

BOOK REVIEWS

Dominic Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions: Jean Daniélou and Raimundo Panikkar: A study in Contrast*. Kristu Jyoti Publications, Bangalore 560 036, India 1988, pp. xiv+407, Price Rs. 100/- \$ 22.00.

The first part entitled, Jean Danielou gives an outline of his theological approach to non-Christian religions. This devolves primarily on three key-issues which constitute the bedrock of his approach: First, a basic methodological option which involves the distinction of the different Pascalian realms: Revelation, the sciences of the spirit and the empirical sciences and, on the other hand, the attainability of truth on the part of the human mind. Second, the human person's constitutive relationship to God. – a basic experience which is central to the thought of Danielou. And, finally, the event of revelation with all its implications. Next Danielou's understanding of religions has been elaborated in five themes: Sacred History, which for him is a global theological perspective, method and reality. The issue of Religion as opposed to Revelation is a second theme. The Centrality of Jesus Christ and the Transcendence of Christianity respectively figure as the third and fourth themes. A final theme entitled, The Theological Status of Religions, deals with Danielou's stance on this issue.

The second part elaborates Raimundo Panikkar's theological understanding of the salvific value of world religions. It mainly deals with categories and principles characteristic of Panikkar's theological endeavour, namely 1) Radical Relativity, which is symbolic of Panikkar's entire vision; 2) Tempiternity – a particular non-dualistic perspective which situates the discussion of the theme; 3) Myth and Logos as two forms of awareness which condition theological reflection; 4) The category of 'symbol' which helps Panikkar resolve some of the problems of the relationship between the concrete and the universal; 5) Faith as a dimension constitutive of the human person; 6) Diatopical Hermeneutics – a new level of understanding a person as this latter understands himself; 7) In fine, Panikkar's evolving understanding of the theological enterprise. Another theme taken up in this connection is Panikkar's Cosmotheandrim – the core of his understanding of religious pluralism and it includes the following four themes: 1) Cosmotheandrim; 2) The symbolic nature of religion; 3) The evolving Christian perspective of Panikkar; 4) And, finally, Panikkar's understanding of pluralism. In contrast to Danielou's view the author formulates Panikkar's view as

follows: "In the final stage of his reflection, Dr. Panikkar affirms the presence of the ecclesial level in the different religions of the world. On the sociological level, all religions are equal, on the ecclesial level they are complementary. The mission of religions is seen in terms of mutual fecundation and dialogue... Each religion is unique - a statement which can only be made from within faith in that religion." ... "Religious pluralism becomes a theological imperative. Pluralism does not involve the recognition and intellectual equation of different systems which would only create a supersystem... If involves the existential acceptance of the other as other without being able to understand or coopt him (p. 182).

The bibliographical arrangement of the works of Danielou and Panikkar according to the year of their publication in the original together with an indication of their translation is a great help for anyone who wants to make a personal study of the evolution of their thought.

After such a thorough and masterly study one would have expected the author to offer his own conclusion. The author, however, has chosen not to offer one, but rather, in the spirit of all inter-religious encounter, to bring the thoughts of both Danielou and Panikkar into a thematic dialogue, paving thus the way for the reader to draw his own conclusions.

This book is undoubtedly a major contribution to the field of inter-religious dialogue dealing as it does not only with the vision and insights of two of the eminent theologians of our era on a topic of vital and current interest but also offering a thematic dialogue between their positions.

Jose Kuttianimattathil S.D.B.

Zacharias Paraniyam, *Christian Openness to the World Religions*, Pontifical Institute Publications, Alwaye, Kerala, 1988, pp. 176 + viii.

In the words of Joseph Cardinal Parecattil this book is "a clear illustration of the new wind of change that is blowing over the christian landscape."

