

BOOK REVIEW

K. Mahadevan, V.K. Madhavan Kutty, N. Kiran Ramachandran & Joseph Ouseparampil (eds.), *The Glory of Indian Heritage*, Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1998, pp.xiv+471, Rs. 600.00; \$ 30.00; (ISBN 81-7018-974-8).

Mathew Arnold, the great English poet and literary critic has spoken of culture as deriving from "the best that has been known and thought in the world". *The Glory of Indian Heritage*, edited by K. Mahadevan, V.K. Madhavankutty, N. Kiran Ramachandran and Joseph Ouseparampil, is indeed an amazing attempt at bringing together "the best that has been known and thought" in India. It is indeed a kaleidoscope through which one can enjoy the many-splendored beauty and the cultural wealth of the country: its philosophy and religion, art and astrology, medicine and science, its eminent personalities, and what not! A miscellany of scholarly papers on various aspects of Indian culture, the book is intended to educate and enlighten those who step into the portals of India, those who are prejudiced and those sceptical of its culture. The editors themselves say: "It is our desire to dispel certain wrong notions about India, which have persisted in some parts of the world. For instance, India is viewed as a country of utterly poor, illiterate and unhygienic slum dwellers, and that Indians are an impractical lot, irrational and superstitious, incapable of scientific temper and attitude. Verifiable facts show that such views on these and many others have to be reconsidered and revised".

Verifiable facts and figures and scholarly studies are galore in the "Glory of Indian Heritage". Divided in three parts, the book gives a *Panorama of Culture and Philosophy* in the first part in twelve chapters, and then, in part two, we get *Perspectives of Development*, and in part three, the *Eminent Personalities* of the country are spotlighted.

The contributors are experts in their own fields. In the first part, the authors make us parade through various arts and festivals, religious traditions and philosophies, and give us a detailed study on Sanskrit, a glimpse of other major languages of the country, etc. There is also a discourse on Sankara's Advaita, on Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Every paper on every form of art, philosophy and religion is well researched and highly commendable.

Thumbing through its pages, though, one may reasonably ask: What is Indian culture without its being impacted by Hinduism? And what is India without its first being Hindu? A chapter on Hinduism and some references to the contributions of Christianity in India would have perhaps perfected the book, adding to its wealth and scholarship.

The second part consisting of five chapters deals with subjects like Yoga, Ayurveda, Astrology and the modern advancements of science and economy of the country. And in the last, the authors present us with personalities of national import. In here, we come to admire the political luminaries - Mahatma Gandhi, Jawharlal Nehru, Tagore, Subash Chandra Bose, Vallabhai Patel, Rajagopalachari, and the modern philosophers like Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Krishna Murthi, Aurobindo, and a host of Indian scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and historians. Written in lucid and flawless English, the book is highly readable, and its contents highly educational also. It should be a priceless possession of all who aspire to teach or learn the humanities. Here is a mine of gold in the "Glory of Indian Heritage". And here is a golden opportunity for you to educate yourself on Indian heritage. I dare not make more comments on the book. May the readers be better judges themselves.

Rev. Jose Kariamadam, CMI.

Brueggemann Walter, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming*. Michigan, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998, pp.xiv+502; \$ 32.00

Walter Brueggemann, professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, is one of the premier Old Testament scholars of our time. He has delved into the depths of the word of God. He writes in an evocative and provocative way, which will move the hearts of the contemporary readers. Whatever comes from his pen is enthusiastically welcomed and well appreciated by all. For him Bible is not simply a literary work, but the Word of God, which has to be approached with deep reverence, faith and love.

The present work was previously published in two volumes in the *International Theological Commentary Series*. This one-volume commentary has an erudite introduction that surveys the current state of studies on the prophet Jeremiah. He reviews the modern scholarly commentaries of William Holladay, Robert Carroll, and William McKane. All the three works have contributed to the scholarly knowledge of the book of Jeremiah and deserve academic appreciation and admiration. Still they fail to deal with the Word of God nature of the Bible. Thus the basic purpose, for which the book was written, is not met with. As Brueggemann says, "the book of Jeremiah does not belong to the scholarly guild. It belongs more properly to the synagogue and the church... Because of its character and quality, however, the book cannot be held and contained even in such communities of faith. It is a public document... this book purposes to address all who attend and listen" (pp. xiii-xiv). These words of the author shed light on the true nature of the Word of God. Brueggemann approaches the book from such a perspective, and tries to release the generative and dynamic power of the message Jeremiah. He pushes beyond the original context of the book to contemporary contexts, and thus makes the voices of the prophet heard in our existential situation. This is the merit of Brueggemann, and he deserves our sincere and unreserved gratitude.

It is not easy to produce a well-balanced and imaginative commentary on Jeremiah, since the book is a complicated literary composition, which escapes scholarly consensus. Brueggemann is well aware of this fact and fortunately, does not try to advance such

critical conversations, nor to adjudicate between several alternatives. He focuses his attention to bring out the theological vision of the book, which remains lively and energizing for every time. He pays special attention to two emerging methods, namely, sociological analysis and literary analysis.

