

***REDISCOVERING THE WEST: An Inquiry into Nothingness and Relatedness.*** By Stephen C. Rowe. SUNY Series in Western Traditions, David Appelbaum, ed., State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, pp. vi + 222, with notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0 7914 1991 6 (hc: alk. paper)

THE AUTHOR with a background in western philosophy and theology takes the reader on a semi-private journey of discovery and rediscovery as he looks to the East for new riches which, paradoxically, enables him to rediscover the depth of richness in the West. Early on, he cites Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and upon reflection, this book with its journey through America toward inner reflection offers both a literal and metaphorical comparison with the present book under review with its zigzagging across America to experience the plurality of the contemporary scene only to come to a reappraisal of the roots of the western tradition. The comparison also reflects the existential quality of this journey to seek answers from without only to change within.

The above may explain the chatty, name-dropping and informal style of the book. It is largely because of this matter of style, and what I see as the ultimate reason for this style, there is a vagueness in holding to or articulating a position of its own. In many ways this book is an excellent survey of the problems that western thought and culture have brought upon themselves through an overemphasis on intellectualization and the bifurcation of mind and body. Moreover, it is a more than adequate survey of the Christian-Buddhist dialogue with its focus on a main point of contention between the two groups: the Christian and Western insistence on historical specificity and the Buddhist insistence on historical "trans-descendence." Admittedly, it may be this very style that lends itself to giving the reader an accessible overview of and "feel" for the present situation. Nevertheless, for all its promise in setting forth the situation, it disappoints in going beyond the descriptive to the prescriptive. There is a lack of depth and focus in its proposal to go beyond the present situation so as to return to a new and fresh reappraisal of the West. It is indeed a difficult task and the author should perhaps not be blamed for making an interesting and fresh though not fully realized attempt. The vagueness in the finally espoused position is largely due to the too literal middle path carefully travelled by the author between the excesses of rationalization and the "feel-goodness" of the New Age, historicity and emptiness, and a practice that sees both the merit of the stillness and being as-it-isness of the East and the activity and the dialoguing relatedness of the West.

Finally, in focussing on two pioneers of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue,

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Abe Masao and John B. Cobb, Jr., and the conflict between them, the book does a service by highlighting their positions. If the reader is prompted to go on to Abe and Cobb themselves and study them in more depth and hopefully on to those who primarily influenced them, Nishida-Nishitani and Whitehead-Hartshorne, then it has done a great service.

JOHN S. YOKOTA

***THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF ZEN MASTER HAKUIN: A Translation of the Sokkō-roku Kaian-fusetsu.*** By Norman Waddell. Shambhala, Boston and London, 1994, with appendixes, notes, index. ISBN 0-87773972-2 (pbk.)

The *Sokkō-roku Kaian-fusetsu* is a series of informal discourses which Hakuin Ekaku Zenji delivered in the spring of 1740, by way of introducing his teishōs on the records of Hsi-keng Chih-yü, known in Japan as Kidō Chigu, and by his sobriquet Sokkō. Though they are billed very modestly, these talks, as Norman Waddell states in his Introduction, incorporate virtually all of Hakuin's views on Zen Buddhist teaching and training, and proclaim his determination to rectify erroneous views and practices which had, he was convinced, brought about the sharp decline of Zen to be seen in his time.

No Zen teacher writes with the passion of Hakuin. The words fairly thrust forth, like spears with white-hot tips:

I eagerly await the appearance of just one dimwit of a monk (or even half such a monk), richly endowed with a natural stock of spiritual power and kindled within by a raging religious fire, who will fling himself in the midst of this poison and instantly perish in the Great Death. Rising from that Death, he will arm himself with a calabash of gigantic size and roam the great earth seeking out true and genuine monks. Wherever he encounters one, he will spit in his fist, flex his muscles, fill his calabash with deadly poison and fling a dipperful over the monk. Drenched from head to foot, that monk too will be forced to surrender his life. What a splendid sight to behold!

Yet Hakuin's heroics are not for everyone. I have worked with people who suffered from profound despair and bleak discouragement that was induced by his go-get-'em style. I get the feeling on reading his exhortations that there is something called *kenshō* out there that one must burst into, like a rat smell-