



## Digest of Biblical Love

*THE BOOK BY MY SIDE.* By Albert N. Williams. Introduction by Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 368 pp. \$4.

By ROBERT O. BALLOU

TO THE large number of recent Bibles, digests of the Bible, and books about the Bible which evidence contemporary man's intensive consciousness of religion, Mr. Albert N. Williams has added a volume which is both digest and commentary. In "The Book by My Side" Mr. Williams, with extensive research in the findings of Biblical scholars, painstaking selectivity, and an obvious sense of religious devotion, has examined every book in the Old and New Testaments of the Judeo-Christian scriptures (including the Old Testament Apocrypha), in most cases digesting the contents of the book, telling what is known of the approximate date of its composition or compilation and its authorship, and setting it against its historical, social, and political background.

By doing so he has rendered an admirable service in giving flesh and blood to the ancient spokesmen for Yaweh and Jesus, filling many spots in the vast open spaces which exist in the average reader's conception of Biblical time and space.

Of especial value are his discussion of the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament and his outline history of notable editions of the Bible from St. Jerome's Vulgate to Smith-Goodspeed, Moffatt, and Knox.

Mr. Williams's contemplation of the Bible is strongly influenced by a distinctly Christian Church bias. He is writing throughout not of the Judeo-Christian, but of the Christian Bible, of a collection of books in which

those from Genesis to Malachi are but a preface to the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John the Divine. Though he never goes as far in this attitude as does Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, who in his introduction writes, "The sub-Christian in it [The Bible] does not grip our consciences. The Christian in it—and this leaps out upon us from the earliest to the latest books—captures and claims us," Mr. Williams gives the impression that the Old Testament is simply a subject clause in a sentence of which the New is the predicate.

Further, while it seems possible to him to question the miraculous events of the Old Testament, to explain them by possible natural phenomena, or to label them "legend" or "folklore" those events of the New which Thomas Paine called "fabulous"—the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the miracles, and the Resurrection—are not subjected to this treatment. Instead of attempting to digest and comment critically on the story (or stories) of the four Gospels he confines himself in general to reporting what is known of their authorship and the dates of their composition and discussing non-controversial differences in their literary styles and conceptions—always from the point of view of Christian Church doctrine. As to the many miraculous aspects of the story upon which Christian tradition is based, and probable explanations of the origins of these conceptions, he is discreetly silent, as if determined to argue neither with Thomas Paine nor Mother Church.

This is somewhat to be regretted. Omelettes destroy eggs, but they are nourishing food. So, too, is good objective Biblical discussion, though it may wave a red flag in the face of more than one Papal Bull.

## Patterns of Love

*THREE TO GET MARRIED.* By Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 310 pp. \$3.

By RILEY HUGHES

THAT love "is not an evolution from the sex of the animal kingdom, but that sex is a physiological expression of Love, issuing from the Kingdom of God" is the central thought and theme of Bishop Sheen's book. To speak, then, "of the two that is in marriage," as does that informed but biased theologian the Wife of Bath, is chiefly to report failure in "the struggle against the ego." Marriage is not the sole battlefield of that warfare, of course, but it is pre-eminently the one, as the author shows, where victories significant for the soul can be communally accomplished. Few couples have had to share the harrowing poverty and "atrocious hours of mental, moral, and spiritual anguish" of Léon and Jeanne Bloy, yet they could say, "There is a lamp lighted for us that does not burn for others."

Many historians and sociologists today urge abandonment of our "sensate culture" for an altruistic culture. The progression from the one to the other, the evolution from Eros to Agape, the author sees as the path of a happy marriage and family life. Thoroughly Thomistic in the moderate realism of his awareness of the physical side of marriage, Bishop Sheen, at once anti-Victorian and anti-Freudian in his approach, insists that "sex is inseparable from the person." Interestingly enough, the emphasis in this book is not placed on the traditional exposition of the "ends" of marriage, but on the Divine and human patterns of love. "For childless couples, where there is no frustration of love's overflow," the author writes, "the law of marriage still holds true; it takes three to make love, and that third is God seen not in children, but through resignation to His Will."

A contributor to a recent *Partisan Review* symposium on religion observed, not without justice, that "educated clergymen do not hesitate to insult unbelievers." It is a pleasure to report that "Three to Get Married," in every way a positive book, handles, always as subordinate to the main theme, such vexed and embattled sub-

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jects as divorce and birth control quite without taking clerical pot-shots at those who hold opposing views. This book would seem to address itself more directly to the Catholic reader than the author's best-selling "Peace of Soul" and "Lift Up Your Heart," but the non-Catholic, though he may occasionally be given pause by the book's elaborately aphoristic manner, will find its matter a helpful finger-post to "the community of love."

