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* Joseph Consolino—*New England*
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A Practical Mystic

THE MIND OF PAUL. By Irwin Edman.
New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1935.
\$1.75.

BEYOND DAMASCUS: A Biography of
Paul. By F. A. Spencer. New York:
Harper & Brothers. \$3.

Reviewed by BERYL HAROLD LEVY

THE recent renaissance of interest in Paul can be easily explained. In the realm of scholarship we have still to combat sectarian prepossession when it comes to an objective account of our religious traditions. But the fermenting religious epoch between Hellenic civilization and the Middle Ages is crucial for an understanding of the origins of our civilization, and it is natural that disinterested scholars should now seek to piece together the materials to bridge the gap. Paul, even more than Jesus, emerges as the pivotal figure, in Mr. Edman's recent book, as in the less recent book of Professor Spencer.

Around Paul's career Professor Spencer has woven an interesting account of life in the first century. His approach is a blend of that sympathy and irony, that disciplined scholarship leavened by not too fanciful an imagination, which is the minimal requisite. After all, the Book of Acts and Paul's epistles are our only first-hand sources. But one wishes that Mr. Spencer had allowed himself less anecdote and gossip, less leeway in filling in the backgrounds with such pseudo-knowledge as we have of the religious trends of the period. We should then have had a more direct biography of Paul, more psychologically sophisticated; and the history would not have been so cursory with respect to economic and other basic determinations. If his classical erudition had extended equally to the Hebrew sources, perspective would also have been gained.

The skeleton of the story is thrice familiar,—how Saul, the Jewish tent-maker, persecutor of the Nazarenes, received a vision *en route* to Damascus, and suffered a conversion. Thereafter he is to be known as Paul, the Roman citizen, apostle of Christ, the one true Lord. His sedulous journeys and letter-writing proceed to lay the foundations for that universal church of those, Jew or Greek, slave or free, who would, like himself, be saved by belief in Christ crucified.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

He was in Mr. Spencer's simple formula, a "practical mystic," caught in a fervent love of Christ, but not so lost in his devotion as not to be able to spend his energies in constructive organization. To tell the reader early in the account that Paul was a "born hero-worshiper" is to plant the seeds of credulity for his later devotion to Jesus, but it is to follow the tech-

nique of the detective story rather than of significant character analysis. Why was his a hero-worshipping temperament? The conjunction of celibacy and its exaltation together with his curious attachment to the crucified Jew he probably never saw bear all the components of homosexual drive and fantasy. This is one type of explanation (not, be it noted, an explaining away) of which we would have sought more, not to impugn the authenticity of the mysticism but to transilluminate the personality of the mystic. Mr. Spencer does, indeed, assure us that Paul's preachment was pathological in relation to his Jewish training, though congruous with other cultic practices of the time. With respect to the causation of the vision on the road of Damascus, Spencer lays it to nervous prostration, after the feverish activities against the "Christians" in Jerusalem. Also, he leans toward acceptance of Ramsay's malaria theory rather than epilepsy, as an explanation of the "thorn in the flesh," but throughout he is cautious in avoiding extremes.

This caution has, however, misled him with respect to the controversy concerning the character of the Pharisees. In contradistinction to their bad reputation for literalistic fanaticism, Talmudic scholarship has established that the Pharisees were, in fact, the central characteristically Bible-interpreting, normally progressive body of Jews rather than the "strict sect" which Spencer pictures. Who should know better than those steeped in the Hebrew sources of before and after; and is not the acceptance of the traditional view by Spencer (despite his protestation), again too easy a paving of the way for Paul's reaction against the oppression of the "Law"?

