



January 1999

Reports & News

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Recommended Citation

(1999) "Reports & News," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*: Vol. 12, Article 11.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1209>

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REPORTS & NEWS

Society for Hindu-Christian Studies News

1999 Annual General Meeting

The 1999 Annual General Meeting of the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies will be held at the American Academy of Religion / Society of Biblical Literature 1999 Annual Meeting, Boston MA, Sheraton Boston and Hynes Convention Center.

Friday, 19 November 1999

7:30 – 10:00 p.m.

Panel Discussion of Julius Lipner's *Brahma-bandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*.

Harold Coward, University of Victoria, Presiding.

Panellists: **Swami Tygananda**, Vedanta Society; **Rachel Fell McDermott**, Barnard College; **Denise Hanusek**, Harvard University.

Respondent: **Julius Lipner**, University of Cambridge.

For further information, contact Mary McGee (mm383@columbia.edu) or visit the Society's website (<http://www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-1>).

Saturday, 20 November 1999

9:00 – 11:30 a.m. [Location TBA, see AAR/SBL Program]

9:00 – 10:45 a.m.: Panel Discussion: "The Conversion Controversy and the Hindu-Christian Encounter in India Today".

Lance Nelson, University of San Diego, Presiding.

Panellists: **Sushil Mittal**, University of Florida; **John Thattamanil**, Millsaps College; **Ronald Neufeldt**, University of Calgary; **Leslie Orr**, Concordia University.

10:45 a.m.: Annual Business Meeting

Both parts of the meeting are open to all who may be interested. For further information, contact Mary McGee at mm383@columbia.edu, or visit the Society's website (<http://www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-1>).

Society to Oversee *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin*

At the 1998 Annual Meeting the Society's Board of Directors' new policies for the *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin* were established. The Society's Board will now oversee the *Bulletin*, and appoint the editor and editorial board members.

The founding editor, **Harold Coward**, was appointed for a five-year term. New members appointed to the Editorial Board are **William Cenkner**, Catholic University of America; **Rachel Fell McDermott**, Barnard College; **Vasudha Narayanan**, University of Florida; and **Deepak Sarma**, Vanderbilt University.

Retiring Editorial Board members are **R. Balasubramanian**, University of Pondicherry; **Margaret Chatterjee**, Westminster College, Oxford; **J.T.K. Daniel**, Serampore College; **David C. Scott**, United Theological College; and **Bibhuti Yadav**, Temple University. The Board of the Society expressed its gratitude to these scholars for supporting the *Bulletin* over the years.

Editorial Board members will be expected to contribute at least one article for the *Bulletin* during their term of office. The retiring Society president will be asked to write a "state of the discipline" article at the end of his/her term of office.

The Board also agreed that the 1998 panel papers on "Ritual Life of Indian Christians" should be published because of their interest to a wider audience. Initially a

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supplementary issue of the *Bulletin* was considered. However, due to cost factors, it was agreed to make the papers available via the Society's website. Presenters were **Eliza F. Kent**, University of Chicago; **Matthew N. Schmalz**, The College of the Holy Cross; **Margaret L. Meibohm**, University of Pennsylvania; and **Selva J. Raj**, Albion College.

Hindu-Christian Studies Book Award

The Society for Hindu-Christian Studies invites nominations for the Best Book in Hindu Studies, 1997-1999.

At its Annual Meeting in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion in 2000, the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies will give the award to a book published in the time period 1997-1999. To celebrate the winning book, the Society will sponsor a panel discussion of the book, to which (if he or she can be present) the author will respond.

The members of the Book Committee are: **Francis X. Clooney, SJ**, Boston College, committee chair; **Laurie Patton**, Emory University; **Tamal Krishna Goswami**, University of Cambridge; **Tinu Ruparell**, Liverpool Hope University College; **Corinne Dempsey**, Syracuse University; **Sushil Mittal**, University of Florida.

