again of very high quality, allowing for their size: it should be noted that by far the greater number illustrate later developments in Buddhist art and thought (there is nothing from Ajanta, for instance). Perhaps this will help to bring home to English readers the inadequacies of the old Rhys Davids picture of Buddhism. Even since the work of Conze (who reviewed the present work rather crossly and unjustly in the *Manchester Guardian*), there is still need in England of accounts of Buddhist thought which do not regard Mahayana Buddhism as simply a corruption of the original purity of the Tradition. Mr Edmund Stapleton is to be congratulated on his care in transposing the transliteration of Sanskrit and Pali from the French into the English convention, and for his tactful adaptations of the bibliography and the chronological table.

C.E.