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Book Review: "Indian Theology in Dialogue"

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- movement is found in the recent publication *Christ and Krishna* by Swami Bhaktipada. Moundsville: Bhaktipada Books, 1985. The author is the son of conservative Baptist parents.
21. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972, p. 123.
 22. P.D. Devananda, *Preparation for Dialogue*. Bangalore: The Christian Institute for The Study of Religion and Society, 1964, p. iii.
 23. A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, "The Living Hindu Popular Religious Consciousness and some Reflections on it in the content of Hindu-Christian Dialogue," *Religion and Society*, 26, 1979, pp. 5-25.
 24. Sara Grant, "Reflections on Hindu-Christian Dialogue in an Ashram Context," *Religion and Society*, 26, 1979, pp. 42-58. Grapes and flowers were placed on the altar table and offered to the Hindu participants.
 25. See "Consultation Working Group Reports", *Religion and Society*, 26, 1979, p. 110.
 26. Ninian Smart, *The Yogi and the Devotee*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1968.
 27. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ*. London: SCM Press, 1969, p. 21.
 28. Klaus Klostermaier, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindahan*. London: SCM Press, 1969. See also Klostermaier's "A Hindu-Christian Dialogue on Truth," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 12, 1975, pp. 157-171.
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 32. M.M. Thomas, "A Reply to Guru Dutt," *Journal of Religion and Society*, 23/3, 1976, p. 61.
 33. M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969.
 34. Kana Mitra, "A Hindu Self-Reflection," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 17, 1980, 121-122.
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 36. James D. Redington S.J., "The Hindu-Christian Dialogue and the Interior Dialogue," *Theological Studies*, 44, 1983, p. 587.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 595.
 38. John A.T. Robinson, *Truth is Two-Eyed*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979, p. 7. Robinson cites Murray Rogers, "Hindu and Christian—A Moment Breaks" in H. Jai Singh, ed. *Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Bangalore: C.I.S.R.S., 1967, pp. 104-117.
 39. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978, p. 40.
 40. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Revised Edition. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981.

Book Reviews

Klaus Klostermaier, *Indian Theology in Dialogue*, Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1986, Pb. Rs. 32.00

According to Professor Klostermaier, this volume is designed as an explanation, not as a definitive statement, or the preservation of the status quo. It is an attempt to bring into fruitful encounter two traditions in which the author has been personally involved. To this end, Professor Klostermaier seeks to have the traditions speak to each other on central issues such as Hridayavidya, Kristavidya, Samnyasa, Sadhana, Pavitrasastram and Moksa. It is the discussion of these issues in relatively systematic treatment which forms the bulk of the volume. In addition there are chapters on themes such as Hinduism in America and Interreligious Dialogue as a Method for the Study of Religion. While significant in themselves and clearly important to the author, they do not relate well to the treatment of the central issues.

In his initial chapter, Professor Klostermaier asks where Hindus and Christians can meet in dialogue. The answer is twofold. Inner dialogue is necessary if outer dialogue is to be successful. Further, dialogue must be sustained if it is to be fruitful. That is, dialogue must grow out of living together rather than simply talking together. It is this emphasis on personal experience which informs the treatment of the central themes. The author is schooled in

Christian theology, and speaks knowledgeably about Hinduism both as a scholar and as one who has lived with Hindus in their own setting.

In his treatment of the central themes, Professor Klostermaier attempts to present some of the complexity that characterizes both Hindu and Christian positions on each subject. He does not hide the fact that neither Hindus or Christians speak with one voice. Nor does he attempt to hide the fact that there are tensions between the traditions. Indeed, he emphasizes the fact that there are points at which the traditions approach each other and that there are points of real tension. For example, he points out that the New Testament, like Samkara, knows the basic discrimination between realms of change and changelessness, but admits that Samkara's distinction is clearly more radical and therefore problematic. Similarly, he admits, that while both traditions can in some respects be seen as sacramental, Hindu understandings of sacraments are not necessarily the same as Christian understandings of sacraments. While such distinctions are acknowledged, the emphasis throughout is clearly on similarities rather than on differences. At times, the treatment of the themes is somewhat one-sided. The chapter on Sadhana, for example, deals largely with Hindu views of Sadhana rather than the issue of how these views intersect with Christianity and how these views can be made to come alive within Christianity. Further, in dealing with Hindu views, Klostermaier emphasizes bhakti more than any other Hindu perspective. This is instructive in that it may point to some of the limits of dialogue.

Professor Klostermaier asserts that the goal of dialogue on these issues is not the replacement of one view by another, not synthesis and not the assertion of sameness; rather, it is the evolution of something new, a fulfilment of that which we now sense partially. One suspects that this evolutionary view is informed by a type of fulfilment theology in which Christ is seen as the fulfilment of that which exists partially in Hinduism. For example, he asserts, in his treatment of sacramentology, that Christ brings fulfilment to Hindu sacraments. Such an assertion may be convincing to the Christian, but not to the

Hindu.

