

OPIMUM OF THE PEOPLE: The Christian religion in the U.S.S.R. by Michael Bourdeaux. *Faber and Faber*. 30s.

Recently two Russian sociologists, A. A. Zemtsov and A. S. Duchal, published a survey, remarkable for its frankness, on how the working man in Russia spends his spare time. Of some 152 homes visited, 64 contained ikons, and this after nearly fifty years of virulent anti-religious campaigning. As Mr Bourdeaux writes, 'the Communists completely failed to understand the true nature of religion. They simply did not see that to allow Christians to continue celebrating the liturgy together was to spare their lifeline'. Conversely, we in the West have completely failed to understand the religious persecution in the U.S.S.R. – not the violent persecution of the early soviets, but that which is going on at this moment, after the famous 'concord' between the Orthodox church and Stalin in 1942, which has lulled the consciences of many. Restriction of our personal liberty is so remote from our experience that we look upon reports from visitors to the Soviet Union as emotional exaggerations. But who, if he had any religious feelings at all, would remain unaffected by the sight of so many churches converted into garages and ware-houses? Or by the loneliness and isolation that surrounds the Orthodox liturgy celebrated in what the soviets call, with their religion of work, a 'working' church? Or by the fact that the synagogue in Moscow cannot be repaired for want of a licence?

Mr Bourdeaux does not permit his feelings however to interfere with his appraisal, and he is anxious to give the soviet authorities the benefit of the doubt. His impassioned book does not conceal his emotions, as he reviews the new wave of persecution initiated by

Khrushchev in 1959. The manipulation of people's minds – whether lay or clerical – is a horrible spectacle. Mr Bourdeaux relates how he was present at a public lecture by Osipov, the notorious ex-priest turned communist, a magnificent orator who dismissed the existence of Christ by a reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls, with 'impossible logic and intellectual dishonesty'. The Russian audience had no access to these documents – and the author was begged for copies of them. And how many of the Orthodox bishops, especially those in contact with the outside world, are actuated by soviet strings? They sometimes paint a very rosy picture of Orthodox Christianity within the Soviet Union, but they still have not satisfactorily refuted the accusation that Patriarch Nikolai was murdered in 1961.

Mr Bourdeaux, an Anglican priest, lived in Moscow for a year, and other long visits have provided extra material for his work. It is readable and exciting, but it is not a pleasant book to read. He was subject to the frustrations of all visitors to the soviet union, and he describes how his wish to visit Riga, where there is a Roman Catholic seminary, was frustrated by the authorities. But his frustrations are more telling because of the object of his visit. It is not only the Orthodox church that is persecuted; the Lutherans, Evangelicals, and especially the Baptists are under attack. In Leningrad, Mr Bourdeaux met the impressive Baptist Andrei, besides whom he confesses to feeling a very second-class Christian. And so would we all.

BENEDICT SKETCHLEY, A.A

AKAN RELIGION AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH by Sidney George Williamson. *Ghana University Press*. 30s.

A book such as this might have been written about a hundred tribes in Africa, 10-50 per cent Christian, now in a state of social and mental turmoil. The same sort of matter is appearing in reviews with reference to peoples from the Sudan to the Cape, and from the horn of Africa to Senegal, marking the fundamental unity of the African peoples south of the Sahara. Almost all of what is said here might refer to Zululand or the Witwatersrand. The

author has chosen a single tribal unit, not Ghana but the Akan. Yet nearly everything appears much the same in mixed tribal and new urban areas.

For this reason this particular study, which has the advantage of a close study of a limited area, and also the advantage that some of the ground has been covered by anthropologically and sociologically trained Africans such as Drs Busia and Danquah, makes an excellent

example of the missionary stocktaking that is going on all over the continent. It deals frankly with secondary motivations on conversions during the last hundred years, such as search for progress and status under colonial rule, now passing with the coming of independence, public school systems and Africanism. The Akan religion, described in some detail, is typical of the whole area: a name for a High God not yet seen as a Father, intermediary spirits, the ever-present ancestors and medicine-cum-spirit influences, an ethical code much identified with tribal social coherence, sin publicly recognized as a matter for social compensation rather than personal repentance.

The conclusions, that Christianity for many Africans enters into a syncretism with this form of religion, that its spiritual penetration is frequently not deep, and that some aspects of magic are even increasing in the present turmoil, could be gloomy for the missionary if we did not remember that Europe also passed through all this, and all the world over many Christians manage to live, sincerely if still

sinners, with two sets of values. They are Christians if Christianity finally predominates, in spite of pagan motivations, African or European, in much of their daily life.

The discussion of possible missionary adaptation here goes for important positive elements in African religious life. While all that the author says seems justified, it seems sometimes that adaptation may be more important in lesser things, in music and the formation of a comfortable community sense, rather than in larger questions such as initiations and sacrifices to ancestors. African life is changing so fast we may aim at adapting to a pattern that is gone tomorrow. But still the consistency of sub-Saharan psychology will remain. Possibly the chief mission formula for 1965, apart from formation of indigenous clergy and leaders, is to allow oneself to become identified with and formed by this, while offering the white light of truth – the friendship that accepts formation by the friend.

F. SYNNOTT, O.P.

HOPE DEFERRED: Girls' Education in English History by Josephine Kamm. *Methuen*. 35s.

The emancipation of women is a subject close to Mrs Kamm's heart. She has written biographies of Gertrude Bell and Emmeline Pankhurst, besides an excellent study of those two great Victorian school-mistresses, Miss Buss and Miss Beale, pleasantly entitled *How Different from Us*. The title of her new book, with its undertone of disillusion, should put readers on their guard against supposing that the English have much to boast of in retrospect. True, the extent of change and the rate of progress during the past hundred years has been astonishing: but we have not yet devised a form of education that takes into account all the potentialities of girls and offers them means of full development. As coeducational comprehensive schools increase, they will afford a better opportunity than we have yet had in England to observe and judge the comparative aptitudes and abilities of girls and boys, about which so many ill-founded generalizations are still current.

*Hope Deferred* is entertaining as well as informative, Mrs Kamm has an excellent eye for the telling personal detail. Besides recalling a whole galaxy of women and girls who cared about learning, she gives her readers vivid glimpses of many types of educational establishments; the nunnery schools (particularly distinguished in Anglo-Saxon times), the charity schools, the ladies' academies, the early training colleges. Time and again we are shown how a craze for 'accomplishments' has been the bane of girls' education, and how readily women used to acquiesce in the view that theirs was the inferior sex. The story is brought right up to date. There is even a footnote reference to the correspondence in *The Observer* last September, sparked off by Sir John Newsom's article that seemed to many feminists a pretty reactionary piece. The debate of course, continues, and so do the experiments.

MARGARET BOTTRALL