

Thus, this book is a very remarkable analysis of religion which is essentially a matter of personal experience. Confusion, untruth and fanaticism arise when this basic aspect of religion is ignored and emphasis is laid on mythology, rituals and theology which are all mere encrustations. True religion is an experience. It is personal. Thus he fulfils the task he set for himself, namely, to suggest "a critical and constructive thrust to our thinking" on religion.

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Albrecht Frenz (Ed.)

Grace in Saiva Siddhānta

Vedanta, Islam and Christianity

Madurai: Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Arasaradi,
1975, 128 pp.

The Seminar held at Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Arasaradi, Madurai, in October 1971 concentrated on the Study of "Grace" in various Religions. Specialists in various religions came together, shared their views, discussed many aspects of grace and arrived at a comprehensive concept of "Grace as viewed by Saiva Siddhānta, Vedanta, Islam and Christianity." It is to the credit of Dr. Albrecht Frenz, that the proceedings of the seminar have been made available to us. That grace has been operating throughout the seminar becomes abundantly clear when one reads this book.

The first two papers by S.P. Annamalai and V.A. Devasenapati give us an idea of grace as conceived in Saiva Siddhanta literature. Grace is presented as *guru-arul* and *tiru-arul*, especially in the initial poems of the first eight *Tirumurais*. The personified concept of grace is not alien to Saiva Siddhanta. The bestowal of grace, the process of sublimation, the consequent effects of sublimation, the concept of obscuration, a comparative idea of *karma and grace*, the co-operation and operation grace and human endeavour, these and other such live issues are discussed as dealt with in Saiva Siddhanta literature. From the third paper we get a brief and precise idea of grace as it was understood by the Vedantic Writers. The paper deals with the perennial problem—the causes for the malady and misery of man, and even suggests the ways and means to get rid of these miseries. It is very appropriately

suggested that the even a disposition towards the study of Advaita arises only from God's grace.

Once the concept of grace is exposed from Saiva Siddhanta and Vedanta points of view, naturally as expected, it is viewed from a Christian perspective and this is done mainly by Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam. He provides us with a Christian reading of the Saiva Siddhanta and Vedanta texts, not twisting the ideas to fit the Christian view, but maintaining the true identity of both.

The concept of grace, perhaps, assumes a more concrete and practical shape within the Islamic trend of thought, and this is clear from the opening sentence of Mir Jaffar Ali's paper "the members of this assembly are forms of grace". He does not hesitate to state that "the grace of God has dawned upon Soviet Russia in the form of communism"—how can it be the grace of God? One has to go through his paper carefully to understand this. He is very outspoken when he says, "We are simply talkers, we are not in a position to spread our grace in actual life as Jesus Christ did, as Prophet Muhammed did".

Next we have three papers which deal with grace from a Christian point of view. These articles are set in a theological tone. In the first, the basis of the concept is presented as in the Old and New Testaments; then follows the traditional theological interpretation; and, finally, we have the Hindu point of view. We get etymological explanations of the various terms used in the Bible with reference to "grace". Certainly this analysis takes us deep into different aspects of grace. A historical sketch of the development of the concept of grace in the theological traditions of the church has been well presented by Biorn Fjarstedt. Is grace an infused power or quality? What is the relation between grace and nature? How can grace and free will be related? All these are interesting, but difficult questions to answer and the writers have very largely succeeded in their attempts to do so.

Through the foregoing papers the reader is enabled to make a comparative study of grace as seen in various world religions. However, the final paper presented by Rev. Fr. T. Dayanandan Francis serves as a comprehensive guide line this paper presents the points of convergence and differences between these religions in their proper perspective. The task attempted in the paper demands a certain amount of repetition and the contributors cannot be blamed for this.

To add to the merit of this book, the editor has provided faithful but lively summaries of the discussions. These summaries help the readers to understand better the ideas presented in the papers. The conclusion presented by Dr. T.P. Meenakshi Sundaram tends to occupy too much space at times—almost the length of a paper—but is most useful and provides a fitting close to the book. A little more attention to the get up would have rendered this book more attractive.

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