

## BOOK REVIEW

**Swami Mukhyananada**, *Vedanta The Science of Integral Reality Vis - a - Vis Modern Science*, Vivekananda Commemoration Volume, Calcutta: Centre for Reshaping Our World-View, 1998, pp.301; Rs. 125.00

The dynamics of rational Western science and the spiritual Eastern Vedanta is amicably integrated by Swami Mukhyananda and published as a commemorative volume for the triumphant return of Swami Vivekananda to India after his monumental lecture tour in the West. First of all let me place on record that this theme is a fitting tribute to a visionary who spent his time and energy for an integrated vision of humanity. Science symbolises the Western culture while Vedanta gives one of the philosophical foundations of Indian Culture. This book crystallises the creative thinking of Swami Mukhyananda who is an expert on Vedanta and who had reflected on science for long years. The integrated vision of the reality is the aim of Swami Mukhyananda and he is successful in presenting a coherent vision of Vedanta and science.

The creative evolution of Indian mind produced Vedanta while the rational European mind perfected science. Science has now conquered all realms of human life, irrespective of West or East. Its seminal character is that science is useful, pragmatic, applicable and yield results to any one who is trained in that tradition. Because of this, science sheds its partisan colour. It has a universal appeal. However, such applicability and universality is not at all possible in Vedanta. Because of that there are not many buyers for it both in East and West. Swami Mukhyananda presents in this book the need of taking seriously Vedanta. Its salient features are meticulously illustrated and explained. This is a must for any one who is interested in Vedanta as well as interested in comparing East and West.

Swami Mukhyananda was interested in this topic from his early period onwards. His reflections are presented as papers, lectures and articles presented in various forums and which gave him also opportunities to interact with top ranking scientists. The present book, thus comes as a fruit of long years of reflection and creative interaction with scientists. Swami is well versed in Vedanta. But he is also in touch with the modern trends in science. He has gone deep into the philosophical foundations of physics and traces a crisis there, which is acknowledged by many leading scientists today. The wholeness about which Swamiji is writing is a hot topic among the scientists. David Bohm's quantum mechanical interpretation and Anton Zeilinger's quantum teleportation

are tangible aspects in the search for beyond the crisis of science. Though these topics are not narrated in the present book, the search for a beyond on the basis of Vedanta is agreeably exposed. But the lack of applicability of Vedanta seems to be stumbling block in further research. Swamiji himself expressed that not many scientists are interested in discussing such issues. Scientists are pragmatic people and Swamiji often exhorts them that they are conventional thinkers and should go beyond conventionalism. However, scientists are not at all convinced about bridging Vedanta and science. Perhaps it is due to the lack of a philosophical bend for the scientists. Or are scientists perhaps questioning the utility of such endeavours? It seems to me also that in support of a Vedantic solution, Swamiji never places experiments nor strong facts. On the other hand he profusely cites from Swami Vivekananda. That is not the way of arguing for an integration of Vedanta with science. However, Swami Mukhyananda had broken the earth and did the foundational spade work in search for a method of integration. It is left to others, who are invited to take up this vital and interesting issue of integration of humanity and saving it from fragmentation.

**Dr. Mathew Chandrankunnel.**

**A. Mathias Mundadan CMI, *History and Beyond*, Aluva: Jeevass Publications, 1997, pp. x+450, Rs. 250.00 (US \$30.00).**

This is a collection of selected articles written by the author, Dr. A. Mathias Mundadan CMI, during the past thirty years or so. Coming from no less a historian and scholar than Dr. Mundadan, the book is most welcome, indeed. Reading it I felt really grateful to him for taking pains to collect and bring out the articles in one beautiful volume, thus saving the coming generations the trouble of doing it. For, I am sure it would be quite spontaneous for his admirers to wish to possess all his works together for reference and further studies! And now they have the wish realised under the title **History and Beyond**. With regard to the contents of the book, in the words of the author himself, "Much of what is published in this volume is documented history, with some historical reflections on specific topics, areas of Indian Christianity, or even on the contributions of certain outstanding personalities. A few of the writings are of a more general nature: theological-philosophical elucidations on the understanding of the historical process; theological and inter-religious investigation; Eastern Christianity; Eastern Christian worship and spirituality. Hence the title of the book, **History and Beyond**" (Preface, p.v.).

