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Book Review: "Christ as Common Ground"

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Jim Douglass' orientation is that of a Christian peace-activist who finds in Gandhi a challenge to Christian discipleship. As he puts it, "The logic of non-violence is the logic of crucifixion and leads the person of non-violence into the heart of the suffering Christ." (p. 106) To see the connection between non-violent action and redemption as Douglass does, however, is to reinforce Gandhi's insistence that redemption can never be once for all, and if anything illustrates this in Gandhi's own lifetime it was the history of Calcutta and the rest of Bengal during the months and years following Gandhi's fast unto death (an event of which Douglass makes special mention).

In conclusion the challenge of Gandhi to Christian mission is taken up by Bob McCahill,

a Maryknoll priest with 16 years experience in Bangladesh. Mission as sharing, as service, provides its own witness. The approach personified in Fr. McCahill is deeply in tune with the alteration in attitude that Gandhi recommended to missionaries of an earlier generation.

All in all this volume which is addressed to Christian readers encourages a further dialogue between Gandhi and the so-called Christian world, a dialogue which can well take up issues which have arisen since Gandhi's time.

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Christ as Common Ground: A Study of Christianity and Hinduism. Kathleen Healy. Foreword by Bede Griffiths. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1990, xiv + 218p.

SISTER HEALY EXPLAINS in her preface that this work is an "outgrowth of six years of study of the relationship of Christianity and Hinduism in India." She spent fourteen months in 1976/77 at the University of Madras as Fulbright Professor of American Literature, and spent most of 1980 as a research-scholar in India, conducting interviews with "innumerable theologians, philosophers, swamis, gurus, sannyasis, and 'ordinary people'." The author explicitly states that her book is "in no sense a 'survey' of dialogue between Hindus and Christians in India." She expresses her "firm conviction that the spiritual union of East and West is crucial in our world. Western Christians can no longer isolate themselves within the intellectual and geographical limitations of a narrow tunnel view of Christianity." She also notes that "it is of primary importance for Christians to discover why millions of Hindus worship Christ, but often view the Christian church as 'Churchianity'." Sister Healy wishes to offer some guidance and show "a direction acceptable to Hindu and Christian alike." Sister

Healy singles out Raimundo Panikkar and Bede Griffiths as having been particularly helpful in her enterprise and acknowledges her indebtedness to their ideas.

In Chapter I, "The Challenge to find a Common Ground," she identifies as the common ground on which a Hindu-Christian dialogue can develop "the Christ who existed from the beginning" on whom "Christians have no monopoly." (8) She carries those ideas further in the next chapters "Christ beyond Christianity: Jesus Christ, the Hindu, and the Church!" and "Toward a More Universal Perspective: Spiritual Interchange between Christian and Hindu," in which she provides a kind of survey of the Indian situation, quoting extensively the interviews which she had conducted. She states that "dialogue between Christian and Hindu today is not a choice for the Indian Christian but a necessity." (p. 35)

Her own creative contribution to Hindu-Christian dialogue begins with chapter IV "Foundations of Spiritual Fecundation," making use of one of Panikkar's favourite images.

Instead of seeing Christianity and Hinduism as hostile towards each other, or unrelated because of their different origins and orientations, Sister Healy sees them in "Spiritual Relationship" (Chapter V), detailing in Ch. VI her views on "Eastern and Western Paths in Conflict and Complementarity." The optimistic note of the whole work finds its appropriate climax in the last chapter: "Hope in the Spirit as Ground for Union of Christianity and Hinduism." To let her speak for herself: "And so I arrive at a firm hope in the love of Christ in the Spirit as a ground of Hindu-Christian communion. I have faith that this union will one day emerge in the mystery of an Indian faith that will unveil the glory of Christ.... Christ belongs to all men and women. All belong to him."

Sister Healy obviously knows and loves India and has immersed herself deeply into the issues of Hindu-Christian dialogue. She was not satisfied with collecting information about dialogue, but conducted dialogues, which apparently confirmed her belief in the possibility, the necessity and the worth-whileness of Hindu-Christian dialogue. It is only to be hoped that her book will be read by many American Christians, most of whom still cling to a sectarian Western notion of Christ and Christianity, representing all the stereotypes of a "Churchianity" which Hindus resent so much. What is especially refreshing about Sister Healy's "Christ as Common Ground" is her focusing upon the central issues of Christianity instead of on Church politics and wrangling about influence and positions.

On the negative side the reviewer notes that there is no reference to either literature or interviews later than 1980. While it does take time to get books through presses, a whole decade of missing records (a decade in which a great deal of dialogue took place and in which much was written) is difficult to justify when speaking about such a contemporary phenomenon, as Hindu-Christian dialogue in India is. Equally, while accepting the author's disclaimer, that the book does not attempt to provide a survey of Hindu-Christian dialogue, certain omissions of basic literature of dialogue or efforts of a significant and original nature are hard to justify. Thus the bibliography does not contain a basic work like Robin Boyd's *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, which since its first appearance in 1969 has come out in several new editions and reprints and is, undoubtedly, the most comprehensive and most authoritative work on the issue. Similarly, Sister Vandana's ashram and publications would have deserved a place in the book, more so since they reflect an Indian Christian woman's contributions. The author did not follow up her 1980 interviews. Many of the interviewees are no longer alive—a fact which does not find mention in the book itself.

Notwithstanding those flaws, the reviewer wishes to recommend the book highly for what it *does* offer and the spirit in which it is written.

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Philosophy of Religion in Hindu Thought. Anand Amaladass (trans. and ed). New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1989, (Sri Garib Dass Oriental Series No. 93).

DR. GERHARD OBERHAMMER, Head of the Department of Indology at the University of Vienna has been for many years one of the most prominent promoters of scholarly en-

counter between Indian and Western Christian thought. He organized several symposia devoted to central issues in Indian and Christian traditions and is the founder of the "De Nobili