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Book Review: "The Indian Christiad"

Bettina Bäumer

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other, the special Hindu understanding of tolerance and truth (a must-read for Christians in dialogue with Hindus), the powerful impact of devotional poetry and classical dance, and the special *guru*-student relationship, are all given sensitive exploration. Much of this material is usually left out of introductory texts on Hinduism, yet it is of crucial importance in understanding the tradition from the inside.

Part 2 of the book focuses on reason and morality. Here again Lipner's approach is fresh and effective. Rather than approaching these issues through classical Hindu philosophy, he engages them in a much more accessible way through their appearance in story – namely the dicing incident in the Mahabharata and the Gita's contribution to the notion of *sva-dharma*. The second chapter of this part examines "Morality and the Person" and concludes with a discussion of the nature of the human person from the Hindu perspective. Lipner's analysis is helpful – especially at a time when issues of ethics in health care and the environment make it essential that the ethical agent in each tradition be understood. However, I have a slight quarrel in that Lipner's emphasis on the spirit as the centre of gravity for the human person (p.241ff) ignores the important influence of the "collective self" engendered by the extended family (see Alan Roland's *In Search of Self in India and Japan*). It also fails to take account of the body-mind-environment *Gestalt* of human identity in Hinduism that Ariel Glucklich so effectively demonstrated in his recent book *The Sense of Adharma*, but of course this was only published in 1994.

Part 3 concludes the reader's introduction to Hinduism by examining that tradition's unique way of reckoning time, space, and eternity. These are ideas I usually present at the beginning when introducing Hinduism. Yet I must confess putting them at the end worked very well. Having a much broader understanding of the tradition before coming to ideas such as the beginningless cycles of *yugas*, rebirth, and final release probably enables a deeper understanding to be achieved. Chapter 11 offers a particularly rich descriptions of how the sacred manifests itself in a myriad of forms in Hinduism: animate, inanimate, and human. The Himalayas, the Ganges, pilgrimage to Varanasi, Tantric worship, and issues raised regarding the status of women are all included. The final chapter offers the many ways and means of realizing release in Hinduism – from participation in festivals like Diwali, to various forms of worship or *puja* and the practice of ascetic or devotional *yoga*.

This is a very well written book which will hold the interest of any willing reader. While the author has limited himself to the Sanskrit traditions, the Hinduism that is evoked is rich and well rounded, with a warm and appealing human face. The chapters are supported by careful and scholarly, but not excessive notes. And there is a brief but helpful Sanskrit glossary. This book has a permanent place on my shelf of Hinduism introductory texts and will be valued by my students.

Harold Coward
University of Victoria

The Indian Christiad. Anand Amaladass and Richard Fox Young. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1995, xvii+378 pp.

IF SANSKRIT HAS been the medium of all Indian religions, why should it not be a

vehicle for the Christian faith in India with a long history of Christianity? In fact, the

Christian contribution to Sanskrit literature is a little-known chapter of Sanskrit literature, conversely, the contribution of Sanskrit to Christianity has not been sufficiently explored. The present book fills an important gap in this sense, and one has to congratulate the authors for their painstaking work. Being both Sanskrit scholars and theologians, Anand Amaladass being Catholic and Richard F. Young Rprotestant, they were ideally prepared to fulfil such a task, which bridges the two disciplines of indology and theology, and in an ecumenical spirit too.

If Christians were eager to express themselves in Sanskrit, they were motivated at various levels. A more linguistic and literary motivation was the great enthusiasm of the authors for the beauty of the Sanskrit language and its capacity to express religious ideas and feelings: "This was a language they had come to cherish as a boundless ocean unsurpassed in depth, beauty, and precision by any other Church language of antiquity, Greek and Latin notwithstanding" (p. vii). The other motivation was certainly an apologetic one, the desire to convince the Hindus of the truth of the Christian faith. The authors of these texts were theologically children of their times, when missionary zeal was prevailing over the recognition of the values of other religions. But in spite of this motivation, the very fact of expressing themselves in the classical language of the Indian religions contributed remarkably to a potential dialogue. Besides, the choice of Sanskrit terms for Christian concepts represented an important theological contribution.

