

macher and Cohn had done before the first world war. The Geneva lecture is not a post-war counterpart to that book. It is much less comprehensive and of a far more popular nature. We need not therefore expect this lecture to contribute to our knowledge of existential philosophy. Mr Smith prefaces his translation by an introduction, almost half as long as Jasper's own essay. Only the first and the last paragraphs of this introduction, however, actually deal with existential philosophy. Whoever has understood what is existential thinking or is even capable of thinking existentially, will doubt whether Mr Smith is a suitable champion against existential criticism when he writes:

'But this dogma [of the Incarnation] would still be in danger of being a mere intellectual assertion with only symbolical comfort for man's understanding if it were only said that God assumed humanity. The point and the fructifying energy of the idea lies in its concretion: God became a man.'

What is this theology talking about, something which *is* or something which is *said* or *thought* (John 19:21)? It is because of this misconception of the meaning of existential reality that I trust that Mr Smith has widely misunderstood his author. H. Y.

A GALLERY OF CHINESE IMMORTALS. Selected by Lionel Giles. (Wisdom of the East Series; Murray; 4s.)

This little book recounts a number of legends of the Chinese 'Hsien', those remarkable beings who attain immortality by their austerities. The stories themselves have considerable charm; they relate the adventures of the 'hsien' and their disciples in search of immortality and the amazing feats they perform once they have attained it. But to the serious student their chief significance lies in the light they throw on popular Asiatic religious concepts. While many adherents of Asiatic religions have achieved deep insight into spiritual reality, for the masses spiritual progress is associated with acquisition of miraculous powers, giving mastery over the natural world, powers of divination and prophecy and long life.

The Chinese have a vast gallery of these immortals. The underlying conception of 'hsien-ship' is that those who have attained a perception of the eternal principles underlying the universe of those principles, that is, they must themselves become immortal. The 'hsien' attain their immortality by a strict discipline of mind and body—by cultivating the virtues of gentleness, self-abnegation and passivity, by studying the sacred books, and by strict attention to bodily discipline and exercises. The swallowing of an elixir is an essential part of practically all the stories, and marvellous adventures are related about the finding and compounding of these elixirs. Still more marvellous are the stories of their deeds after they had attained 'hsien-ship'—they rode tigers, cured epidemics, travelled at incredible speeds. Some became beneficent rulers, or advisers to Emperors and Governors. Some were regrettably addicted to

drink and rollicked their way through their eternity.

Many eventually disappeared into the mountains, or if their long lives ended, their bodies vanished from their coffins. Here no doubt we find the core of truth in all these stories—the seekers after truth, abandoning everything in their search, lead lives so withdrawn from the world, so absorbed in the eternal, that the man of common clay must needs build legends around men so incomprehensible to him.

L. OUWERKERK

ISLAM ET CHRETIENTE (Impressions de Voyage). By Paul Denis, O.P.  
Liège: La Pensée Catholique; n.p.)

This is a little book of essays on contemporary religion and life in the near east. Among the most interesting and informative are those on the future of Catholicism in Turkey, and on the Palestine problem. Père Denis makes no attempt to offer a solution to the latter, but he states the facts in a very vivid manner and ends by making a horrifying picture of what the Holy Land may shortly become. Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings (including Bethlehem) will be internationalised, but what of the rest of the countryside which after centuries of Arab domination has altered very little since our Lord's time? The immigrant Sionist Jews are largely materialistic in outlook (in over 400 colonies founded in the last 20 years, only 11 possess a synagogue). Will the day come when the sea of Tiberius is surrounded by villas and bungalows, fashionable beaches and floodlit open-air, dancing halls?

M. PENMAN

THE STATION. ATHOS: TREASURES AND MEN. By Robert Byron.  
(John Lehmann Ltd.; 12s. 6d.)

Robert Byron was cut off untimely in the war of 1939-45, and this is a reprint of his second book, originally published in 1928. Mr John Lehmann has added it to his Library of Art and Travel series; it is a well produced volume, with numerous illustrations that are very good.

*The Station* is essentially a travel book: it adds little to our knowledge of either the history or the life of The Holy Mountain, but it gives a most vivid (and 'vivid' is the word) impression of the beauty of Athonite country, buildings, decoration and other art. Byron was only twenty-two when he wrote it, and accordingly it is rather juvenile in parts: the piling-on of epithets of colour becomes a little wearisome, and 'liquid eyes mooning from his beard' is a bit too much. But 'a kind of cold, misty light, shadowless and unbegotten, such as floats about London railway termini on Sunday mornings' is well observed of the atmosphere of many Byzantine churches.

Mr Christopher Sykes in his introduction to *The Station* says all that need be said about Byron's enthusiasms, exaggerations, dislikes and prejudices, which are sufficiently illustrated by the book.