The main thrust of this book is an inclusive and an open attitude towards other religions. This position is justified from Scripture, Tradition, and from the various theological trends, and from the document *Nostra Aetate* of Second Vatican Council. The first chapter highlights the glimpses of openness in the Bible. The documents of Vatican II on this

subject being the maiden attempt of this sort, in the whole history of the church, it remains a landmark widening the horizon of the religious fellowship. In the context of past history, full of anathemas and condemnations, *Nostra Aetate* represents, both in tone and context, a decisive and unique advance in the self understanding of the church. Conciliar direction is positive and a solemn beginning of openness towards all other world religions. The Christian attitude towards other religions is so complicated and complex, that the author himself seems to contradict in a later statement, what he said earlier. On page 118 he says: "The declaration does not speak explicitly about the salvific value of religions." But in the final conclusion, he says: "The second Vatican's greatest contribution in the field of the relation of the church to non-Christians is the discovery and recognition of the salvific values of these religions" (p. 166).

This book, however, opens a way to a new era of understanding and cooperation based on the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

Arthur James

Cherian Kochupurackal, *India Awaiting the Good News*, G.M. Secretariate, Cochin, 1988, P. 142.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part in five chapters (1. Context of the study; 2. India that awaits the good news; 3. Evangelisation; 4. Efforts of Evangelization; and 5. obstacles to evangelization) presents the frame of reference of the study. The second part, in chapters six to ten (6. Profile of the Sample; 7. Idea of Evangelization; 8. The Good News: Response to Indian Realities; 9. Effectiveness of the efforts; and 10. Major Findings and Implications for action) presents data analysis.

The first part gives the background, situating of the study on the national and ecclesial panorama of India viz., St Thomas Christians, Syro-Malabar Church, Carmelites of Mary Immaculate and the five dioceses. Then the major variables, methodology and research design used in the book are explained. In the frame of reference, the socio-political, economic, religious and cultural realities that characterise the Indian situation, are taken note of. According to Cherian the most important challenges that the current Indian situation present to evangelization are religiosity, deprivation, and socia

injustice. The study appears to be conducted with a clear vision of evangelization: "The goal of mission work is the kingdom of God which is also the goal of world history." (p. 60).

Sebastian Poonolly

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Vol. 3 by Gurbachan Singh Talib, Publication Bureau, Punjab University, Patiala, pp. 1522 - 2249. Rs. 160/-

This volume is the third of a four-volume translation of *Guru Granth Sahib* (completed in 1604), the Sacred Scripture of the Sikh faith. Its contents are hymns of God-consciousness, loving devotion and deep moral reflection. Among its contributors are six of the Gurus of Sikhism and a number of medieval Indian saints, drawn from different denominations and castes.

Daniel P. Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhagavata Purana*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986, pp. 170, Rs. 75/-

Within a compass of eight chapters of this volume the author makes a close examination of the fundamental tenets of *Bhagavata Purana*. By penetrating analysis he shows how as a unified scripture Bhagavata Purana combines Vedantic non-dualism and Vaishnava devotionism; and how the Bhagavata non-dualism accommodates the reality of the universe and of the individual selves in it within the all encompassing reality of Brahman. According to the author, this wonderful blending of devotionism and non-dualism in the *Bhagavata Purana* finds its expression in the worship of Krishna as transcendent and supreme deity by all Vaishnavas.

Krishna is also equally this worldly. The Krishna legends are presented in a village folk setting with trickster episodes and erotic love-play that communicate some of the most distinctive aspects of the devotional traditions of India. Such a saviour personality! A divine child who steals butter and plays pranks with his family, a youth who steals the garments of the maidens while they are swimming, who hides and then reveals himself, who dances with erotic delight with the village women, and in all this makes the divine present in its supreme transforming power.

Though "a clear scholastic understanding of the paradox" (p.41) of the non-duality of the reality, and the theism of the *Bhagavata* is not clearly emerging from the book, the reader gets a clear picture of what vaishnava devotionism really mean. That itself is the great merit of the present work.

T. K.