



January 1988

Hindu-Christian Dialogue: A Review

Harold Coward

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/jhcs>



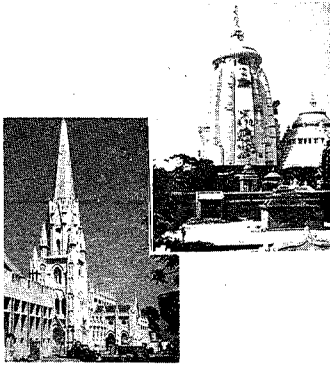
Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Coward, Harold (1988) "Hindu-Christian Dialogue: A Review," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*: Vol. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1003>

The *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* is a publication of the [Society for Hindu-Christian Studies](#). The digital version is made available by Digital Commons @ Butler University. For questions about the Journal or the Society, please contact cbauman@butler.edu. For more information about Digital Commons @ Butler University, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.



HINDU-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

BULLETIN

Volume 1
Autumn 1988

Introducing the Bulletin

The Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin is a scholarly journal published jointly at the Calgary Institute for the Humanities, Calgary, Canada and at the Institute of Philosophy and Culture, Madras, India. The annual issues will present articles, book reviews, viewpoint essays and news items on Hinduism and Christianity and their interrelationship based upon historical materials and contemporary experience.

Materials selected for publication will be balanced between historical research and contemporary practice, and, where possible, should employ analytical and theoretical analysis set within the context of our shared human experience. The aim of the journal is to create a world-wide forum for the presentation of Hindu-Christian scholarly studies, book reviews and news of past and upcoming events. Contributions are invited for the next issue and should be addressed to either the Editor or Co-Editor. All articles are subject to review before acceptance and may receive editorial modifications in the course of publication. In the early stage of the Bulletin's development only brief articles of no longer than 10pp double spaced typing with notes at the end will be accepted for consideration. Please send news items of publications, books to be reviewed, conferences, dialogue meetings, research activities, special events, etc. to the Editors. Your comments on this first issue are welcomed by the editors. It is our hope that this Bulletin will serve to foster solid scholarship in the area of Hindu-Christian Studies.

Editor: Harold Coward
Calgary Institute for the Humanities
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2N 1N4
(for correspondence from the world except India)
Co-Editor: Anand Amaladass
Institute of Philosophy and Culture
Madras, India 600 041
(for correspondence from within India)

Hindu-Christian Dialogue: A Review

Hindu-Christian dialogue has had a long and checkered history. Up until the beginning of this century most of the Hindu-Christian interaction took place in India. The first half of this century saw the expansion of Hindu-Christian discussion to Europe and North America. World-wide pluralism in the decades since the Fifties has resulted in a gradual intensification of this interaction at both the lay and scholarly levels. But aside from sporadic events, there has been no broad and sustained Hindu-Christian dialogue.

Recent scholarship has shown that there was considerable trade and intellectual contact between India and the Graeco-Roman world during the first few centuries after Christ.¹ Hindu thought seems to have influenced the Neo-Platonists and is specifically commented upon by Clement of Alexandria (C.E.200). During the Medieval Period, however, this early interaction deteriorated into a Christianized myth based on Biblical allegories which painted India as a land

griffons, monsters and demons lying somewhere East of the terrestrial Paradise.² There is much speculation regarding early Christian activity in India. According to the fourth-century Christian historian, Eusebius, St. Thomas was allotted a mission territory reaching across northwest India as far as the Indus, although no definite trace of Christianity can be found in that region. Tradition, however, continues to connect Thomas with India. Gregory, Bishop of Tours (Ca. 580 C.E.), mentions that Thomas's relics rest in an elaborate church in South India and Marco Polo (ca. 1290) locates this church in Mylapore just South of Madras. There is definite evidence of a Persian, perhaps Nestorian, Christian community in Southern India in the seventh or eighth century, but there seems to have been little Christian impact upon Hinduism.³

In this Issue

| | |
|--|----|
| Introducing the Bulletin... | 1 |
| Hindu-Christian Dialogue; a Review | |
| by Harold Coward... | 1 |
| Book Reviews... | 5 |
| Publications... | 7 |
| Viewpoints: | |
| Dialogue in India | |
| by Anand Amaladass... | 7 |
| Dialogue in the Modern West | |
| by Klaus Klostermaier... | 8 |
| NEWS: | |
| Three Dialogue Centres in India... | 9 |
| Ashramites meet at Varanasi... | 11 |
| Hindu-Christian Dialogue Conference in Calgary... | 11 |
| Future Issues... | 11 |

