

BOOK REVIEWS

1. Kana Mitra, *Catholicism-Hinduism: Vedantic Investigation of Raimundo Panikkar's Attempt to Bridge Building*, Lantian, University Press, pp. 186.

The title of the work itself declares the scope of it. Today the religious world is saturated with the talk about inter-and intra-religious dialogue, and the publications on the same are steadily on increase. Kana Mitra's book also comes along this line, but with a difference. It is a remarkable study of the unique contributions of Raimundo Panikkar, an outstanding philosopher-theologian in the field of interreligious studies.

The Introduction of the book gives a short, but very reliable and informative sketch of the history of the Hindu-Christian dialogue in this century. The book has five chapters with a conclusion and selected bibliography. The study is well documented. The conclusion clearly brings out the salient features of Panikkar's thought exposed in the early chapters.

The main conclusion of the book is that the Hind-Christian dialogue is a viable one although some among Hindus are suspicious and not without reason, that dialogue is another trick on the part of Christians to convert them. Panikkar's work in the field of dialogue are numerous yet we do not find any written comment on his works by any Hindu thinker. One of the reasons for this is said to be that Panikkar writes primarily for Christians. The author summarizes the Christian reaction to his works thus: "The Christian thinkers in general are appreciative of Panikkar's universalistic and integral interpretation of Christianity. . . However, most of his Christian critics are unhappy about what they consider his minimizing of Jesus of Nazareth" (p. 129). He is not willing to identify Christ with Jesus of Nazareth. For him this would be equal to emphasising the concrete at the expense of the universal and it may amount to idolatry.

The author has certainly succeeded in showing that, although the response from the Hindus and Catholics to Panikkar's dialogue was not very much spontaneous, he has been successful in removing some of the barriers of dialogue from both sides.

It seems, however, that we have to agree with most of the criticism the author makes against the inter-religious dialogue of Panikkar within Catholicism (cf . pp. 130, 131). "Panikkar's integrated interpretation of

Christianity is subject to some criticism from the point of view of internal consistency. His main concern is to hold together universality and concreteness. With this end in mind he distinguishes between historical and transhistorical Christianity, Jesus and Christ, visible Church and Mystical Body, while at the same time holding on to their inseparability" (p. 130). The reality of this distinction and inseparability is as mysterious as the integration of universality and concreteness. Panikkar, however, does not claim that he has solved all the intellectual problems of universality and concreteness, and that is the most refreshing thing about his contribution.

2. M.P. Pandit, *Traditions in Occultism*, Sterling Publishers, Delhi, 1987, pp. 99, Rs. 90/-

The book is written to stimulate a positive interest in the occult side of our life. What is beyond the reach of our physical senses and tools we make use of is occult to us. Older traditions all over the world have always testified to the interaction between the physical world and the higher and lower worlds that constitute in their totality the cosmos. The modern mind is just beginning to become conscious of this fact and developing interest in harnessing these occult energies for a richer development of the physical possibilities.

The following assumptions are accepted as true in this book. "There is a life after death. There is a link between the life on earth and the subsequent life beyond. This brief life on earth is not all. Rebirth is a fact. There are beings in the universe – benevolent and malevolent – which help or hinder man in his progressive evolution" (p.v.).

The aim of the book is to show that the occult world is not outside of us, it is there, organized in principle, in our own being. At different centres in our consciousness there are focii that serve as windows opening upon these occult worlds. And they can be utilized for quickening our growth towards our highest objectives. The author's approach is one of harmonizing understanding of the thread of unity running through the Vedic and Tantric scriptures, Jain, Buddhist, Tibetan Tantric, Sufi, and Jesuit traditions.

The book offers a refreshing reading. The author, M.P. Pandit, a *Sadhaka* in Sri Aurobindo Ashram for the past five decades, has written over a hundred books on yoga, spiritual philosophy, psychology, Veda, Upanishads, Gita, Tantra and problems concerning human society.

3. Carlos G. Valles, S.J., *Sketches of God*, Gujarat, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987, pp. 175.

From the beginning to the end a single theme, namely, broadening ones concept of God, pervades the whole book. The book is remarkable because of the special background of the author. He was born in Spain, joined the Jesuits in 1941 and came to India in 1949. Since then India was his second home. In 1980 he has been chosen by the Gujarat Literary Academy for *Ranjitram Gold Medal*, the highest Gujarati Literary Award.

The opening paragraph summarizes the message of the book. I have often been asked in my life: "What has India given you"? And the final answer I give is: "India has enlarged and enriched the concept I had of God. . . and that is possibly the best service she has rendered me" (p. 1). "And that concept, in me, would have been much poorer and colourless if I had not come to India" (p. 4). As the title suggests man can have only "Sketches of God." He has to change it constantly. It is in this context the author interprets Jesus' mysterious words: "Unless I go, the Holy Spirit will not come to you" (p. 167). The apostles' concrete concept of Jesus had to go so that he may come back to them in the Spirit.

The author argues out that people becomes atheists because they have not changed their concept of God in due time. "I do not believe in the God in whom the atheists do not believe" said pointedly Patriarch Maximus IV in Vatican II. Hence the aim of the book is stated as follows: "The best way to fight atheism. . . is to obtain a better understanding of God. That, and no less, is the quixotic ambition of this book" (p. 6). "When the atheist rejects God, what he rejects is the image he has himself formed of God, and it is possible that if in due time he had known that there are other images, and he had accepted and lived them beforehand, he would not have come to this denial" (p. 169). The book is certainly a real help to enlarge one's concept of God.

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