

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Minor, *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavad Gita*, New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1986, pp. 278.

This book is one among the several modern interpretations of the *Gita*. It is a collection of careful, objective and historically sensitive studies of nine contemporaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the basic scriptures of Hinduism, and one which has been widely read in the modern West. Experts on modern Indian religious thought explain how Bankim Chandra Catterji, Tilak, Aurabindo, Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Swami Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Swami Sivananda and Swami Bhaktivedanta have read, meditated upon and interpreted the *Gita*.

Since the modern Indian thinkers, whose writings are analysed in this volume, believed that the message of the *Gita* transcended its historical circumstances, their approach to the text included methods which differed from those orientalists who seek to place the text in its historical context.

The authors of these essays are scholars from departments of religious studies who are interested in highlighting the values hidden in the ancient religious literature. Hence the book offers very interesting and informative material.

A. Njallampuzha

Sebasti L. Raj, *Total Revolution : the final phase of Jayaprakash Narayan's Political Philosophy*, Madras : Satya Nilayam Publications, 1986, pp. xv + 285. Price. Rs. 95/-

The idel of Total Revolution of Jayaprakash Narayan that fascinated the Indian mind in the mid-1970s caused the "Janata Wave" and the formation of the first non-Congress government in the independent India for the first time. Jayaprakash, one of the great social revolutionaries of India, was first a Marxian, then a socialist and later a Gandhian. But towards the end of his life he came to the conclusion that all these ideologies were not fit for the concrete Indian situation. Then he formulated the concept of 'Total Revolution': "... the ushering in of radical changes, ... a change of heart, ... structural changes in the political, economic, socio-cultural and educational spheres, ... the creation of a new power base by which the masses become the masters of their own destiny, ... the provision of man's basic needs, namely, freedom, equality and fraternity ... and man is liberated from all the evils and defects of the present social order" (p. 205).

'Total Revolution' was the final phase of the political philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan who had adopted a number of positions in his political career. And to be realistic, the ideal of 'Total Revolution' seems to be Utopian as it remains as an ideal in the abstract form, impractical in concrete situations.

However, Sebasti L. Raj has done a great service to the academic community of Indian polity, and especially to the students of Indian politics and socialism, in preparing this research study on the movement initiated by Jayaprakash Narayan.

T. Chirapurath

Pinchas Lapide, *The Sermon on the Mount, Utopia or Program for Action*, translated from German by Arlene Swidler, New York : Orbis Books, 1986, pp. vii + 148 (pbk) : \$ 9. 95

The sermon on the Mount by Pinchas Lapide is an important book on two grounds. It provides a Jewish interpretation of the 'quintessence' of Christianity and is a healthy contribution to the Jewish-Christian dialogue. For the average reader the second reason may be more valid: it analyses the whole thing not just as an utopian idea, but as a programme for action, which can be put into practice in everyday life and in fact, is a necessity in a world aspiring for peace.

According to the author the Sermon on the Mount has been grossly misinterpreted by theologians who did not take into consideration the Christ's Jewishness which does not consist merely of genetics but something more of a spiritual and moral in nature. The theologians have taken apart the shocking, demanding and uncompromising message and rendered a beautiful version which is superfluous and therefore, stale and ineffective. However, the author emphasizes the Jewishness of the sermon on the Mount to such an extent that he seems to echo with Julius Wellhausen when he says, "Everything on the sermon on the mount can be found in the Talmud—yes and how much more besides," and thus he reduces the sermon on the mount merely as a part of Jewish teaching and nothing more. The author analyses the beatitudes, and 'And I say to you' passages in the gospel of Matthew (Mat. 5:1-12, 21-48, 17:20) in fourteen chapters divided into three parts. Each theme has been treated separately and evaluated within the context of Rabbinic interpretation and current theological and existential perspectives. The work is an illumi-

nating one, which could be profitably read both by scholars as well as ordinary believing Christians.

J. Akkara

Hans Steffner S.J., *The Significance of Jesus Christ in Asia*, Anand, India : Gujarath Sahitya Prakash, 1985, pp. xvii + 264. Rs. 35.00.

The book is an attempt of a believing Christian to show what significance Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, has in Asia, especially in India. The book has two sections with a conclusion. The first section narrates the reactions of three groups of admirers of Jesus Christ. In the first group there are Indians who saw in Christ the key to the progress of their country, but were not personally committed to him. In the second group we have those Indians who were intensely committed to Christ but felt against the well-organized and westernised Church. In the last group we find Indians who did become Christians, maintaining that culturally they remained Indians/Hindus. The second section of the book makes an analysis of various religions of Asia, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Zoroastrianism and shows how they act as heralds to Christ.

The book is remarkable because of the background of the author. He was born in Austrian Tyrol, joined the Jesuits and came to India in 1934. Since then India was his second home. This book is an outcome of the personal experiences and authentic study of the author of the main streams of India's religious life. It is well documented with a comprehensive and well chosen classified bibliography.

One of the special features of the book is that it challenges the traditional way of propagating Christianity and it proposes its own way of approaching the issue of propagation of faith.

V. Kochuparambil

Walbert Buhlmann, *The Church of the Future, A Model for the Year 2001*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1986, pp. 16 + 210. \$ 10.95.