It was with the arrival of the British and Portuguese traders in India in the seventeenth century that the way was paved for Christian missionaries from Europe. As early as 1573 the Emperor Akbar summoned Jesuit Christians from Goa to appear before him and take part in a theological debate, but it was not until the Moghul empire collapsed and the British took control to protect their trading interests that the Christian missionaries arrived in force. British rulers wanted to govern the Hindus according to Hindu law and religion, and so they established the Asiatic Society of Bengal for the study of Indian philosophy and literature. Christian missionaries also began taking an interest in Hindu thought—mainly to be able to criticize it and gain converts.⁴ Some, however, learned Sanskrit and became serious scholars of the Hindu texts. The cumulative effort of these and other activities produced the Hindu Renaissance, which aimed at rationalizing and reforming Hinduism.

Rammohun Roy (1771-1833) set out to recover from obscurity the ideas of Vedic Hinduism, which had become neglected in favour of shallow idol worship. Roy was deeply interested in the new religious teachings of the Christian missionaries. He read the *New Testament* and extracted those ethical teachings that he felt were universally consistent with the laws of nature. These he translated into Sanskrit as *The Precepts of Jesus* so as to improve the hearts and minds of his fellow Hindus.⁵ Because he had rejected the divinity of Christ, Roy caused an uproar among the Calcutta Christian missionaries. After more than three years of debate with the Christians, Roy began to write in "...Vindication of the Hindu Religion Against the Attacks of Christian Missionaries."⁶ In public letters he effectively argued that Hinduism is not inferior to Christianity (as the missionaries were suggesting), but that the mysteries of each religion equally transcend human understanding so that one cannot be preferred to the other.⁷ In order to defend Hinduism against the Christian charges that it was a pagan and idolatrous religion, Roy and his colleagues set out to reform it. For this purpose the Brahma Samaj was formed. Its goal was to "purify Hinduism and immunize it against the

Christian ideas and practices."⁸ This strategy initiated by Rammohun Roy was passed to Keshub Chunder Sen, and then to Dayananda Sarasvati. But before moving on it is worth noting the role played by Roy in the introduction of English into Hindu education, an action which has certainly encouraged Hindu-Christian dialogue.

It was Roy's view that the only way to modernize Hindus was through the introduction of English language education. He opposed British attempts to introduce traditional Sanskrit education, and instead argued effectively for modern Western learning through the medium of English.⁹ The subsequent emphasis on English and lack of stress on Sanskrit has had an impact on Hinduism which has yet to be evaluated. Certainly it turned the minds of young Indians to the West and Christianity, and away from the traditional wisdom of Hindu Sanskrit texts.

Keshub Chunder Sen was willing to go much further than Rammohun Roy in appropriating Christianity. Indeed in the last years of his life he did something reminiscent of Akbar—he experimented in synthesizing elements from the major world religions. "Although he borrowed devotional and yogic practices from Hinduism, he drew even more heavily on Christian teachings and practices."¹⁰ Sen went so far that he was virtually excommunicated from Hinduism, and his conversion to Christianity was constantly expected. Whereas Roy had accepted only the ethical teachings of Jesus, Keshub embraced Christ as the fulfillment of Hinduism's devotional strivings. He argued for the Asiatic nature of Christ, the Apostles and the Gospel and concluded "in Christ, Europe and Asia, the East and the West, may learn to find harmony and unity."¹¹ Keshub not only thought that Christianity and Hinduism could coalesce, but also Islam. He thought that the resulting new religion would both sustain India and lead the world into a worldwide spiritual brotherhood. The Hindu religious genius in continuity with the Old and New Testament revelations would, he felt, be able to reconcile all religions, by absorbing "all that is good and noble in each other."¹²

