



January 2000

Reports & News

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



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2000) "Reports & News," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*: Vol. 13, Article 11.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1231>

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.

REPORTS & NEWS

Society for Hindu-Christian Studies News

2000 Annual General Meeting

The 2000 Annual General Meeting of the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies will be held at the American Academy of Religion / Society of Biblical Literature 2000 Annual Meeting in Nashville TN.

Friday, 17 November 2000

7:30 – 10:00 p.m.

Panel Discussion. Theme: "Political Presuppositions and Implications of Hindu-Christian Scholarship"

Tinu Ruparell, Liverpool Hope University College, Presiding.

Panellists: **Gerald James Larson**, Indiana University-Bloomington; **Vasudha Narayanan**, University of Florida; **Richard King**, University of Stirling; **Arindam Chakrabarti**, University of Hawaii-Manoa.

Respondent: **Corinne Dempsey**, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Saturday, 18 November 2000

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

9:00:

Book Award Ceremony.

Lance E. Nelson, University of San Diego, Presiding.

The Society's award "Best Book in Hindu-Christian Studies, 1997-1999" will be presented to **Julius J. Lipner** for his book *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*.

Panel Discussion. Theme: "Light and Darkness: Idolatry as a Category in the Hindu-Christian Encounter"

Harold Coward, University of Victoria, Presiding.

Panellists: **Edwin Bryant**, Harvard

University; **Diana Eck**, Harvard University; **Philip Roberts**, North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention; **Daniel Sheridan**, St Joseph's College of Maine.

Respondent: **Francis X. Clooney**, SJ, Boston College.

10:45 a.m.: Annual Business Meeting

Both sessions and the business meeting are open to all who may be interested. For further information, contact Kay Jordan, Society Secretary at kjordan@runet.edu, or visit the Society's website (<http://www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-1>).

Hindu-Christian Studies Book Award

We are pleased to announce that Dr Julius Lipner of Cambridge University has been chosen by the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies as the recipient of its award "The Best Book in Hindu-Christian Studies for the period 1997-1999" for his *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (Oxford University Press, 1999). Every three years this award is given in recognition of a book that makes a distinguished contribution to the field of Hindu-Christian studies by exemplary scholarship bringing the Hindu and Christian traditions into a fruitful dialogue with one another. *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, already the subject of a stimulating panel discussion at our annual meeting in Boston in November 1999, and reviewed in the 1999 *Bulletin*, meets these criteria in a signal fashion. It exemplifies painstaking research in multiple language traditions and the mastery of archival materials. It offers us a fascinating narrative of the complex life

story of Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay (1861-1907), better known by his chosen Christian name, Brahmobandhab. He was a well-known writer, journalist, speaker, who chose to become a Roman Catholic while yet insisting that his Christian identity was that of an Indian thoroughly devoted to his culture and its religious wisdom and to the freedom of his country. Prof. Lipner draws readers sympathetically into the life and times of this pioneering figure in the Hindu-Christian encounter, while yet leaving them free to draw their own conclusions. Admirably sensitive to the crosscultural, interreligious, and theological issues arising from Upadhyay's bold experiments, the book makes an enduring contribution to the work of our Society. We are delighted to honour it with our award, which will be presented at our November 2000 meeting in Nashville.

Members of the Book Selection Committee are: Francis X. Clooney, SJ (Boston College), Committee Chair; Corinne Dempsey (University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point); Tamal Krishna Goswami (Cambridge University); Sushil Mittal (Milliken University); Tinu Ruparell (Liverpool Hope University College); Laurie Patton (Emory University).

The committee considered many other books and wishes to draw the attention of our readers to the following distinguished contributions.

Religions in Conflict: Ideology, Cultural Contact, and Conversion in Late-Colonial India. Antony Copley. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997. [Corinne Dempsey; also reviewed in 1999 *Bulletin*]

This "case study for cultural encounter" is a loose assemblage of individual case studies that begins by examining the thoughts and experiences of roughly two dozen British missionaries and ends by turning its attention to the lives of a dozen elite Indian converts (mostly from Hinduism). Through first-person accounts derived from journals and letters, supplemented by biographical writings, Copley succeeds in putting a human, often vulnerable, face on

the mid to late nineteenth-century mission, exposing the dashed hopes, frustrations, and unforeseen "conversions" that permeated the lives of the missionaries. Copley's case studies also reveal the ways missionaries' arrogantly inflated expectations – an arrogance ironically responsible for the Mission's vulnerability – were fuelled by millennialist and exclusivist theologies as well as a fundamental, brazen ignorance of Indian religious traditions.