Nevertheless, the book is a provocative attempt to come to grips with themes that apply to both Christianity and Hinduism. Professor Klostermaier is clearly correct in his repeated assertion that Indian theology, to be meaningful for Hindus must take its cue from themes and concerns that are central to Hinduism. Monasticism, for example, to be meaningful must relate to the *sannyasa* ideal. Or, *Kristavidya* must be related to the nation of *Brahmavidya*. Through such assertions the author attempts to move dialogue beyond the usual simplistic surface comparisons.

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M.M. Thomas, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987, pp. vii + 122. Reduced price in India Rs.40.

The recent explosion of studies on the issue of Christianity and religious pluralism may perhaps be signaling a *kairos*, a new context in which a revision of how Christian faith understands itself and other religions of faith or of no faith is both possible and necessary. M.M. Thomas' latest book is intended as a contribution to the continuing enquiry into a Christian theology of pluralism. Being something of a personal reflection of the author's one is not surprised to discover that the study has two loci—the ecumenical movement and India.

For an initial analysis of 'the challenge of pluralism' we are invited to begin with a "phenomenological survey of religion, religious pluralism and the history of inter-religious relations in modern history." Arguing that this is basic for any theological reflection, Thomas heads into the wasteland of what is by now a rather hackneyed bipolar typology of religions, variously described in terms of 'monistic' and 'monotheistic', 'mystic' and 'prophetic', 'ontocratic' and 'theocratic', 'interiority' and 'confrontation', or what he himself has elsewhere termed 'unitive' and 'messianic'. A major problem with this typology is that it tends to confuse two aspects of religious experience, namely the mode and the content of the experience, or

in phenomenological terms, its noetic and noematic aspects. In the type variously termed 'prophetic', 'theocratic' or 'confrontation' the two aspects usually coincided, but this is not necessarily the case with interior modes of religious experience. For example, it is hardly conceivable that Moses or Muhammad would have experienced the divine encountered in their respective moments of revelation as being ultimately identical with their innermost selves. In other words, the confrontational mode of encounter coincided with the confrontational—that is utterly transcendent—content of that which was encountered. However, there are interior or mystical modes of religious experience which, nevertheless, maintain or even reinforce the polarity between the divine and the human. If we take Friedrich Heiler's prototypical case of Martin Luther, for example, one may certainly agree that Luther represents a 'prophetic' piety, sharply antithetical to Teresa's mysticism; yet Luther's religious experience centered from the beginning on conscience, an interior phenomenon *par excellence*. Wherever typologies are made, it is certainly not in heaven. Indeed, typologies are intellectual constructs, usually of partial and temporary usefulness, and perhaps their major usefulness is manifested in the process by which they are demolished. The classical statement of this fact may be found in Max Seber's theory of 'ideal types'. It pertains to any application of intellectual constructs to the fluid and intrinsically anarchic reality of human experience. Certainly that part of human experience commonly designated as religion is no exception. One finds it difficult to suppose that Thomas does not know this, but unfortunately his present analysis of the challenge of pluralism is flawed by a lack of indication that he does.

The remainder of the work is a rather sketchy survey of various Christian—both Protestant and Roman Catholic—approaches to pluralism. In this, despite the somewhat provocative title of the book, the major concern, by the author's own submission, is not with "bold, pioneering adventures, risks beyond the confines of present ecclesiastical and theological structures". Rather, Thomas

directs his attention to efforts within the ecumenical movement to "deepen the traditional understanding of Christ and fellowship-in-Christ in a more inclusive way." To describe and elaborate these efforts Raimundo Panikkar and Paul Devanandan are taken as representing two significant streams of Indian Christian theology in dialogue with both India's pluralistic consciousness and their own Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.

Regrettably the discussion of Panikkar's struggles towards an 'ecumenical ecumenism' is little more than a rehash of his theology of religious pluralism. Here is but one more attempt to delineate the central thrust of Panikkar's *theandric* perspective on Trinitarian and Christological formulations emerging in Christianity's interface with other religious traditions. The context is the oft described developments in Roman Catholic thought. Well-known names are here—Karl Rahner, Hans Kung, Heinz Robert Schlette, Aloysius Pieris, Abhishiktananda et al. Familiar Vatican documents are marshalled. The reader is reminded of the centrality for Panikkar of the category of 'growth', a dynamic convergence of religions made possible through 'mutual fecundation' in the larger Christ of God. Predictably Panikkar is criticised for making the 'Cosmic Christ' his starting point for interfaith dialogue because it is seen by the more orthodox as weakening, if not eliminating, the historical dimension of the Christ-event. At issue, of course, is the biblical perspective on myth and history. To participate in this debate one is pleasantly surprised to find the historian of religion, Mircea Eliade being summoned. (It is seldom that theologians pay heed to historians of religion, when in fact there is much to be gained by an attentive ear.) Eliade's perspective on the relationship of historical time to mythical time raises the question as to whether the perception of the centrality of historicity may be, in part, the result of a certain misreading of the biblical material. With his usual perspicacity Thomas suggests that the matter of the relation between the historical and the mythical urgently needs to be pursued further. This, interestingly enough, bears on the matter of religious typologies referred to earlier.

The very real significance of the