While Chunder Sen was preaching the one extreme of a Christian-Hindu

universal religion in Bengal, an opposing viewpoint was put forth by a stern ascetic Hindu in Northern India. *Dayananda Sarasvati* (1824-1883) was also an ardent reformer, but he wanted to go in the opposite direction from sympathetic dialogue. "Standing foursquare on the authority of the Vedas, he fearlessly denounced the evils of post-Vedic Hinduism."¹³ He was taught complete reverence for the Vedas and a disdain for all later texts. He devoted his life to lecturing on the exclusive authority of the Vedas. Because of the fervor of his reforms and preaching, he was called "the Luther of India." His followers are grouped together in the Arya Samaj which became especially strong in Punjab, and now, with the emigrations from India to many countries, has spread around the world. Dayananda's approach to other religions and other groups within Hinduism is aggressive and militant. This marks a considerable change from the traditional Hindu attitudes of passive tolerance for all other beliefs. Dayananda's approach to Christianity was to engage a minister in debate and to demonstrate the logical inconsistencies of Christian belief.¹⁴ A very "Christian-looking" system of religiously sponsored schools was established (from preschool to university) along with the creation of a class of specially educated paid preachers (*upadeshaks*) for proselytization purposes.¹⁵ The introduction of these new modes of communication served to heighten the communal tensions which had traditionally existed in the Punjab between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. This unfortunate result of Hindu-Christian interaction has left a legacy which still haunts us today.¹⁶

In sharp contrast to the confrontational thrust of Dayananda and his followers was the statesman like oratory of *Vivekananda*. He appeared on the world stage when he addressed the First World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. He subsequently toured North America and England preaching the spiritual riches that Hinduism had to contribute to the modern West. Since most of his listeners were Christians, this preaching mission was an early instigator of dialogue between Hindus and Christians in the West.¹⁷ Vivekananda's inspira-

tional preaching was followed up by *Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's* sophisticated scholarly presentation of Hinduism to the modern West. The seeds for Radhakrishnan's approach were sown by A.G. Hogg, missionary to India, and Principal of Madras Christian College, where Radhakrishnan took his first University degree. Hogg gave careful consideration to points of contact between Hindu and Christian thought.¹⁸ Following the lead of Hogg, Radhakrishnan appealed to the universalist aspects of Christianity that would show contiguity with the Vedantic teachings of Hinduism. Radhakrishnan represents the approach of orthodox Hinduism toward dialogue with Christianity. Hinduism and the Vedas are still the ultimate truth of religion, but a truth which may be shown to encompass the highest Christian teachings and thus be universally acceptable.¹⁹ Certainly his appointment to the Spalding Chair of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford and his lectures there from 1936-38 significantly raised the profile of Hindu-Christian dialogue in the English speaking West. In Radhakrishnan Rammohun Roy's goal is realized. Through its various dialogues with Christianity, Hinduism revived and reformed itself. And now, in the 20th century, Hinduism presents itself to Christianity as *guru* or spiritual guide to the future. This is especially seen in the way Gandhi's life and teachings have been studied and emulated by such Western Christian leaders as Martin Luther King Jr. In a quieter but more widespread way, the dialogue with Christianity has continued in the West in Universities and Colleges where courses on Hinduism are taught. The preaching approach of Vivekananda continues through the Ramakrishna Missions distributed throughout Britain and North America and through the more recent International Society for Krishna Consciousness movement.²⁰

World War II and its aftermath marked a hiatus in activities, but the past two decades has seen a gradual revival of interest in Hindu-Christian dialogue through publications and conferences, especially in India. Writing in the mid-sixties Wilfred Cantwell Smith gave notice to Christian theologians that all future theology will have to be worked out in dialogue with theologians of other

religions.²¹ Major initiatives in this direction came from Indian Christians. For example Dr. P.D. Devananda's efforts as Director of The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore were aimed at establishing Hindu-Christian dialogue at a deeper level than had previously existed. In India, it was observed, "Most inter-religious meetings...are still full of 'parallel monologues'."²² In its hosting of conferences and through its journal, *Religion and Society*, Devananda's hope has been at least partially realized. The Institute has played a major role, especially during the seventies, in initiating serious Hindu-Christian dialogue. Especially notable in this regard was the Institute's "Consultation on the Praxis of Inter-Faith Dialogue" in 1978 which brought together leading scholars on dialogue from all over India. Several of the papers from this Consultation were published in volume 26 of *Religion and Society* and provide a good evaluation of the state of Hindu-Christian Dialogue within India. One weakness of the Consultation, however, was that Hindu scholars did not have equal representation with the Christian scholars. The Consultation emphasized that Hindu-Christian dialogue should transform the existing religious ideas of clean-unclean and sacred-profane in both religions because they militate against the realization of an inclusive human community in India. A particularly good paper by A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel,²³ which focuses on popular Hindu experience, argues that it is misleading to frame Hindu-Christian dialogue strictly in terms of the classical Hindu philosophical systems. Several of the Consultation papers reported on the practical experience of Christian ashrams dedicated to Hindu-Christian dialogue. Sara Grant's report offers a delightful solution to the problem of how to handle the desire of Hindu colleagues to participate in the Eucharist.²⁴ Her report also conveys the necessity for Hindus and Christians to live together in community if real dialogue is to develop. Another issue dealt with in these reports is the seeming conflict between the approach of dialogue and the traditional Christian conception of missionary evangelism.²⁵