Caste, Class and Catholicism in India 1789-1914. Kenneth Ballhatchet. Surrey: Curzon Press, 1988. [Corinne Dempsey]

Ballhatchet's intricately researched and entertainingly spun narrative of the nineteenth-century Catholic mission is first and foremost a study of the Vatican's dealings with the unruly – particularly the problem of building a Church in light of an all-too-human priesthood and a tenacious Indian caste system. Revealing instances of moral misconduct and racism among Catholic missionary priests in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Bombay, Ballhatchet brings to light what has often been swept under the rug. He argues that suppression of such information is far more harmful to an institution than its telling. This book also provides an important look at Catholic missions as non-monolithic, and at the ways a variety of cultures and individual personalities responded to the challenges of the task at hand. The result is a comparative study of European views regarding race, caste, and class.

Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and "The Mystic East". Richard King. London: Routledge, 1999. [Tinu Ruparell]

King's book is an interdisciplinary study of Orientalism and India, as well as of the discourse of postcolonial theory, which has arisen from the Orientalist critique. After some "ground-clearing" work of definition and genealogy with respect to notions such as "mysticism", "religion", and the "orient", the substantial part of the book revolves around the possibility and grounds for comparativism in a "post-

colonial" era. To this end he considers Said, Gadamer, Foucault, Derrida, and the subaltern critics. King argues, along with Paul Rabinow, for an "anthropologization of the West", i.e., a reflexive analysis of both the intrareligious as well as the interreligious differences which partially characterize religious traditions. The way forward, King argues, is not to make Indology or religious studies a form of anthropology, but rather to study religion in a way that uncovers the mutual imbrication of the study or religion (and particularly mysticism) with structures of power. In doing so, Religious Studies may well be redescribed as a form of cultural studies rather than as an off-shoot of theology. King's book is particularly useful to comparativists interested in Hinduism and Christianity, because it provides a detailed look at the discourse of postcolonial theory and also suggests guidelines for future work in this area. It is an accomplished work in an important area.

Sankaracarya's Concept of Relation. Sarah Grant. Motilal Banarsidass, 1999. [Francis Clooney]

Since 1956 Grant has lived, taught, and researched the Vedanta traditions, particularly Advaita; this volume is one of the finest fruits of her many years of study. "Relation" (which translates a rich variety of Sanskrit terms, including *sambandha*, *samyoga*, *samavaya*) is a key term upon which the coherence of philosophical and theological claims about the Brahman-Atman, Brahman-world relationships must rest. After a succinct summary of Sankara's overall theological system, Grant explores the nature and structure of relation, and distinguishes real, logical, and non-reciprocal relations. The relevance of this study to Hindu-Christian studies is evident near the end of the book, where Grant compares Sankara's teaching on relation with that of Thomas Aquinas. She concludes that at a technical philosophical level, and despite important differences in their systems, Sankara and Aquinas are in substantial agreement on the meaning of relation. The volume thus highlights a

slender but very strong and enduring strand in the ongoing project of discovering common philosophical ground linking the Hindu and Christian religious traditions.

Mysticism in Shaivism and Christianity. Bettina Baumer (Ed.). DK Printworld, 1997. [Francis Clooney; review in 1998 *Bulletin*]

This volume includes twelve essays presented at a 1990 conference organized by the Abhishiktananda Society, edited by Bettina Baumer, a respected scholar and expert in dialogue who has lived in India for over 30 years. The conference and volume are inspired by the spirituality of the French Benedictine *sannyasi* Henri Le Saux, and accordingly seek to advance interreligious dialogue and spiritual exchange among Hindus and Christians. The quite varied essays skilfully characterize important features of mystical Christianity – the mysticism of Jesus (in a long essay by Raimon Panikkar), Eastern Orthodoxy, Meister Eckhart, Hadewijch, Julian of Norwich, Ignatius Loyola – and mystical Saivism – in the Kashmir and Tamil traditions. While it includes no effort at synthesis or overall conclusions, the volume makes many fine resources available to scholars of comparative Hindu-Christian mysticism.

Dalits and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India. Sathianathan Clarke. OUP, 1998. [Francis Clooney]

Based on Clarke's PhD research at Harvard University but also rooted in his own experience of growing up and working in South India, this book makes two significant contributions to Hindu-Christian studies. First, it deepens and complexifies our awareness of religion in India by offering a sophisticated examination of the religion of the Paraiyar "outcaste" community. Clarke attends both to elements essential to that religion – e.g. deities such as Ellaiyamman, particular local rituals, the roles of religious functionaries – and also to the resistances to wider societal expectations that are deeply inscribed in Paraiyar religious consciousness and practice. Second, Clarke studies the symbolism of the

drum in Paraiyar ritual and iconography, and examines how an appreciation of the Paraiyar tradition of the drum brings forward specific possibilities for the development of a South Indian Christian identity attuned to and liberative of the local culture. Most striking is Clarke's development of the image of "Christ as drum", a Christ whose presence echoes uncannily through South India, and thereafter throughout potentially all cultures where Christian communities form amidst power inequalities.