Interestingly, most of the authors of Christian Sanskrit texts – called "Church Sanskrit" by R. F. Young – were Europeans who got deeply immersed in the beauty and the richness of the language. The entire attitude is summed up in the quotation of M. Monier-Williams, the author of the still most used Sanskrit-English Dictionary:

Such, indeed, is the exuberance and flexibility of this language and its power

of compounding words, that when it has been, so to speak, baptized and thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of Christianity, it will probably be found, next to Hebrew and Greek, the most expressive vehicle of Christian truth. (1861:54; quoted on p.1)

Among the authors represented in this collection, only Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, the Bengali brahmin convert (1861-1907), is of Indian origin. Otherwise not many Indian Christians wanted to write in Sanskrit. Rather, some Hindu Pandits who appreciated Christ wrote compositions on Christian themes.

The selection excludes Sanskrit translations of the Bible, for this entire field has not yet been fully researched and would require more than one volume. The authors included in the anthology belong to the first half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, whose hymns are still sung in present-day churches and Christian ashrams, is the most recent author. One would wish that the selection be continued and brought to the contemporary context in a subsequent volume.

The following texts are represented in this anthology: *Satyavedasārasaṅgraha* and Sanskrit versions of common prayers by Jean Calmette, a large extract from the voluminous *Śrīkṛstasāṅgītā* by W. H. Mill, and texts by the Sanskrit scholar John Muir. The texts are given in roman transliteration, followed by an English translation, and the Sanskrit in *devanāgarī* at the bottom of the page.

Part one consists of a Historical Overview of Church Sanskrit by Dr Young, a piece of thorough and painstaking research, as is the well-researched bibliography at the end of the book, which will be very useful for anyone wanting to pursue the subject.

The translations of the texts by A. Amaladass, and the last one by G. Gispert-Sauch, do justice to the poetical and religious content of these texts, some being more didactic, others in the form of prayers

and hymns (*stotra*). It is laudable that the editors have left out the more offensive apologetic passages which would defeat the purpose of such an anthology, and which instead of serving as a bridge between the Hindu and Christian traditions, would lead back into a bygone theological era of mutual condemnation.

While congratulating the authors on their thorough and at the same time poetic work, one hopes that this book will not remain stacked away in research libraries. One hopes that it will have a living impact in the following ways: 1) The Christians in India could use these texts as prayers and hymns and thereby imbibe the depth and beauty of Sanskrit expressions of their faith; 2) These Sanskrit compositions, even though they were to a great extent apologetical in their approach, should and could contribute to a

dialogue between Hindus and Christians, Sanskrit being the privileged medium, at least in its terminology and religious-philosophical associations; 3) Present-day theologians, in India, but in other parts of Asia as well, should reflect on the theological implications and on the rich potential of Sanskrit. Even W. H. Mill was, in his time, convinced that what could be done with Greek for the Christian faith could also be done with Sanskrit" (p. XIII). In our present-day context, theologians should realize that going back to Sanskrit does not mean a conservative attitude, but rather opens up doors of understanding between different religious traditions.

Bettina Bäumer
Varasani

Practice and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue. A Critical Study of the Indian Christian Attempts Since Vatican II. Jose Kuttianimattathil. Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1995, xxiii+757 pp.

THIS VOLUME WAS originally presented as a doctoral dissertation in the Faculty of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Fr Jacques Dupuis, who guided this research work, writes the foreword saying that this is an "impressive witness to the theological ferment that characterizes the Indian Church" on interreligious dialogue and the extensive bibliography (105 pages) is cited as ample evidence of this ferment.

The author himself points out the scope or "the limitations" of this study. First of all, it covers the period from the end of the Second Vatican Council (1965) to 1991 when the Roman Document on "Dialogue and Proclamation" appeared. Secondly, it leaves out the individual denominations, since they were too many, taking only the official position of the Church. Thirdly, it makes no attempt to give a comprehensive

picture of the development in the theology of dialogue and it looks at specific problems of terminology and their significance from the Christian point of view.

The book is divided into four parts: 1) The beginning and progress of interreligious dialogue in India; 2) The collective thinking of the Indian churches on issues related to dialogue; 3) Responses of Indian Christian theologians to the major issues on dialogue; 4) Overall assessment and prospects.

It is certainly an impressive and well-documented source book on interreligious dialogue. It is especially interesting to read the history of the debate on the uniqueness of Christ. Different Indian theologians are grouped under different models of Christology like the rigid-uniqueness models, Christocentric models, pluralistic models, and so on, along with a critique of