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## Book Review: *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue.*

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***The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue.* Edited by Catherine Cornille. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, xvii + 490 pp.**

THE last 25 years have seen a plethora of studies looking at inter-religious dialogue from the basis of one particular tradition encountering another (e.g. Hindu-Christian, Shinto-Buddhist); focusing on the participants themselves and how their experience and particular practices changes the encounter (e.g. monastics, women); tying dialogue to social action and particular social and private practices (e.g. peace-building, art, worship); and finally thinking about what makes dialogue possible and the academic areas and practices that have arisen from it (e.g. scriptural reasoning and comparative theology). This volume, edited finely by Catherine Cornille, a leading expert, is unique in the field. It covers all the areas just mentioned and more with detailed studies by many of the major figures in comparative theology, theology of religions and the individual dialogues themselves. Part I consists of studies of topics of central importance to the internal practice of inter-religious dialogue as well as the relationship between dialogue and various critical issues arising from it. In Francis Clooney's excellent chapter on comparative theology, he holds that there is a necessary distinction and interpenetration of comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue with the former an internal version of the latter. Paul Knitter, in a tour-de-force chapter on inter-religious dialogue and social action, argues that a post-liberal "particularism" has led to the denial that religions can ever have any common ground because they are "incommensurable." One needs, therefore, a socially engaged

dialogue where the participants find what is common amid all the diversity and provide a common response to it: unnecessary suffering. This binds religions together in a "community of conversation" bent on removing suffering with new cooperative guidelines for dialogue: com-compassion, con-version, col-laboration, com-prehension and com-munion. Inter-religious dialogue becomes a species of liberation theology. Part II is a series of case studies of inter-religious dialogue, encounters and relations organized from the most ancient encounters (Buddhist-Hindu, Jewish-Christian) to more recent meetings of traditions (Confucian-Jewish, Mormon-Evangelical). Anantanand Rambachan's chapter is one of the best. It looks at the response of major figures in the Hindu tradition to Christianity (from Rammohan Roy to Gandhi and Savarkar) and how their ideas have shaped the present dialogue. His is a quite damning conclusion: both Hindus and Christians are stuck in mutual stereotyping making for a superficial and limited dialogue. There is a need for sustained theological engagement between the traditions with a greater commitment to justice and the overcoming of systematic oppression. The one area where this volume might be said to suffer is in (the perhaps inevitable) particular viewpoint of the case studies which usually only reflect one side of a dialogue. But a volume that reflects the true diversity of the different dialogues would be twice this size. Moreover, it is not clear the field itself has yet reached a stage of development where the discussion is extensive enough that one can easily

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summarize the nuances of each side. Until that time, this volume is a great gift for practitioners, teachers and students of the continuing encounter with the religious Other.

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