Among the twenty-three articles included in the book, "The Churches in India," "St. Thomas the Apostle," "Missionaries and Portuguese Discoveries," "Religious /Monastic Life of St. Thomas Christians," and "Syro-Malabar Liturgy: History of Development" come mostly under documented history; "Some Thoughts for a Student of Church History," and "Theological Activity: Reflections from History" concern the theology of history; "Placid: His Call, Vision and Contributions," "Cardinal Parecattil: A Historian," and "An 'Unknown' Oriental Scholar: Ernest Hanxleden (Arnos Pathiri)" are studied in the contributions of those individuals. "The Invalidity of Synod of Daimper," and "Emergence of the Missionary Consciousness of St. Thomas Christians" deal with questions related to St. Thomas Christians; "Selfhood of Indian Christians" discuss the search and struggle of Indian Church for identity and autonomy; "Hindu-Christian Dialogue," and "Kesub Chander Sen: the Church of New Dispensation" have reference to inter-religious dialogue and Indian theology; "Christian Mission Towards Third Millennium" have more bearing on missiology in the Indian context; "Liturgical Reform in Syro-Malabar Church: Texts of Divine Office" presents certain observations and suggestions on the subject along with an appreciation of Fr. Abel CMI's compositions; and "Spirituality of Syriac Fathers," and "Understanding Eastern Christianity" are reflections on Oriental Christianity.

In spite its being a collection of articles written at different times and for different purposes, the book does have a unity of vision and consistency of thought. For the most part it is history of Indian Church, and reflections on the same history with an underlying theology of history, which, too, is stated in some of the articles. It also touches on issues related to the history of Church in India: inter-ritual questions, inter-denominational matters, and inter-religious dialogue; Indian theology, spirituality and liturgy; mission and mission theology. The book may be described as an encyclopaedic work on Indian Church. Accuracy, precision and clarity of thought on the one hand, and, on the other, a scientific approach coupled with an elegance of language are the characteristic marks of the author's writings, which are obvious in the present case, too. One may also discern a development of thought as well as an expansion of the field of interest on the part of the author over the long period of three decades during which the articles have been written.

In conclusion I would like to request the author to publish at the earliest the remaining articles, too, in one or more new volumes!

**Dr. Thomas Kochumuttom cmi**

**Antony Fernando**, *Christian Path to Mental Maturity. A Lucid Exposition of Christianity for the Multi-religious Classroom*, Kadawata, Sri Lanka: 1998, pp.iii+262; \$ 18.00; Ind.Rs.260.00 (ISBN 955-9036-13-0).

Speaking about Christianity to believers of other religious traditions is far from easy. India, like its neighbouring countries, has a multi-religious background where Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have taken deeper roots. The Indian and Sri Lankan religious audience will naturally resist any attempt of Christian introduction, not to speak of Evangelization. Christianity to them is not only alien, but also an invader's religion, because Christianity entered some countries like Sri Lanka in the wake of the country's invasion and colonization by the Western powers in the sixteenth century. Challenging though it is, it has been the concern of many Christian scholars to attempt at an introduction of Christianity to a multi religious classroom. And this is what has been accomplished in *Christian Path to Mental Maturity*, by Antony Fernando from Sri Lanka.

The author himself says, "This book is the result of a course on Christianity that I have been conducting for under graduates of a secular University in Sri Lanka for nearly twenty years. In this University "Christianity" could be freely selected by a student in combination with other Arts subjects for a graduate or post graduate degree. Sri Lanka is a multi religious country and the students of these classes quite naturally belonged to diverse religious traditions. Like elsewhere in the world, there were also those who were altogether sceptical about religion."

His lectures on Christianity in the form of a book, thus, benefit not only his Sri Lankan students, but the huge multi-religious class room of the world. True to what the publishers of the book say, it fills a large educational gap in today's world of multi religious traditions and secular trends. At a time when Christianity is widely identified with Western culture and is seen only as a religion splintered into numerous denominations, the author's lucid exposition of the central message of Christianity endows the book with a usefulness which goes far beyond the class room. From the perspective of a student of Comparative Religion, the book is an exposition of Christianity as a path to mental maturity. Because of that perspective the author has been able to present the message of Christianity in a down to earth manner where faith does not appear to go against reason. The author believes that in a world of multi religious traditions and religionless trends, common sense should not be set aside when talking about Christianity to thinking Christians, ex-Christians

or believers of other faiths. The book is an educator to believers and non-believers, to scholars and lay men alike.