In the method of sociological analysis one pays attention to the interests ideologies and constructions of reality that are operative in the formation and the transmission of the text of Jeremiah. The author succeeds in showing that this prophetic book has its authoritative claim in the social realities of our time. By making use of literary analysis, Bruggemann discovers the power of the prophetic language to propose an imaginative world that is an alternative to the one in which the reader thinks herself/himself enmeshed. He ventures to place the reader in crisis, as well as present her/him with a new zone for fresh hope, changed contact and fresh historical possibility.

Bruggemann's commentary focuses on what the text of Jeremiah meant in its ancient speaking and hearing which keeps pushing into our present. He brilliantly shows what the text meant in its original context, and that it has incredible power to 'mean' in our existential situation. He evocatively demonstrates that the proud empire of the time of Jeremiah, its pitiful royal leadership, the self-serving religionists, and other cynical forces are ever present in our culture, and they will meet tragic end. Beyond everything we feel the pathetic and compassionate presence of plucking up and tearing down, as well as of planting and building (Jer 1:10).

To conclude, Bruggemann has done a wonderful job in making the O.T. prophet a contemporary who will make us uneasy and disturbed at our unimaginative and easy going life style. His commentary will remain for a long time an essential resource for every minister of the word of God.

Prof. Paul Kalluveettil

Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997, pp.xcii+928 (hardcover); \$ 50.00; (ISBN 0-8028-2315-7).

Among the numerous commentaries on the Gospel of Luke, this new commentary by Joel B.Green is unique in several aspects. For one thing, its methodology is unique. The author accepts the words of Luke in the preface of the Gospel, namely, his work is a "narrative" ("*diegesis*") (Lk 1:3), as his starting point. Then he pursues a line of study, which he terms as "discourse analysis". In this approach, he pays due attention to the historical and cultural situation of the first century Roman world, which stands in the background of the Gospel of Luke. Going beyond the familiar modern methods of historical criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and the like, J.B. Green in this commentary opens a new method of criticism, namely, narrative criticism. This renders this commentary a harmonious combination of high academic and scientific interpretation of the Gospel, and at the same time takes care of the down-to-earth and practical pastoral and spiritual concerns of the people of God. Each section of the Gospel is thoroughly studied and researched and explained expensively. Each section this massive work provides ample insights and scientific data to the inquisitive reader, and inspiration and comfort to the spiritual seeker. Needless to say that this work is equally useful to scholars and students of the Gospels, to preachers and priests, and also to all faithful and seeker of spiritual perfection. The elaborate bibliography (sixty-six pages) and exhaustive indexes (sixty-four pages) enhance the merit of the work.

Prof. Lucius Nereparampil

Nyayakusumanjali of Udayanacharya, Vol.I, with translation and explanation by N. S. Dravid, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1996, pp. 500; (ISBN 81-85636-29-X).

This is a work of circa tenth century (CE) in classical Sanskrit language written by Udayanacharya. The great importance of this work is that it establishes the theistic Nyaya system of philosophy by refuting the atheist heterodox doctrines of Buddhism.

The concept of God is accepted on the grounds of logic, faith and the mystic experiences. Different systems of philosophies give different weightages to these aspects. Thus the issue of providing a set of rational, logical and epistemological proofs to prove the existence of God has been a hot topic of discussion amongst the philosophers.

The issue of "God" in a system of philosophy is an important matter as far as the common man's acceptance of that system of philosophy and evolution of a practical social living style. The individual, family and social living styles, the value systems and culture of a society are going to be seriously influenced based on the perception of "God" in a given system of philosophy. In the Indian context, the social life is anchored in the mystic experiences as expressed in Vedas, but the development of which have been of diverse nature, even from ancient times. There is the *charvaka* system of thought, which rejects God, the Vedas and mysticism; it lays emphasis on material pleasures and plenitude of living styles. In contrast, we have the Buddhist and Jain systems of philosophy, where in Vedas and God have no relevance or little relevance. This inferior position of God and the pantheon of gods in their systems of philosophy has projected the practice of a living style with highest stress on moral attitudes and upright living.

In the systems of Nyaya and Vaiseshika philosophy, Vedas and God are accepted; but 'God' is accepted as a logical epistemological necessity to explain the phenomenon of the world. Thus a 'proof' for the existence and functioning of God is a necessity. The present

work addresses this issue in five chapters and offers the necessary material. The work was written at a historic time when the Indian Intellectual society was under the strong influences of (a) Advaita Vedanta philosophy established by Sri Shankaracharya was at its zenith; (b) the Buddhist logical thinkers were on the decline and Buddhism was almost disappearing in India; (c) the multitude of gods and goddesses mentioned in the Puranas and the Tantras held a sway over the mind's of the common masses; (d) the plethora of smaller kingdom's across the length and breadth of India extended patronising support to different systems of philosophy in a differential way; (e) the rage of war for political supremacy between the groups of different faiths like Shiva believers, Vishnu believers was rampant; (f) the Vedic philosophies were wrongly explained to suit the warring factions in society for their convenience.

It is this situation which demanded a logical work to assert and establish the right position of Logic in the schema of human faith and living style according to Vedas. The author Udayanacharya defends his effort to provide a set of "proofs" for the existence and operation of God.

The work gives the Sanskrit text with its word by word meaning, and translation of the text. More information and a comparative analysis of later writers over this effort of Udayanacharya in "proving God" could be added as a supplement in a later edition.

V. Venkatakrishna