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## Briefly Noted

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## Briefly Noted

***Divergent Traditions, Converging Faiths: Troeltsch, Comparative Theology, and the Conversation with Hinduism.*** Joseph Molleur. New York: Peter Lang, 2000, xvi + 185 pp.

In this book the author contends that Troeltsch followed closely in the footsteps of Friedrich Schleiermacher except with regard to the treatment of other religions. For Schleiermacher the consideration of other religions was but a prolegomenon and did not form part of the central work of Christian theology. Troeltsch, however, did not confine consideration of other religions to the introduction of his *Glaubenslehre* but included such discussion throughout his whole theological system. For Troeltsch engagement with the teachings of other religions was an integral part of doing Christian theology. This resulted in him moving from the earlier notion of the supreme validity of Christianity to his proposal for the cultural validity of all religions. For Troeltsch, as a Christian, other religions were seen to be just as valid in their partaking of "Truth and Life" (37). This led Christians to approach other religions in humility and with the possibility of learning something from engagement with the religious other. Troeltsch, a Protestant theologian, worked out this position in his "Dogmatics of the History of Religions School" between 1910 and 1913. It was grounded more in his ideas about history and the history of religions generally than specific knowledge of other religions - of which he seems to have had little. Troeltsch was a founding member of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, the "history of religions school."

Of particular interest to the readers of this *Bulletin* is Molleur's setting up of a test case for Troeltsch's comparative notions. For his test case the author selects a specific text within Hinduism, namely the ninth century Alvar, Shatakapan's *Tiruvaymoli*, Song 8.7, and includes a new English

translation. The topic for comparison is grace - Vishnu's *arul* in relation to the Christian conception as presented by Troeltsch's *Glaubenslehre*. The author concludes, "For both theologians, divine grace/*arul* is the staggering gift of the divinity's personal condescension to the needs of human beings, which the human recipients can do nothing to merit..., but can only receive in an attitude of gratitude and surrender" (131). And both see the holy text as a means for the experience of this divine gift.

The final section of the book examines the three recent theologians who in the author's view have furthered the pioneering work of Troeltsch - Paul Tillich, Raimundo Panikkar and Francis Clooney. Special attention is paid to Panikkar's method with which the author has a critical divergence. This is a solid study which offers a Protestant basis for Hindu-Christian comparative theology.

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***Purity of Heart and Contemplation. A Monastic Dialogue Between Christian and Asian Traditions.*** Bruno Barnhart and Joseph Wong (Eds.). New York: Continuum, 2001, xx + 364 pp.

This volume emerged out of a week-long encounter between monastics at New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California U.S.A. in 2000. The themes of purity of heart and contemplation were regarded by the participants as being a common feature in the monastic quest for spiritual liberation. Though the great majority of contributors to the volume are Christian monastics, a wide range of topics are covered pertinent to the spiritual quest. Major sections of the book treat in succession Hinduism, Buddhism (with subsections on Chan and Zen), Taoism and Confucianism, Christian and Western Perspectives. Part I, on Hinduism, is comprised of three articles. Pravrajika

Vrajaprana in her "Regaining the Lost Kingdom: Purity and Meditation in the Hindu Spiritual Tradition" presents the classical four yogas or paths as leading to a "withdrawing the mind from whatever is finite and relative, then focusing it on whatever is infinite, real, absolute." Taking an Advaitin perspective and placing emphasis on the practice of meditation, she argues for the recovery of true self-identity as the ultimate spiritual goal. In the following article, "Heart Yoga: A Comparison of Two Texts," Thomas Matus examines the Pratyabhijna-hridayam of Rajanaka Kshemaraja (11th c.) and the Kaivalya-darsanam of Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri (19th c.). Common to the two texts is the need of inner purity of heart for the purpose of self-realization. Matus reflects further on the many meanings of "yoga" and the place of love in a yogic context. The third and last article in the Hinduism section is Cyprian Consiglio's "The Space in the Lotus of the Heart: the Anthropological Spirit in the Writings of Bede Griffiths." The author examines Bede's tripartite distinction of body, soul, and spirit as a useful point of departure for dialogue with other religions. He notes that meditation practice is an important aid for attaining purity of heart and the overcoming of all ego-centeredness, thereby facilitating the experience of the immanent Spirit.

Readers of this book will find the essays both informative and clearly written. While spiritual and doctrinal differences between the various religious traditions are acknowledged one also receives throughout the impression of a shared spiritual journey.

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## Recent Articles of Interest

Francis X. Clooney, "Theology and Sacred Scripture Reconsidered in the Light of a Hindu Text," *Theology and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey, OP, and William Loewe. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 211-236 pp.

Francis X. Clooney, "Dominus Iesus and the Practice of Interreligious Learning," *Sic et Non: Responses to Dominus Iesus*, ed. Charles Hefling, Jr. and Stephen Pope, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 157-168 pp.

Sara Grant, "The Contemporary Relevance of the Advaita of Sankaracarya," *New Perspectives on Advaita Vedanta*, ed. Bradley Malkovsky. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 148-163 pp.

Edward P. Hahnenberg, "Arcavatara: Srivaisnava Image Descent and Catholic Eucharist," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 37, (2000): 187-201 pp.

Selva J. Raj, "Adapting Hindu Imagery: A Critical Look at Ritual Experiments in an Indian Catholic Ashra," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 37 (2000): 333-353 pp.

Will Sweetner, "Unity and Plurality: Hinduism and the Religions of India in Early European Scholarship," *Religion* 31 (2001): 209-224 pp.

Keith Ward, "Christian Vedanta: An Absurdity or an Opportunity?," *The Myriad Christ. Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, ed. T. Merrigan and J. Haers. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 235-247 pp.