In the first part of the book the author deals with what religion means to different people and also the connection between culture and religion. He makes a distinction between 'Religion born to' and 'Religion awakened to' (adult religion). We have no choice about the first. But one enters into the second after much reflection and investigation. One has to be reborn into it with proper judgement and choice. This is what the Buddha refers to as enlightenment, and Jesus, as 'reborn in the Spirit'. If Christianity or any religion for that matter is viewed not with prejudice, but in this perspective of an awakened person, it becomes more acceptable. As the author says, both the Buddha and Jesus wanted people to be mentally mature, having a vision of right life values and an adult attitude to life. The author is presenting a Christianity which is 'supra denominational' and 'supra cultural'. What is spotlighted in the book is not so much Christianity as an institution, but Christianity as a form of spirituality or a path to mental maturity.

From a discussion on religion the author goes on logically and systematically to a discussion on God belief in Judaism, teaching of Jesus and the Early Church. Finally, in parts three and four, we have studies on the Church today and Christian Path to Mental Maturity.

The author's discussions on the whole are very simple, down to earth and practical. The way he presents Christianity is so appealing that even atheists will nod approvingly of it. The studies on the Son of God, Virgin birth, Resurrection, etc., that appear in part three, are thorny issues though. He equates the title of the Son of God, for example, to the Indian "gurus" or "Bhagavans". He interprets Resurrection in the background of the Jewish belief in the bodily resurrection. The author says, "Resurrection is a matter of religious vision, not of physical view; it is better reached by insight than by physical sight". And Virgin birth, to him, means that Jesus, with regard to his life and activity, owed more to the Spirit of God than to his parents. Indeed, there is a lot of common sense in what he says. And his interpretations are, no doubt, appealing to the multi-religious class he addresses. Theologians have always been divided in their opinion about all these dogmas. The Church perhaps believes in a literal interpretation of all these. But who knows the real Truth and the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth?

The last part justifies the title of the book. The author's insights on suffering, death, sin, sinlessness, etc. are indeed in tune with an adult attitude to life. To a mentally mature person "suffering is not unbearable, though it may be unintelligible," he says. To him religion becomes most alive in the experience of suffering. "The best answer to the problem of death is a life lived in a mature way fulfilling all one's responsibilities", says the author in his discussion on death. Such ideas as these are not only insightful but also comforting to any believer.

In this age of dialogue and ecumenism, books such as 'Christian Path to Mental Maturity' should be the priceless possession of all Christians. The book comes in handy for all who wish to dialogue meaningfully with ordinary folks, for catechists, missionaries, religion teachers and theologians. Of course, it is designed to suit the needs of those who face multi religious classrooms in universities. But the book is indeed a great addition to the wealth of inter-cultural and inter-religious literature.

(Rev.) Jose Kariamadam, CMI.

**Dulichand Jain, *Pearls of Jaina Wisdom. A Selection of Inspiring Aphorisms from the Jaina Scriptures*, Varanasi: Parshvanath Vidyapith & Madras: Research Foundation for Jainology, 1997, pp.xxxii+328; Rs. 120.00 (ISBN 81-86715-18-5).**

Jainism is a world religion of Indian origin. The philosophical tenets, religious practices and spiritual disciplines of the Jains, though they are small in number today, have exerted tremendous influence on Indian culture and religiosity. Established, or rather re-established, in the sixth century BCE by Lord Mahavira, Jainism has weathered all the tempests of time and still flourishes in our own times.

The specific gift of Jainism to the theology of spirituality is the concept of *ahimsa*, which, for Jains is not just a personal virtue, but the very norm and criterion of spiritual life and religious perfection. Jaina concepts of *karma*, creation (origin of matter), state of the liberated life, idea of *anekanta-vada*, concepts of *dharma* and *adharmā*, etc. are also different from the corresponding concepts of mainstream Hinduism.

Jaina doctrines as taught by Mahavira and the early monks are enshrined in the Jaina sacred scriptures, especially in the *Jaina Agamas*. But the *Agama* literature is immense, and it is composed in *Arthamagathi*, which is a *prakṛta*

language. Therefore, the eminent thoughts and doctrinal conclusions contained in these texts are not easily accessible to ordinary students of Jainism.