The book has been divided into two parts, one a systematic and detailed analysis of the institution of Church as it exists in the various parts of the world today, together with an in-depth study of the evolutionary process reaching upto the current phase; and the other a discussion on 'Prototypes for the Year 2001,' a convincing portrayal of what the Church should be or is tending to look like in the distant future. Though through

the colonial expedition of the Western imperialistic powers, the Church made her presence felt at every nook and corner of the world, yet she remained fundamentally a western reality. Dealing with each of the continental Churches in separate chapters, the author has tried to show what the Church meant for each of them and asserts openly that the hope for the Christian Church lies within the third world. While faithfully acknowledging the universal character of the Church, he cautions all against false universalism which calls for uniformity in religious practices.

In part two, the author has exhibited his prophetic vision portraying the cloak that the Church should wear. It envisages a restructuring of the Church and her Missions. This book will offer solace for many who are sincerely concerned with the things happening within the Church and were on the look out for a model which could inspire them as a goal for future action. After the second Vatican Council a general confusion prevailed in the Church regarding her evangelical work. However, Buhlmann's description of the threefold task of a Christian – to interpret, to transform and to christianize the world – goes a long way in the process of clearing up this confusion.

G. Kulangara

Arij A. Roest Crolius, et. al, *Creative Inculturation and the Unity of Faith*, Working papers on Living Faith and Cultures VIII, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1986. pp. xii+76.

This book is a collection of three working papers by three different scholars in the field on living faith and cultures presented at the Seminar of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (F.I.U.C.) in 1985 held at Jerusalem.

It stresses the urgent need for inculturation and describes inculturation as "a two way process through which Christianity takes root within cultures and cultural values are integrated to Christianity." These are the process of rooting and integration. One is reminded that the unity of faith of a religion is not very much affected by the legitimate plurality of cultures but rather it is only enriched by them. Paul Surlis points out that in order to achieve a new synthesis between faith and cultures, the Church has to evangelize cultures. It involves "accommodation of cultures without dissolving the unity of Faith."

In the last paper, Rodger Van Allein makes a case study of the creative inculturation of Catholicism in the United States. Hence the book

would be a useful guide for those who are engaged in the inter-cultural and religious activities.

P. Pottampuzha

David M. Johnson, *Justice and Peace Education: Models for College and University Faculty*, Orbis Books, New York, 1986. pp. 248. \$ 16.95.

The force behind the immediate genesis of the book was the Call of the 1971 Synod of the Bishops for Action on behalf of Justice. Taking inspiration from the Call, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) initiated and developed new models of Justice education, incorporating Justice concerns into the already existing Courses on Study in the various disciplines in the colleges and university faculties. The book contains a collection of eighteen essays on four disciplines, namely, the humanities (4), the social sciences (5), the professional disciplines (4) and inter-disciplinary courses (2).

Courses on the issues of Justice and Peace will certainly enhance the goal of the National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution which urges all citizens to support training in conflict resolution, the non-violent resistance and programmes devoted to service to peace and education for peace through justice. Although there is abundant literature to document the study of war, there is comparatively little to document the study of the history of peace activities which has a long history, a history which is coeval with the history of the war. Hence the book is certainly a very useful one. It provides both the vision and the practical tools to answer the earnest searching of administrators and teachers in the educational institutions for the ways and means to promote the cause of justice and peace.

T. Elavunkal

Jesu Rajan, *Bede Griffiths and Sannyasa*, Asian Training Cor., Bangalore, 1989, pp. 280.

Sannyasa is a state of life in which a person is totally detached from everything in the universe and intensely attached to the Ultimate Reality. This is a way of life in all the Indian Religions and Christianity. The present work is an attempt to give a comprehensive study of the life and teachings of Bede Griffiths who came to India in 1955, with a conviction

that the best way to make the West and the East to meet is to live the life of an Indian Christian *Sannyasin*. First he stayed at the Benedictine Monastery at Bangalore. In 1958 he moved to Kurisumala in Kerala. After ten years stay there, he moved to Santivanam, Trichy in Tamil Nadu. The 'Saccidananda Ashram' at Santivanam was established by Abbe Jules Monchanin (alias Swami Parama Arubi Anandam) and Swami Dom Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda); and the former died rather suddenly and the latter began a wandering life in 1968. Then Swami Bede left Kurisumala with two other *Sannyasins* and came over to Santivanam and he is there to this day. According to him "the aim of the *Ashram* from the first was to establish a form of contemplative life based alike on the traditions of Christian monasticism and Hindu *Sannyasa*" (p.11). The book under review is a reliable account of the attempts of a number of pioneers in this line, giving a central position to the views and life-style adopted by Bede Griffiths. The work is a real contribution in the field of Hindu-Christian dialogue.

T. Kadankavil

Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *The Politics of Compassion*, New York: Orbis Books, 1986, pp. 132.

The central theme of the book can be stated in the words of the author himself: "Christians... particularly those who are relatively affluent or comfortable, will understand the message of Jesus only if we let the poor be our teachers." A closely related insight is that we can seriously hope for a world with more justice and less hunger only if we understand history, economics and theology from the vantage point of the poor. The author applies this principle by examining three vital issues - hunger, liberation struggles in South and Central America and the arms race which offer concrete opportunities for the transformation of the attitudes of the rich to the poor. The book rightly argues the need for Christians to develop a politics of compassion, that is rooted in biblical faith as a response to critical social problems such as hunger, arms race and global colonial politics.

B. Karuvellil