## Religious Book Notes

**THE TRUE BELIEVER.** By Eric Hoffer. Harper. \$2.50. It is necessary to say at once, and to say without restraint, that this little book is the most penetrating analysis of mass movements in the entire corpus of sociological literature. One may call the roll of all the sociologists of our era, including those who have specifically addressed themselves to Mr. Hoffer's subject, and find in their works nothing quite so profound, nothing quite so clean and clinical and clear. The wonder of it grows with the realization that the author was blind until his fifteenth year, never spent a day in school, and spent much of his life knocking around the West, first as a gold miner, then as a migratory laborer (with a library card in dozens of railroad towns), and, since 1943, as a longshoreman on the Pacific Coast.

"The true believer" is the fanatic, the man without whom a mass movement would be impossible. He is a frustrated man, a man who has no faith in himself, a man who seeks freedom from the responsibility of individual decision. His cause is immaterial, so long as it enables him to lose himself in it and to call it holy. It may be Nazism or Communism or Fascism or Catholicism or Americanism. Indeed, the fanatical Communist and the fanatical Catholic hate each other as only brothers can, for they are brothers under the skin, and neither has anything in common with the sober and skeptical liberal. This is only one of a series of observations, all quotable, on fanaticism, on suspicion, on doctrine, on leadership, on propaganda, on coercion, on action, and on other aspects of mass movements. The book is more than a unique achievement. It is required reading.

—ROBERT BIERSTEDT.

**BEYOND EAST AND WEST.** By John C. H. Wu. Sheed & Ward. \$3.50. Judging by Lin Yutang, Jade Snow Wong, and now John C. H. Wu, the Chinese write autobiography as naturally as the Irish do poetry. In "Beyond East and West" Dr. Wu, Lin Yutang's

friend and a leading international lawyer, tells his life story with the humor-laced contemplative charm that we have come to recognize as characteristically Chinese. No doubt his book will be called a Chinese "Seven-Storey Mountain," for it describes a spiritual odyssey in the course of which the author was converted from Methodism to Catholicism.

However, while he reports events of public interest, such as his post-Pearl Harbor flight from Japanese imprisonment and his appointment as Minister to the Vatican, Dr. Wu lays more stress than Thomas Merton does on the purely spiritual aspects of his confession. For example, in the account of his friendship with Mr. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Dr. Wu affords us a unique look into the mind and heart of the great American jurist. When he touches on his dissolute hours among the sing-song girls, it is to point up the potential sanctity in the souls of the unfortunate prostitutes. If he mentions his translation of the Psalms and the New Testament, it is not to call attention to the fact that it has become the standard Chinese version, but to bring out its spiritual impact on his own life and that of others. His confession, in fact, is persuasively dedicated to the conclusion that Christianity, being of East and West, is beyond both.

—ANN F. WOLFE.

**DEMOCRACY AND THE CHURCH.** By James Hastings Nichols. Westminster Press. \$4.50. All churches claim that they are the strongest bulwarks of democracy. Are such claims justified? Professor Nichols endeavors to answer that question, writing as an historian and not as a pamphleteer or special pleader.

His answer, based on a study of European and American life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is that some churches have indeed undergirded democracy, but others are generally found upholding autocracy. He divides the churches into two groups. The first group he calls "Puritan Protestantism," in which he lumps together Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians, Quakers, Disciples of Christ, the Salvation Army, and the evangelical party of the Anglican Church. These he finds to have effectively supported liberty, democracy, and brotherhood.

The second group, consisting of Roman Catholicism, Continental Lutheranism, and the high church party of the Anglican communion, has generally been antagonistic to liberal democracy, he contends.

Professor Nichols frankly admits that he writes as a liberal Protestant



## SATAN

Edited by Father Bruno de Jesus-Marie

This enormous book of essays on the devil covers his personality, activities and recreations rather completely. The devil in art, in contemporary literature, in the Divine Comedy, in Milton and Blake, in Gogol and Dostoevsky; possession, pseudo-possession and dream demons are a few of the subjects treated. Anyone with a professional or amateur interest in the Prince of Darkness, indeed anyone who knows enough to take evil seriously, will realize the value of the book. 525 pages, 24 illustrations \$5.50

## TERESA OF AVILA

by Kate O'Brien

The author of *Without My Cloak* has long been fascinated by her subject whom she believes to be one of the three woman-geniuses to appear in the world so far. We doubt if St. Teresa has ever been written of with more understanding and affection. \$2.00

## GUILT

by Caryl Houselander

Our generation suffers from an obscure sense of guilt which shows itself in all manner of neuroses and oddities. To clarify the problem and suggest the cure Miss Houselander studies the psychology of guilt in individual criminals, geniuses and saints. Illus. \$3.75

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