A number of Western scholars have

also made helpful recent contributions to the revival of the dialogue. In 1966 Ninian Smart's *The Yogi and the Devotee* explored the Hindu tradition from the context of the Christian notion of Natural Theology.²⁶ Smart found several points where Hindu thought could bring illumination to Christianity. Based on his experience as Bishop of Madras, Lesslie Newbigin in his 1969 *The Finality of Christ* stressed that the Christian dialogue must include not only intellectual understanding of Hinduism, but also an attempt to enter into the feelings and experiences which underlie Hindu teachings. Newbigin also notes that although the commitment to Christ is something that can never be left behind, still the Christian must expect his or her own religion to be corrected as a result of dialogue with Hinduism.²⁷ The classic work of the sixties was Klaus Klostermaier's *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* which was published in German and English and read widely in both Catholic and Protestant circles.²⁸ Residing in Vrindaban, a North Indian pilgrimage centre for devotees of Lord Krishna, Klostermaier lived a life of dialogue for two years. Dialogue began by joining his Hindu colleagues on pilgrimage, understanding their devotional practise, developing a deep friendship with them, and only then entering into theological dialogue in which the differences between Hinduism and Christianity were explored. The subtle but influential factor of the influence of climate and country is powerfully explored in a chapter titled "Theology at 120°F. With his "Hindu brother" Swami Yogananda Tirtha, Klostermaier read the Gospel of John and explained it line by line in *guru*-student style. Klostermaier's experience is a dialogue of everyday life and of experiments in faith in India. It is a dialogue based in friendship but with a deep and underlying scholarly quest. Lacking Klostermaier's existential involvement, but still of value is the abstract academic comparison of Hindu Vaishnavism and Christianity by Professor N.K. Devaraja, published in 1969.²⁹

A good but rather narrow focus is presented by Sisir Kumar's 1973 study of how the Hindu-Christian dialogue in Bengal produced the "Bengal Renaissance" in literature and religion.³⁰

Another historical study worthy of note is Eric Sharpe's *Faith Meets Faith: Some Christian Attitudes to Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Sharpe suggests that the lack of progress in the dialogue of the preceding decades (prior to 1975) was largely due to "the progressive disintegration of Christian theological thought, and the rapid changes which have taken place in that external world in which the encounter of faiths has to be played out."³¹

During the past decades, discussion on the methodology of Hindu-Christian dialogue has become popular. M.M. Thomas suggests that Hindu syncretism, from the Christian perspective, is unavoidable. Just as the Christian sees the work of the "Hidden Christ" in Hinduism, so Hindus, like Radhakrishnan, see in Christianity aspects of "Hidden Vedanta."³² In the modern transformation of every religion, says Thomas, the meeting with another religion plays an important part—as for example in the role played by Christianity in the Hindu renaissance.³³ Hinduism, following its traditional method in the debating of differing views, is teaching Christian theologians that the first and necessary step in the process is the mastering and restating of the opposing position.³⁴ Only from the ground of a shared basic knowledge of each other can Hindu-Christian dialogue successfully proceed. A Hindu scholar living in the U.S.A., Bibhuti Yadav examines Radhakrishnan's ontology of religious tolerance and then observes that what it requires from Christianity is the giving up of its notion of a "special revelation" in Christ. To claim "special revelation", says Yadav, is to kill the Absolute and to enthrone oneself and one's own religion as Absolute. This he argues is methodologically unacceptable. Following the Vaisnava Hindu theology of Vallabha, Yadav says the proper methodology is to see God as speaking through the scriptures of all religions and dialogue as the necessity of discussion between God's various words. "Inter religious dialogue is the method of establishing communion between the Words of God, of recognizing that God is specially immanent in and larger than them all."³⁵ A methodologically similar but opposing move is made by a Christian thinker,

James Redington S.J. Redington focuses on the Christian thesis that "God wills to save all people" and sees dialogue as directed toward the understanding of how God is doing so in Hinduism.³⁶ But in his or her study of Hinduism, cautions Redington, the Christian must not make the mistake of choosing a preferred type of Hinduism (e.g. Advaita Vedanta) and act as if this is the only valid one. "This would be the Hindu sectarian mistake (and a Hindu in dialogue could make the corresponding mistake of holding out strongly for one Christian sect over all others)."³⁷ One of the fruits of dialogue may be to teach us how to live tolerantly with the different divisions within our own religion, be it Hindu or Christian.