Between now and November 1999, the Society invites nominations for this award. Standards for nominated books include: 1) publication in 1997, 1998, or 1999; 2) scholarly excellence; 3) the book should be a distinguished contribution to the field of

Hindu-Christian studies, according to criteria such as the following: a) a comparative study of a theme in the Hindu and Christian traditions, or of two (or more) thinkers from those traditions; and/or b) a study which traces some aspect of the interaction of Hindus and Christians (e.g. in the colonial period, in a missionary context, in a contemporary setting, inside or outside of India); and/or c) a study in which the author, belonging (religiously and/or culturally) to either the Hindu or the Christian tradition, reflexively undertakes a study of some idea, image, ritual, author, text, etc., from the other tradition, and thus brings it into dialogue with his or her own tradition.

Nominations should be sent to Francis X. Clooney, SJ, Chair of the Book Committee (Theology Department, Boston College, Chestnut Hill MA 02467-3806; clooney@bc.edu) no later than 19 November 1999. (Authors are welcome to nominate their own books.) Please include some brief indication of the appropriateness of the book for consideration for the award. Publishers are urged to send a copy of the book itself. The committee will make its decision by the spring of 2000, and invite the author to come to the Society's Annual Meeting in 2000, to be held in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion's Annual Meeting.

At its annual meeting in November 1997 the Society gave its first book award, for the years 1994-1996, to Francis X. Clooney, for his *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Srivaisnavas of South India* (SUNY, 1996).

Other News

Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies invites submissions from scholars in all fields. Published quarterly by the University of Toronto Press, it includes articles by scholars in all humanities and social science disciplines on old and new

diasporas ranging from the Jewish to the Indian, the Armenian to the African, the Pakistani to the Chinese, the Sri Lankan to the Trinidadian, etc.

Topics may be in the fields of history, literature, sociology, politics, religion, art,

and the mass media, and all topics that subtend the concept of "diaspora" today, such as nationalism, transnationalism, ethnicity, globalization, and postcolonialism.

Submit two copies of article to Prof. Khachig Tololyan, Editor, *Diaspora*, Wesleyan University, Middletown CT 06459-0100, USA (e-mail: ktoloyan@wesleyan.edu).

Message for Diwali, 1998

The annual Message for Diwali, 1998, from Cardinal Francis Arinze, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, The Vatican, concludes with the following paragraph:

We Christians and Hindus, each on our respective spiritual paths, can work together to give increased hope to humanity. Yet first we must accept our differences and show each other mutual respect and true love. This will render us more credible as a clear sign of home for the human family.

From the Papal Encyclical "Faith and Reason"

#72. In preaching the Gospel, Christianity first encountered Greek philosophy; but this does not mean at all that other approaches are precluded. Today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation, which mean that our generation faces problems not unlike those faced by the Church in the first centuries.

My thoughts turn immediately to the lands of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. Among these lands, India has a special place. A great spiritual impulse leads Indian thought to seek an experience which would liberate the spirit from the shackles of time and space and would therefore acquire

absolute value. The dynamic of this quest for liberation provides the context for great metaphysical systems.

In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought. In this work of discernment, which finds its inspiration in the Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, certain criteria will have to be kept in mind. The first of these is the universality of the human spirit, whose basic needs are the same in the most disparate cultures. The second, which derives from the first, is this: in engaging great cultures for the first time, the Church cannot abandon what she has gained from her inculturation in the world of Greco-Latin thought. To reject this heritage would be to deny the providential plan of God who guides his Church down the paths of time and history. This criterion is valid for the Church in every age, even for the Church of the future, who will judge herself enriched by all that comes from today's engagement with Eastern cultures and will find in this inheritance fresh cues for fruitful dialogue with the cultures which will emerge as humanity moves into the future. Thirdly, care will need to be taken lest, contrary to the very nature of the human spirit, the legitimate defence of the uniqueness and originality of Indian thought be confused with the idea that a particular cultural tradition should remain closed in its difference and affirm itself by opposing other traditions.

What has been said here of India is no less true for the heritage of the great cultures of China, Japan and the other countries of Asia, as also for the riches of the traditional cultures of Africa, which are for the most part orally transmitted.

The full text of the encyclical can be found at:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/en_hf_jp_ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html