History of Hindu-Christian encounters (AD 304 to 1996) (revised, expanded edition). Sita Ram Goel. Voice of India, 1996. [Francis Clooney]

The book award committee stretched its "1997-1999" category just a bit to include this much expanded 1996 edition of Goel's 1986 book. It is surely the most contentious of the books considered for the award. Argumentative in tone and aimed at unsettling the polite conventions of dialogue and seemingly objective scholarship, this *History* gives a startlingly loud and clear voice to a Hindu interpretation of the Hindu-Christian encounter, from the early encounter of Roberto de Nobili, SJ, with Hindu pandits right up to the correspondence between Fr Bede Griffiths and Swami Devananda Saraswati in the 1980s. There is much here that will annoy some readers – most infamously, the appellation "Jesus as Junk" – but there are also interesting and useful presentations on pre-twentieth century Hindu-Christian apologetics and the lamentable side of such encounters. A bracing and bitter tonic, Prof. Goel's work usefully reminds us that Hindu-Christian studies is part of a longer history which has not always been a peaceful and courteous academic inquiry.

Inkulturation in Tranquebar: Der Beitrag der frühen dänisch-hallieschen Mission zum Werden einer indisch-einheimischen Kirche (1706-1730). Daniel Jeyaraj. Verlag der Ev.-Luther. Mission Erlangen, 1996. [Francis Clooney; reviewed in 1999 *Bulletin*]

Daniel Jeyaraj is a Professor at the Lutheran Gurukul in Chennai. His book

examines the origins of the German-Danish mission in Tranquebar in the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu, South India. The mission began with the arrival of the Lutheran missionaries Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1677-1746) in Tranquebar in 1706. The first section of *Inkulturation in Tranquebar* surveys the sources for the study of the mission, and the historical treatment of the Mission in eighteenth-twentieth century literature. The second (longest, and most interesting) section traces "the encounter with South Indian culture", the project of learning the Tamil language and translating the Bible into Tamil, and the missionary encounter with Hindu bhakti in research and then in writings for both Christian and Hindu audiences. Particularly fascinating is the missionary understanding of "Tamil ethics". The third section puts in perspective the founding of an indigenous church in the face of conflicts among the missionaries themselves regarding the nature of Christian community in a hierarchical society. Jeyaraj offers fascinating insights into topics as varied as church architecture, the development of vernacular music, poetry, ritual forms, schools, and, finally, the training of Indian church leaders. One comes away from this book with a strong sense of the sincerity and energy of the missionaries in their search to make Christianity as deeply Indian – linguistically, artistically, socially – as possible.

Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936. Koji Kawashima. OUP, 1999. [Francis Clooney]

Koji Kawashima is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Political Science and Economics at Kokushikan University, Tokyo. His study examines the interactions among Hindus and Protestant Christian missionaries during the modernization of Travancore, with special attention to education, medicine, and caste. The volume is valuable precisely because it focuses on policy issues often neglected in the study of religious traditions, and thus widens the scope for thinking about such encounters. As Kawashima concludes,

The triangular relationship between Christian missionaries, the princely state of Travancore and the British colonial authorities was not static but constituted a more complex and changing situation than has previously been considered. Despite their evident religious differences, the missionaries and the Hindu state were not always confrontational. The British authorities did not always support the missionaries, nor did they always try to intervene in the domestic affairs of Travancore. The positions, interests, attitudes and policies of each of these three groups changes substantially during the period which this study covers, and indeed their relationship underwent a structural change from the late nineteenth century onwards.(218)

Kawashima's work thus models yet another fascinating approach to the history of Hindu-Christian encounters.

Call for Nominations for the Positions of Vice-President and new Board Members, Society for Hindu-Christian Studies

The Society's Nominations and Elections Committee – Francis Clooney (Chair), Deepak Sarma, Paul Younger – invites nominations for the positions of Vice-President and for two new Board members. Nominees for the offices of Vice-President and Board membership should be persons willing to serve and generally able to attend the Annual Meeting, which precedes the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

The Vice-President serves for two years, during which time his or her chief responsibility is planning the program for the two sessions of the Society's Annual Meeting. After two years, the Vice-President automatically becomes President for two years.