Aside from the above methodological considerations, recent thinkers also see a most important result of Hindu-Christian interaction as the development of "Inner Dialogue." The notion of inner dialogue is picked up by John A.T. Robinson from Murray Rogers and is developed in Robinson's book *Truth is Two-Eyed*.³⁸ Inner dialogue includes both the impulse which leads one to desire outer or interreligious dialogue and the effects of the outer dialogue on one's own faith. A detailed description is given by Raimundo Panikkar: "an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter of the depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level."³⁹ Panikkar's earlier book *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*⁴⁰ and Robinson's *Truth is Two-Eyed* are excellent examples of such inner dialogue from a Christian perspective. The aim is an inner reflection upon the teachings and practices of the different religion which leads to new insights and integrations in the experience of one's own religion.

The past two decades have seen a marked increase in Hindu-Christian dialogue. Advances have been made in methodology as well as in recognition of the inner impact of dialogue. This has been particularly true of the Christian side of the dialogue, with significant leadership being provided by Indian Christians. Today Western Christian theologians are more and more doing their theologizing as an "inner dialogue" in which the other world religions, including Hinduism, have an impact. With a few notable exceptions

(e.g. Yadav) contemporary Hindu thinkers do not seem to be engaged with Christianity in the way their predecessors were at the turn of the Century (e.g. Roy, Sen, Dayananda and Radhakrishnan).

Notes

1. Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965, pp. 12-19.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
3. The above summary is based on "Note on Christianity in India" in N.G. Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature*. Delhi: Manohar, 1970, pp. 521ff.
4. P.T. Raju, "The Development of Indian Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13, p. 540.
5. W.T. De Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. II. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, pp. 23-25.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
7. Rammohun Roy, "Letter to the Editor of the Bengal Hurkanu," May 23, 1823, reprinted in De Bary, p. 28.
8. De Bary, p. 51.
9. Rammohun Roy, "Letter on Education" in De Bary, pp. 40-43.
10. De Bary, p. 64.
11. Keshub Chunder Sen, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia" in De Bary, pp. 68-69.
12. Keshub Chunder Sen, "We Apostles of the New Dispensation" in De Bary, p. 75.
13. De Bary, p. 76.
14. The above summary is based on De Bary, pp. 76-81.
15. G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, p. 13. See also J.F.T. Jordens, "Dayananda Sarasvati and Christianity," *Indian Church History Review*, 15, 1981, pp. 34-47.
16. Kenneth W. Jones, "Communalism in the Punjab," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 28, 1968, pp. 39-40. See also Richard Fox Young, *Resistant Hinduism*, Vienna: The De Nobili Research Library, 1981.
17. De Bary, pp. 94-107.
18. See for e.g. A.G. Hogg, *Karma and Redemption*. Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1909.
19. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.
20. A good example of a serious attempt at dialogue from the Hare Krishna