Without systematically tracing the lines, Spencer does succeed in making clear how Paul, to the last, thought he was merely interpreting the Jewish messianic hope as fulfilled in Christ, while assimilating to his gospel the typical mystery religion pattern of the dying god who is later resurrected, as well as elements of stern Stoic adherence to virtue, especially the slavish duty of sticking to one's post, however oppressed. It was this facile eclecticism which won the day for Christianity against all its genuinely rival faiths. Certainly it was the emotional fervor with which Paul tapped the brew, rather than its intellectual compulsions, which made the new faith plausible. St. Augustine, indeed, tells us that it was the intellectual shoddiness of Paul which deterred him so long from embracing Christianity. And Paul met with fiasco in his sermon to the philosophic audience at Athens.

Mr. Edman also sees Paul less as a missionary or theologian than as a mystic, and also as a practical mystic but less in the sense of an executive organizer than as one whose mysticism took on ethical consequences, the sharing in which was to transform one's life. To Edman the vision on the road to Damascus, by whatever ailment it may or may not have been caused, is the central religious experience around which Paul's distinctive contribution builds. His was an authentic re-

ligious genius, initiator of the distinguished line of Christian mysticism (which has been a special object of Mr. Edman's teaching at Columbia). His vision is described by such words as immediate, intuitive, passionate, and absolute. But what is peculiarly significant of it is that out of this "enraptured indistinction" between himself and divine being, out of his sense of Christ's indwelling presence ("It is not I that live but Christ that lives in me") came a repudiation of the flesh and sin and an affirmation of love, joy, peace, meekness, and long-suffering. These are the fruits of the Spirit, once the flesh has, like Christ, become crucified. The old man is dead and the new man who is the believer lives. By this moral element is Paul's mysticism to be distinguished from the magical and ritualistic identification of the mysteries, and the speculative ascent to the One of the neo-Platonists.

The analysis of Paul's mysticism follows an account of Paul's relations to Judaism, Jesus, and the mystery religions, preceded by a canvass of Paul's various and divergent interpreters. These chapters cover surprisingly much the same ground as Spencer, though Edman is focussing on the intellectual threads which wove into the mind of the man and seeking a clear focus despite the agglomeration of subsequent theologizing. His tone is far more elevated than Spencer's and the book, like everything of Edman's, is a contribution to *belles lettres*. It is an essay on Paul which, like Pater's on Plato and Arnold's on Spinoza (for this is really the tradition in which Edman writes), must live. It makes no pretension to exactitude or completeness, being designed for those "interested in religion in its relation to human culture and imagination." As one such, who has himself participated in the Columbia University program of studies in religion, I must add that the book will doubtless seem slight to specialists in the field, who will feel that Edman has done little more than take a Cook's tour through the secondary sources, having himself knowledge of little Greek and less Hebrew, and that he has made his own composite which palpably shows where he followed Deismann, Foakes-Jackson, Montefiore, Kennedy, *et al.* Nor will technical philosophers regard the essay as much more than a high class piece of journalism. But Edman is neither of these. His job was one of artistic portraiture of a man's philosophic constitution. He undertook to humanize a vast corpus of scholarship so much of which is arid. He has succeeded.

There is more than a scholarly reason for renewed interest in Paul. Our times are palpably marked by a comparable tissue of competing faiths, with national barriers and traditional orthodoxy under attack. Perhaps Mr. Spencer is right, that that "dream would have died in Judæa had not a Jew of Tarsus seen a vision on the road to Damascus." Perhaps it would have been in any case resurgent. Undoubtedly, though the entire spiritual tradition may now be doomed as quixotic, the need for somehow giving concrete implementation to this ideal was never more poignant.

Beryl H. Levy teaches philosophy at the College of the City of New York.

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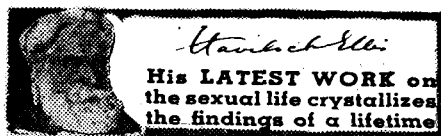
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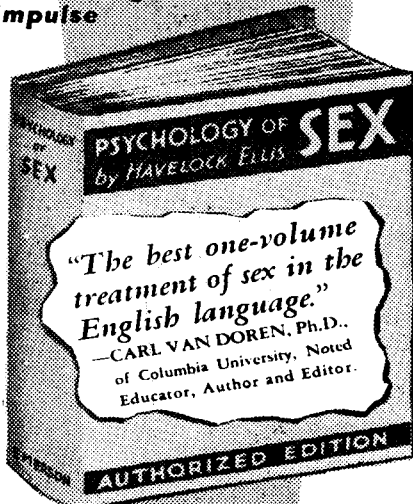
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A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

HIGH WIND IN JAMAICA. By Richard Hughes. Harpers.