Board members are responsible for the overall well-being of the Society, and share in deliberation on all issues related to the operation of the Society, its Annual Meeting, and its *Bulletin*. Board members serve four-year terms. Two new Board

members will be elected this year.

Current elected officers are: Lance Nelson, President (University of San Diego); Selva Ray, Vice-President (Albion College); Kay Jordan, Secretary (Radford University); Harold Coward is Editor of the *Bulletin* and Treasurer of the Society.

Current Board members: Deepak Sarma (University of Chicago); Corinne Dempsey (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point); Tamal Krishna Goswami (University of Cambridge); Laurie Patton (Emory University); M. Thomas Thangaraj (Chandler School of Theology, Emory University); Parimal Patil (Emory University); John J. Thatamanil (Millsaps College); Tinu Ruparell (Liverpool Hope University College); Paul Younger (McMaster University); Francis X. Clooney, SJ (Boston College; ex officio Board member, as chair of 1997-1999 Book Award Committee).

Board members Tamal Krishna Goswami and M. Thomas Thangaraj finish their terms this year. Former Board members may be renominated to the Board, but only after a one year hiatus. They may at any time be nominated for other positions. Francis Clooney's work as chair of the Book Award Committee ends with the 2000 annual meeting, and so too his ex officio presence on the Board.

The Committee requests your nominations for Vice-President and for Board members. If possible, gain in advance the consent of the nominee, and his or her ability and willingness to attend the Annual Meeting. Nominations may be sent to by E-mail or post to the Chair of the Committee, Francis X. Clooney, SJ, Theology Department, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467-3806; fax: 617 552 8219; clooney@bc.edu, no later than 15 September 2000.

Nominees' names will be posted on the Society's website (www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-1/) as of 1 October 2000.

The election will occur at the Annual Meeting in Nashville on 18 November 2000, but members who cannot attend may submit their votes to the Chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee by 10 November.

40 Reports & News

Questions about any aspects of the nominations and election process can be directed to Deepak Sarma (1159 E. 56th St. Apt 3, Chicago, IL 60637; dsarma@uchicago.edu), Paul Younger (RR #5, Chatsworth, ON NOH 1G0, Canada; 519 794-3897; younger.p@bmts.com), or Francis Clooney (Theology Department, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467; 617 552 3883; clooney@bc.edu).

The Conversion Controversy in India

Panel Presentation at the Annual General Meeting, Boston, 19 November 1999.

This session was well attended by both Hindu and Christian members of the Society and other delegates to the American Academy of Religion annual meetings. The room was packed and in the view of some, it was the best session of the entire AAR/SBL Conference. Presentations were given by two Hindu scholars, Dr Ramakrishna Goswami of ISKCON and Prof. Parimal Patil, and Christian scholars, Dr John Tathamani and Dr Ronald Neufeldt, and Dr Leslie Orr.

A summary of the presentations is available from Theodore Gabriel (TGabriel@chelt.ac.uk). He concludes that the following four points emerge from the discussion:

1. No clear and unambiguous decisions can be taken about the legality of religious conversion in the light of constitutional

provisions and court judgements. A contextual approach seems best. All are agreed that conversions by force, coercion, fraud, or overtly material inducement are objectionable. However, the consensus is that the constitutional provision are not to be scrapped or modified, and that a legal ban on conversions is not viable.

2. Propagation of one's faith has to be less aggressive. Religious beliefs, tenets, and views can be disseminated, but then the issue of conversion is best left to the choice of the individual. Fundamental human rights of freedom of conscience and freedom of religious choice rule out legislation banning conversions.

3. The Hindu and Christian religions belong to quite distinct categories and the consensus seems to be that conversion from Hinduism to Christianity does not necessarily lead to a displacement, replacement, or loss of identity. A clear definition of what Hindu identity or identities are is required and might clarify the significance and implications of such conversion. More research and reflection are required in this regard.

4. There has been debate between religions in India in the past, but there has also been interchange, beneficial interaction, and peaceful co-existence for long periods. Politicization of the issue with non-religious agendas has to be avoided.

Other News

New Web Site

A Bede Griffiths web site has been established at www.bede.griffiths.com to communicate his goal of interreligious dialogue through contemplation and meditation.

Scholarships for Christian-Asian Studies

The University of Birmingham, UK, is offering some "scholarship incentives" for

those students who wish to study the relationship/dialogue/encounter between Christianity and Asian religions.

For information contact Dr David Cheetham, Dept. of Theology, University of Birmingham, Elmfield House, Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LQ, UK. Telephone +44 (0) 121 472 4231; Fax: +44 (0) 121 415 2287; E-mail: d.cheetham@bham.ac.uk.