Any new publication by Dr. Heinrich Dumoulin, S. J., of Sophia (Jōchi) University in Tokyo is bound to be an event of significance for scholars in this field of the History of Religions in Japan and, if it is a book about Zen, it is especially welcome. However, there is such interest in the subject throughout the world, it is to be expected that this volume will find a much broader public reception than ordinarily would be accorded a book on Japanese religion.

So much nonsense has been spoken and written about Japanese Zen, and so little has appeared in English that is objective and scholarly, that it is a pleasure to read a book that is both reliable and understandable. Dr. Dumoulin has provided the reliability in the original German text; Dr. Paul Peachey has placed the English-language reader in his debt by producing a splendid, readable translation.

It must not be inferred from what is said above that the writings of Japanese Zen scholars are not to be regarded as generally reliable. Of course they are; but scholars who are devotees of Zen are no less human than those of other faiths, and there is need for a great deal more to be written about this faith from the pen of scholars who are not devotees. Moreover, there has been all too much ill-advise exploitation of Zen abroad, mainly by foreign “devotees,” so that it is inevitable that there should be a great deal of misunderstanding about the faith in this country. This exploitation has resulted in the strange notion, for example, that Zen can be equated with Japanese...
Buddhism, whereas it is in fact only
one, and by no means the largest,
school of Buddhism in Japan. Fur­
thermore, it has resulted in an ex­
treme idealization of Zen which
makes the reality in this country
extremely disillusioning when a
visitor to these islands seeks to learn
what it is all about. And, of course,
no one deplores this exploitation and
misunderstanding more than the
true exponent of Zen as a way of
life.

A History of Zen Buddhism
begins with four chapters dealing
with Zen before it entered China:
(I) "The Mystical Element in Early
Buddhism and Hinayana," (II) "The
Mysticism and Mahayana, (III)
"The Mahayana Sutras and Zen," and
(IV) "The Anticipation of Zen
in Chinese Buddhism." Following
these are four chapters dealing with
Chinese Zen; (V) "Zen Patriarchs
of the Early Period," (VI) "The
High Period of Chinese Zen," (VII)
"Peculiarities of the Five House," and
(VIII) "Spread and Methodo­
logical Development During the
Sung Period," which all together
take up about half of the volume.

The last half deals with (IX)
"The Transplanting of Zen to
Japan," (X) "The Zen Master Dō­
gen," (XI) "The Cultural Influence
of Zen in the Muromachi Period," (XII) "The First Encounter between
Zen and Christianity," (XIII) "Zen
in the Modern Japanese Age," (XIV) "The Zen Mysticism of Ha­
kuin," and finally (XV) "The Es­sence of Zen." This is followed by
24 pages of copious notes, 9 pages
of bibliography, and a very satis­
factory index.

Such being the contents, it goes
without saying that this is a book
which must be read by all who
would understand Zen. Here are
the answers to the many questions
which people have been asking. For
example, the rise and psychological
structure of the Koan are discussed
on pages 126—132, after which
there is an explanation of the two
main streams of Zen — Soto and
Rinzai — both of which are strong
in this country. The technique of
meditation known as Zazen is re­
ferred to at many points in the
volume and presented in some detail
on pages 159—66. Not unnaturally
the final chapter in which the
author sums up "The Essence of
Zen" is especially helpful with its discussion of "History and Form," "The Experience of Satori," "The Psychological Interpretation of Satori," and "Natural Mysticism." But probably all but a very few specialists will find on almost every page new information that provides a better understanding of the meaning of Zen and the multitudinous ways in which Zen has influenced the culture of this country.

It may seem inappropriate, then, to say that something is lacking, because actually nothing is. But there is an urgent need for an objective evaluation of the place of Zen in contemporary Japanese society, and no one is better qualified for this task than is the author. It is to be hoped, therefore, that he will do this in the not too distant future.

Dr. Domoulin, who was born in the Rhineinland, came to Japan in 1935. He has done postgraduate work at Tokyo University, and currently is professor of Philosophy and the History of Religion at Sophia University in Tokyo. By his arduous study of Zen, he has placed every student of Buddhism in his debt. W. P. W.