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Great Religions of Modern Man, ed. by Richard A Gard; **Buddhism**, by Richard A. Gard; **Catholicism**, by George Brantl; **Hinduism**, by Louis Renou; **Islam**, by John Alden Williams; **Judaism**, by Arthur Hertzberg; **Protestantism**, by J. Leslie Dunstan.

New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1961, 256 pp. each,
US\$ 4.00

There is no limit to the number of books that can be written about the religions of the world, and we can expect a continuous stream of them from the publishers as more and more people travel abroad and become increasingly interested in the faiths of mankind. Moreover, scholars are constantly finding new facets of knowledge which need to be conveyed to the students of religion and those interested in interfaith communication. Very obviously, however, few people can read all the volumes on this subject that are coming off the press and so a selection must be made. Even if the funds and time were available, these should not be wasted. Moreover, no one likes to fill his library shelves with chaff.

Great Religions of Modern Man, however, is a six-volume set that

no library should hesitate to own and, now that it has appeared in paperbacks, every scholar and interested person also and can afford to have a set of his own. The authors are not travellers or casual observers, but competent scholars in their respective fields, and they write out of a depth of personal experience and knowledge that is impressive.

While the volumes are in no respect comprehensive presentations of the six faiths,—they do not claim to be—they are unique in being veritable storehouses of original sources, ancient and modern. However, they are not anthologies. Quotations constitute the bulk of the pages, but these are generally introduced and commented on in such a manner as to make the reading easy and the meaning

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intelligible to the reader regardless of whether or not he is a specialist in the fields being discussed. Thus, the faiths are left very much to speak for themselves through their own essential scriptures and expositors. Regarding the amount of space allotted to the various subjects or individual leaders, there will be a great deal of difference of opinion; but this is unavoidable. No one knows better than an editor how painful it is to cut material down to fit a given amount of space.

From the fact that each one of the six volumes has exactly 256 pages and that the texts vary only slightly in length, it will be clear that there are no extended discussions of textual and historical problems. Neither is there much on the sociological background of these faiths. It would not be possible in such a limited space. The volumes are not numbered. Each is a unit by itself, so they do not need to be kept together if it is more convenient to separate them topically in a library.

The treatment of Hinduism is somewhat different from the others in that the editor, Dr. Louis Renou,

devotes sixty pages to an introduction dealing with the General Characteristics of Hinduism, Vedism, Texts of Hinduism, Practices and Beliefs, Religious Sects, Indian Society, and a conclusion. Hinduism, he says, is a faith which provides the means for attaining liberation; in its purest form it is a type of wisdom. He believes that the caste system and many crude institutions will disappear in time and that the Hinduism of the future will have "unforeseen powers of maturity."

The rest of the volume is devoted to selections from both Sanskrit and non-Sanskritic sources, each of which is introduced briefly by the editor.

Dr. Richard A. Gard, lecturer on Buddhism at Yale University and general editor of the set, is editor of the volume on Buddhism. With his long and wide acquaintance with the Buddhist world, few persons are better informed than he is on contemporary Buddhism in Asia. It is a disappointment, therefore, that there was not space for a presentation of this phase of Buddhism in the volume he edits. The same is true for Mahayana and

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more particularly Japanese Buddhism. This, however, was not in line with the purpose of the volume which treats mainly with the basic teaching of Buddhism, a knowledge of which is, of course, essential to an understanding of Buddhism today.

Space will not permit extended comments on the volumes on *Islam*, *Judaism*, *Catholicism*, and *Protestantism*, each of which is presented in a concise manner by a competent

scholar who thoroughly understands the essential teachings of these faiths.

The first edition in board covers was so expensive that purchase by individuals scholars was difficult. With the appearance of the set in paperbacks at the modest sum of only sixty cents (US), it is now within reach of every Japanese scholar as well as any interested laymen. It should prove to be a popular buy in Japan. W. P. W.