- movement is found in the recent publication *Christ and Krishna* by Swami Bhaktipada. Moundsville: Bhaktipada Books, 1985. The author is the son of conservative Baptist parents.
21. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972, p. 123.
 22. P.D. Devananda, *Preparation for Dialogue*. Bangalore: The Christian Institute for The Study of Religion and Society, 1964, p. iii.
 23. A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, "The Living Hindu Popular Religious Consciousness and some Reflections on it in the content of Hindu-Christian Dialogue," *Religion and Society*, 26, 1979, pp. 5-25.
 24. Sara Grant, "Reflections on Hindu-Christian Dialogue in an Ashram Context," *Religion and Society*, 26, 1979, pp. 42-58. Grapes and flowers were placed on the altar table and offered to the Hindu participants.
 25. See "Consultation Working Group Reports", *Religion and Society*, 26, 1979, p. 110.
 26. Ninian Smart, *The Yogi and the Devotee*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1968.
 27. Leslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ*. London: SCM Press, 1969, p. 21.
 28. Klaus Klostermaier, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindahan*. London: SCM Press, 1969. See also Klostermaier's "A Hindu-Christian Dialogue on Truth," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 12, 1975, pp. 157-171.
 29. N.K. Devaraja, *Hinduism and Christianity*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969.
 30. Sisir Kumar Das, *The Shadow of the Cross: Christianity and Hinduism in a Colonial Situation*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973.
 31. Eric J. Sharpe, *Faith Meets Faith*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1977, p. 132.
 32. M.M. Thomas, "A Reply to Guru Dutt," *Journal of Religion and Society*, 23/3, 1976, p. 61.
 33. M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969.
 34. Kana Mitra, "A Hindu Self-Reflection," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 17, 1980, 121-122.
 35. Bibhuti S. Yadav, "Vaisnavism on Hans Kung: A Hindu Theology of Religious Pluralism," *Journal of Religion and Society*, 27, 1980, p. 60.
 36. James D. Redington S.J., "The Hindu-Christian Dialogue and the Interior Dialogue," *Theological Studies*, 44, 1983, p. 587.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 595.
 38. John A.T. Robinson, *Truth is Two-Eyed*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979, p. 7. Robinson cites Murray Rogers, "Hindu and Christian—A Moment Breaks" in H. Jai Singh, ed. *Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Bangalore: C.I.S.R.S., 1967, pp. 104-117.
 39. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978, p. 40.
 40. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Revised Edition. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981.

Book Reviews

Klaus Klostermaier, *Indian Theology in Dialogue*, Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1986, Pb. Rs. 32.00

According to Professor Klostermaier, this volume is designed as an explanation, not as a definitive statement, or the preservation of the status quo. It is an attempt to bring into fruitful encounter two traditions in which the author has been personally involved. To this end, Professor Klostermaier seeks to have the traditions speak to each other on central issues such as Hridayavidya, Kristavidya, Samnyasa, Sadhana, Pavitrasastram and Moksa. It is the discussion of these issues in relatively systematic treatment which forms the bulk of the volume. In addition there are chapters on themes such as Hinduism in America and Interreligious Dialogue as a Method for the Study of Religion. While significant in themselves and clearly important to the author, they do not relate well to the treatment of the central issues.

In his initial chapter, Professor Klostermaier asks where Hindus and Christians can meet in dialogue. The answer is twofold. Inner dialogue is necessary if outer dialogue is to be successful. Further, dialogue must be sustained if it is to be fruitful. That is, dialogue must grow out of living together rather than simply talking together. It is this emphasis on personal experience which informs the treatment of the central themes. The author is schooled in

Christian theology, and speaks knowledgeable about Hinduism both as a scholar and as one who has lived with Hindus in their own setting.

In his treatment of the central themes, Professor Klostermaier attempts to present some of the complexity that characterizes both Hindu and Christian positions on each subject. He does not hide the fact that neither Hindus or Christians speak with one voice. Nor does he attempt to hide the fact that there are tensions between the traditions. Indeed, he emphasizes the fact that there are points at which the traditions approach each other and that there are points of real tension. For example, he points out that the New Testament, like Samkara, knows the basic discrimination between realms of change and changelessness, but admits that Samkara's distinction is clearly more radical and therefore problematic. Similarly, he admits, that while both traditions can in some respects be seen as sacramental, Hindu understandings of sacraments are not necessarily the same as Christian understandings of sacraments. While such distinctions are acknowledged, the emphasis throughout is clearly on similarities rather than on differences. At times, the treatment of the themes is somewhat one-sided. The chapter on Sadhana, for example, deals largely with Hindu views of Sadhana rather than the issue of how these views intersect with Christianity and how these views can be made to come alive within Christianity. Further, in dealing with Hindu views, Klostermaier emphasizes bhakti more than any other Hindu perspective. This is instructive in that it may point to some of the limits of dialogue.

Professor Klostermaier asserts that the goal of dialogue on these issues is not the replacement of one view by another, not synthesis and not the assertion of sameness; rather, it is the evolution of something new, a fulfilment of that which we now sense partially. One suspects that this evolutionary view is informed by a type of fulfilment theology in which Christ is seen as the fulfilment of that which exists partially in Hinduism. For example, he asserts, in his treatment of sacramentology, that Christ brings fulfilment to Hindu sacraments. Such an assertion may be convincing to the Christian, but not to the