

beauty and truth, sensation and intuition, unity and diversity. He also points out the radical change brought about by the *Aranyakas* in interpreting rituals with reference to real intuitive prayer; this orientation reaches its culmination in Upanishads, where the word "Om" gives expression to the total reality-content. Om is understood as the breath of life (*Prāna*) of every living being and the essence of reality. It is more a symbol of reality than a mantra of individuality.

This book will serve as a good guide for further explorations in the field of Vedic studies.

Antony Maliekal.

Charles P. Price,

The Principles of Christian Faith and Practice,

New Delhi: Islam and Modern Age Society Publication,
1977, 305+xiii pp.

In the past, religions remained relatively isolated from one another. However, in these days of dialogue, quick communication, and vastly increased mobility have turned the world into one 'global village'. Today, especially in India, which is a land of all major religions, Buddhists and Muslims, Christians and Jews, Hindus and Agnostics, intermingle socially and academically. This situation requires the people of the various faiths to make an effort to understand each other and, especially, to know what other religions have to say about the greatest issues of life and destiny.

It is, therefore, encouraging to see that *Islam and Modern Society* has come forward to meet this urgent need, by publishing books on major religions. Here the book under review *The Principles of christian faith and Practice* is a mine of information for those who seek to understand the fundamental principle of Christianity. It is written in a simple style by Charles P. Price, an ordained minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the 'General Principles' in three chapters. The second part is on the 'Principles of Christian Faith'. This part is divided into eight chapters. The third and the fourth parts are on 'Principles of Christian Practice' in eight chapters.

Every religion has a variety of forms. Christianity is no exception. This seems to be the reason why the author starts his discussion on the *Principles of Christianity* by dealing its various divisions. Charles P. Price not only points out the various diversities of Christian denominations but also hints at the possibility of a common platform, where all of them can come together.

Then the author proceeds to describe the great impact which the humanity of Jesus has made on these Christian movements, particularly in recent years. The author depicts the story of Jesus of Nazareth from birth to death and his appearances to the chosen witnesses. 'Christianity is a historical religion based on the historical person of Jesus' (p. 22).

The second part of the book is devoted to the 'Principles of Christian Faith'. It begins with the concepts of 'Religion, Faith, Revelation and Authority'. Religion, according to Price, denotes 'the bonds which join human life to the cosmos' (p. 33). Christianity, for him, is a religion in this sense of the term, and in it the decisive act of reunion was accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth, both in the course of His life and through His death and resurrection. Faith is distinct from belief. It means not only trusting in God but also accepting the message about Jesus as the Christ. It is not only the acceptance of the doctrine as in the case of belief, but also a way of life in accordance with it.

Religion and faith are founded on revelation. 'Revelation is the self-disclosure of God Himself. Christianity is based on the Principle that the reality communicated by Christian revelation is the ultimate Truth. The fulness of revelation is seen in Christ and hence, Christ is the final and ultimate authority. Authority in the church is a liberating power, a service.

Next the author presents God as Holy, Absolute, and Transcendent. The Absolute by definition, is what is beyond all relations. 'The Absolute is unqualified in any way by a relation to anything else' (p. 50). But to know the Absolute there must be some relations with the Absolute, and this is the paradox in knowing the Absolute. The absoluteness of God is known by the self-disclosure of God Himself.

In the revelatory encounter, God is known as both immanent and transcendent at the same time. God is transcendent because He is above our experience even after the revelation, and He is immanent because He "dwells within" every soul. The vexed problem of evil and sin is the next issue discussed. 'Evil is defined as what is hostile to human existence'. But 'sin is a breach in our

relation with God. According to the Bible, evil is the result of sin. Disobedience is the cause of sin and, therefore, of evil. According to the author freedom and finitude of man are the main factors which give rise to evil.

Chapters seven to ten speak about Christ, the redeemer, God the Father, and the Spirit, the principle of unity and love in Godhead as this triune unity of Godhead is understood in the Christian tradition. According to Price, "the doctrine of Trinity is not a biblical doctrine". Some may find it misleading and inaccurate. Similarly he also makes the controversial statement that "Spirit is an attribute of Personhood. It has no Personal centre" (p. 167). What the author really means here is not clear.

The third part of the book deals with the "Principles of Christian practice". In Chapter twelve, Price describes the nature of the Church. He reminds us of the fact that each and every Christian denomination claims that theirs is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. While dealing with the nature of the Church, he first concentrates his attention on the *organizational structure* of the Church. He says, "The bishops of the imperial cities, Rome and Constantinople, attracted jurisdictional powers over the whole church, and to this day, the Pope as bishop of Rome, and the Patriarch of Constantinople have special pre-eminence and power in Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. In all this arrangement, *there is no theological content*" (p. 202). The underlined assertion will be objected to by Roman Catholics and Orthodox Churches, for they believe that the pre-eminence of the Roman Bishop (the Pope) has scriptural foundations and hence it has theological sanction.

The work under review proceeds with the description of the individual and corporate worship and the consequent Christian ethics. By baptism one is incorporated into the body of Christ and into the particular Christian denomination. Lord's supper is another Service of worship which all Christian Churches have in common. Marriage, Confirmation and services to the sick are some other services of worship. Christians have special burial services. There are services to the world such as education, social action and social work. Though there are differences concerning doctrines and practices, almost all the churches retain and perform these services.

Christian ethics and morals are based on the commandment of Jesus: "Even as I have loved you, that you love one another". They "are committed to make ethical judgements to the best of

their ability by applying the standard of life which Jesus embodies" (p. 249). What God revealed through Jesus Christ and his teachings and life, is the fundamental criterion for Christian ethics and morals.

The last three Chapters prior to the final Chapter take up the issues of Church-state relationship, Sex and marriage, labour and property, respectively. Though the author has nothing original to offer on these much discussed issues, the inclusion of these subjects in a book on Christian doctrine and practice, make it clear how Christian religion is involved in the life-issues of man. The final Chapter is on Christian hope. Man's problems are not once and for all solved here on earth. Man is called to work for a better life, which he believes in and hopes for.

Thus Charles P. Price presents Christianity both in its diversity and unity, in its scriptural and historical purity. Almost all theological and ethical principles are discussed. One of the major merits of this book is that the author deals with the Christian religion not as an exclusive religion. There are references and comparisons with other world religions. The author does not appear in the role of 'judge-advocate'. He is an analyst-interpreter in his approach. Price exposes the historical, philosophical, and theological facts and allows the reader to judge and evaluate for himself. Far from being defensive the author expounds his standpoint with honesty and openness. At this time of inter-religious dialogue it is a great virtue which can enrich our poor world in many ways.

The author has succeeded to a great extent in the difficult task of keeping in mind all the varieties of Christianity when exposing. Even so he could have easily avoided some of the theological points and explained a little more in detail some of the points so that there may not be any misunderstanding and objections. Clarity and precision is lacking on some points as already noted. The fundamental principle of Christianity that is 'love of God and love of man' deserved to be treated more elaborately.

The printing is good. But a little more attention to the get-up and proof reading would have rendered this book more attractive and accurate, and freed it from some mistakes such as: *with* instead of *Which* (p. 101 line 27). *In* instead of *It* (p. 165 line 24). As expected by the publishers this book, we hope, will help Christians and non-Christians 'to understand and appreciate the spiritual and moral principles' of Christianity.

Philip Puthenparampil