QUEEN VICTORIA. By Lytton Strachey. Harcourt, Brace.

A WINTER DIARY AND OTHER POEMS. By Mark Van Doren. Macmillan.

A Medical List

I should like (writes A. K. of Bridgewater, Va.) a list of suitable books, first choices, you might say, on the subject of medicine. I mean books which would be helpful for pre-med students.

HAVING not long since talked to a young medical student, and been much impressed with the attitude almost of awe with which he approached his vocation, when A. K.'s letter came in I felt that her request demanded much greater familiarity with the field of medical literature than I could glean no matter over how many reference books I pored. So I wrote to a friend who is both an experienced practising physician and a lover of literature and who could, I knew, be counted on to give me a list of books which would not only be instructive but stimulating. Promptly came back an answer from which I abstract the following facts. Dr. Osler, that great physician who for so long shed lustre on Johns Hopkins and who has left behind him writings which are full of charm for the layman as well as the physician, made two books obligatory reading in his courses. No, not some specialized studies of disease or chronicle of the development of medicine, but volumes which thousands

who have no intention of approaching doctoring in any way except as relief from possible ills, have been reading these many years—Sir Thomas Browne's *RELIGIO MEDICI* and Voltaire's *ZADIG*. Both of these books are to be had in editions varying from costly to cheap so I quote no separate publishers for them. At any rate, they should go on the shelf for the intending medical student. Another volume that should join them is the *LIFE OF PASTEUR* (Doubleday, Doran), by Vallery Radot, son-in-law of the great scientist. I can answer for the fact of its interest, for it was proof even against the French in which I read the first part of it before I got hold of an English edition which I finished at much greater speed. Dr. Osler has supplied an introduction for the translation. Cushing's *LIFE OF OSLER* himself (Oxford University Press) should go in the biography niche, and along with it R. M. Wilson's *THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN* (Macmillan) a life of Sir James Mackenzie. Two works of the last few years, Paul de Kruif's *MICROBE HUNTERS* and *MEN AGAINST DEATH* (both Harcourt, Brace) make good reading, especially the former which had immense popularity at the time of its appearance. Another volume, this time a novel, which my friend recommended, pops into my mind out of turn at this moment just because of De Kruif's name. That is Sinclair Lewis's *ARROWSMITH* (Harcourt, Brace) for which the author drew for guidance in his descriptions of a research institution on Dr. De Kruif who for a time was associated with the Rockefeller Institute. Now I've gone too fast for my list, for I've left biography without mentioning Lambert and Goodwin's *MEDICAL LEADERS* (Bobbs-Merrill), or a book which I read in galley proof the other day, shortly to be issued by W. W. Norton &

Over the Counter

The Saturday Review's Guide to Current Attractions

Trade Mark	Label	Contents	Flavor
ROXANA Clarence Budington Kelland (Harpers: \$2.)	Novel	Small town, corn-fed honey, makes a sucker of the Broadway Jungle with her—so help me, customers,—with her cooking! Trigger gab, swift action, and a clinch finale.	Chicken Pie
SWORDS OF MARS Edgar Rice Burroughs (Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.: \$2.)	Adventure	While the Prince of Helium gent, John Carter, hunts for racketeers in Zodanga, Crook Ur Jan pulls a snatch on Dejah Thoris, his mate. Tip: Lay your money on Carter.	Terrific
MOUNTAIN MEN Jackson Gregory (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Western	Sheriff Madden has one tough time bringing to justice a bunch of killers while his kin folks are in danger and his friend fails to see Shorty Hannan's true colors.	Rip Snortin'