

BOOK REVIEWS

Clarence O. McMuller (Ed.)

The Nature of Guruship,
ISPCK, P. Box 1585, Kashmere Gate,
Delhi 110006, 217 pp., Rs. 30.00.

Guruship is not only central but also common to most of the major religions and religious traditions of the world. Intense devotion to the Lord, and equal devotion to *Guru* are the essential preliminaries to the realization of the true path in Hinduism. *Guru* is sometimes regarded even as the incarnation of the deity. Among Sikhs, the term applies to the ten successive heads of their religion, the last of whom stopped the succession with himself declaring that henceforward the Sikh holy book, the *Granth* should be the *Guru*. This *Guru Granth* now receives almost divine homage. To the Christians Jesus Christ is the *Guru* who declared himself as "the way, truth and life". L.S.P.C.K.'s recent publication. *The Nature of Guruship* is an exhaustive study on the topic by various scholars.

This book comprises eighteen of the papers presented at a seminar organised by the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies, in December 1974. It is divided into four parts each of which discusses the nature of *Guruship* in different ways and with reference to different source materials. Part I deals with the nature of *Guruship* as understood from the scriptures of three major religions represented in the Punjab – the Hindu, the Sikh and the Christians. The papers herein are exegetical treatments of these scriptures. Dr. Chaubey has very well delineated the flexible figure of *Guru* in Hindu Scriptures, explicating Hinduism's emphasis on synthesis and its all inclusive nature. "The concept of *Guruship* in New Testament" (James Massey) summarises the teachings of Jesus Christ about *Guru* and the New Testament's teaching about Jesus as *Guru*.

Part II discusses the nature of *Guruship* as viewed by various other religious traditions or denominations. The first two chapters of this section dealing with the two traditions within Islam add to the richness and uniqueness of the book. The method of approach made use of in the part III is academic.

It discusses the nature of *Guruship* from the vantage point of four academic disciplines, history, psychology, sociology and art. Rev. James Swain's paper on *Guruship* revealed through popular art is a unique contribution. He has based his research on non-verbal sources i.e. various pictures of the Sikh *Gurus*.

The two papers in the last section present the experiential view of the nature of *Guruship*. Sr. Vandana's paper attracts our special attention. She has successfully pictured *Guru* as a present reality from her own personal experience with some of the well-known contemporary *Gurus*.

However, we cannot say that this book is the final word on the nature of *Guruship*. It has only initiated further researches in respective fields. Repetitious explanations of the term "Gurju" in various papers could have been edited out. Most of the papers, it should be noted, bear the stamp of scholarship and deep research.

The theme of the book is more relevant in this era of inter-religious dialogue. This is a time which Christianity tries to cast off her prejudices and go in search of the "grains of truth" spread over in all other religions.

Joseph Pdackal.