

## BOOK REVIEWS

***BOTH SIDES OF THE CIRCLE:*** The Autobiography of Christmas Humphreys. Published by George Allen & Unwin, London, 1978. 258 pp. + Appendix + Index.

This memoir by Mr. Christmas Humphreys, founder and president of the Buddhist Society, London, covers a period of some seventy years, from his birth in 1901, auspiciously enough on the Buddha's Nirvana Day, up until the present. In Japan, Mr. Humphreys is perhaps best known as the founder of the Buddhist Society, although his role as the British Prosecutor at the International Tribunal for the Far East is also remembered, as is his long and close association with the late D. T. Suzuki, the founder of the *Eastern Buddhist*.

His reminiscences touch on the main occurrences of his full and eventful life, giving us interesting glimpses of both the private and the public man and of the events in which he played a part. Aspects of his life and personality are set forth which were unknown even to those of us who know him personally. As to his reason for writing, it was, he tells us, "to recall events and people which few remember and the younger generation never knew," and "to describe areas of activity in present life unknown to many, such as the life of a City Guild, or a criminal trial." There are matters about which he thinks he has something useful to say, "such as unorthodox medicine, or the real identity of Shakespeare, or the place of religion in the modern world; the fields of pure nostalgia, which include French cathedrals, Chinese art and the Russian Ballet." He has imagined himself "reminiscing to a circle of interested friends," in a "style and quality of English . . . appropriate to such an occasion." In planning this work, he saw the material as an anatomical diagram, with two parallel spines formed by Theosophy/Buddhism and English criminal law symbolized by the Bench at the Old Bailey.

Throughout the narrative, we are made aware of the presence of an ideal couple: Christmas Humphreys, lawyer who rose later to become a Queen's Counsellor and judge at the Old Bailey, Buddhist layman, and author, and his wife Aileen, of whom he was bereaved in 1975, a skilled gold and silversmith who numbered among her many other accomplishments drawing, painting, and gardening.

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Speaking in recollection of a childhood which was spent in upper-class circumstances as the second son in a family of eminent lawyers, he tells us, in words that reflect a personality nurtured for fifty years in the Buddhist faith,

I remember it as utterly happy, and I often thought of it when I heard in court, year after year, of the tragic broken lives of parents and the pathetic, unloved wreck of a youth, now steeped in crime, who stood before me. Lucky! No, I do not believe in luck; I believe in cause and effect.

His introduction to Buddhism came in 1918, when he was still in public school. The seventeen-year-old youth who regarded himself as a devout Christian happened unexpectedly upon Ananda Coomaraswamy's recently published *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* in a London bookshop. He realized after reading it that "If that is Buddhism then whatever else I am I am a Buddhist." We can see in retrospect this event coincided with the spiritual crisis brought on by the deaths of his brother and cousin, killed at the front during the First World War, and by similar losses among relatives of those close to him. His Christian faith was deeply shaken just at a time when he was seeking to find his own way in life after having given up on a military career.

Another significant period was the time he spent in Japan immediately following the end of the Second World War, which gave him the opportunity of becoming familiar with leading Japanese Buddhists and gaining firsthand knowledge of Japanese Buddhism. The space he allots to describing in detail the circumstances leading to the acceptance by Japanese Buddhists of the Twelve Principles of Buddhism he had formulated, is no doubt an indication of the importance he attaches, even now, to the cause of Buddhist ecumenism. One thing which stands out in the chapters on Japan is his deep respect and admiration for D. T. Suzuki, whom he describes as "the most spiritually developed" man he had ever met. The following moving episode:

Two weeks before I had hurried to a hospital in Kyoto to visit Dr. Suzuki, who was recovering from pneumonia, though still unable to talk. He pointed to a cupboard in his room and someone brought him his favorite obi, the dark blue cotton sash which held together his kimono. This he gave me. Words were not needed. I knew where I stood in his regard.

makes us realize the importance of the late Dr. Suzuki's moral support and encouragement to Mr. Humphrey's untiring efforts to further the cause of Buddhism in England and Europe. His official reason for being in Japan was to act as a British prosecutor in the war trials then being held. It was a role that turned out to be deeply meaningful to him as a seeker of the Way. As for the

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trial itself,

I had done all required of me, but I had never actually appeared in court. This was partly because so many others were longing for the chance to be seen on television by "the old folks at home," and partly because I did not want to emphasize to my Japanese friends that I was after all in Japan to prosecute a group of Japanese.

His own inner development during this period he describes as a process of extension/expansion, a steady lift of consciousness to the plane of a higher self; sometimes, as in midsummer in Japan, with a sense of sustained operation at that level. The extension was, as one must use analogy, up to the self, out to mankind and all other forms of life, and inwards to the centre.

The curious blend in Mr. Humphreys of Theosophy and Buddhism, which is seen not only in this autobiography but in his newly published manual for meditation (*The Search Within*, 1977) as well, appears to have its own historical background. We are reminded of Beatrice Suzuki, wife of the late D. T. Suzuki, who was also a Theosophist before she encountered her future husband. At a certain period of history, for a certain set of people, Theosophy seems to have played a remarkable role in introducing Westerners to the realms of Buddhist philosophy. What to our prejudiced (or ignorant) eyes appear to represent totally different thought streams, in him find harmonious expression. Whatever evaluation one might venture in this regard, his remarks do help clear up something that had long been a mystery to me.

We hope that Mr. Humphreys is able to continue on for many more years creating the material that will inspire him to a sequel, which will record for us his continuing "journey of the heart . . . to wider still becoming . . . and heights as yet unwon."

BANDŌ SHŌJUN

***THE INNER EYE OF LOVE: Mysticism and Religion.*** By William Johnston. Collins: London, 1978, 199 pp.

This book aims at being thoroughly "ecumenical" in three areas: (1) religion, psychology, and science; (2) Buddhism and Christianity; and (3) mysticism and ordinary religion are to be harmoniously related to each other. At first I was inclined to spend my space in quarreling with its view that all vital religion