Dulichand Jain, an eminent scholar of Jaina religion, has done a great service to such students and also teachers of Jainism, by producing the present work. He has very ably culled out the important aphorisms from the *Agamas* and also from other primary sources (like *Bhasyas*, *Prakirnakas* and *Curnis*) and has classified and arranged them in twelve sections. These aphorisms, as the author himself states, are 'particularly simple, reflective, thought provoking and specially appealing to the common man'. The twelve chapters are: Precepts on (i) the auspicious, (ii) the Self, (iii) the path of liberation, (iv) knowledge of fundamentals, (v) conquest of passions, (vi) conquest of mind, (vii) karma, (viii) reflections, (ix) path of righteousness, (x) meditations, (xi) learning, and (xii) some other precepts.

The aphorisms are given in the original language (*Arthamagadhi*). Each aphorism is followed by its transliterated text and a very lucid and easy reading translation. Thus this work is a book of easy reference on specific themes of Jain thought, religion and spirituality. The author could perhaps have added one more section, namely, on the nature of the state of liberated life of the individual self. After all, for a believer the goal of human existence is this ultimate, eternal state. The Vedic philosophical schools describe the state of liberation differently: it is a total merging into the divine essence, it is total isolation or alone-ness (*kaivalya*), or it is service (*kaimkarya*) of the divine person. What is the Jaina stand on this issue?

The introductory chapters on "Jaina Agama Literature", "Life of Tirthankara Mahavira", and "The Eternal Message of Jaina Wisdom", and the Glossary of Technical Terms, Bibliography and the Index of Verses (aphorisms) at the end enhance the merit of this excellent work.

**A.Thottakara,cmi**

**Gorman H. Frank, Jr.**, *Divine Presence and Community: A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, Michigan, Grand Rapids: W. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1997, pp.xii+163; \$ 18.00.

This book on Leviticus forms part of the *International Theological Commentary* edited by Fredrick Carlson and George A.F. Knight. This series is meant for ministers and Christian educators. The main concern is to offer a

theological interpretation of the Bible. Hence the authors of the series do not focus their attention to the critical-historical problems of the text. Rather, they try to develop the theological significance of the Old Testament, and its relevance for the life of the Church. They see themselves as servants of the Word, and write for the believing community. The editors claim that they bring out the biblical message to the contemporary lay persons.

The present work on the OT book of Leviticus is written by Frank H. Gorman, Jr., who holds the T.W. Philips Chair of Religious Studies at Bethany College in West Virginia. True to the policy of *International Theological Commentary*, the author makes the message of Leviticus relevant for lay persons. The tone is theological, and the author has done his best to make Leviticus appealing to the contemporary audience. His task was not easy, since this OT book deals apparently with ritualistic laws and legal prescriptions. One may wonder what is theological at all in Leviticus? Gorman finds the divine presence dwelling in the midst of the Israelite community as the basic theme of the book. According to him Leviticus explores some of the dynamics of what it means for the community to live in the presence of the holy God. People of Israel were elected to become holy like their covenant Lord and the prescriptions in the book are meant to help them to live up to their call. When they live in the divine presence, which permeates their whole day to day life, they become the children of God. Gorman succeeds in showing how the ritual activities and instructions in the book provide a means for the individual and the community to enact life in the context of the divine presence.

The author finds out few specific moments wherein the instructions of Leviticus are located. First, we have the context of creation theology. Creation resulted from the conquest of chaos. God established harmony and good order throughout the creation. Now the instructions of Leviticus are meant to be means of maintaining and, when necessary, restoring that good order. Second, the instruction presupposes the covenant promises of land, progeny and the divine presence made to the patriarchs. Now Leviticus helps the people to live in the context of the divine promises. The third context is God's liberative act of exodus, by which the people were led from slavery to the Promised Land. Now the book of Leviticus shows the community of Israel how to respond to God's liberative activity. Fourth, the Sinai covenant provides context for the instruction of Leviticus. Gorman builds up the theology of Leviticus from these four viewpoints. He locates them within the



category of human enactment where ritual activity and social activity are held together. He attempts to locate the self and the community within the world of rituals.

In bringing out a theological commentary, the author avoids the danger of looking at rituals and laws of Leviticus as mere expressions of an antiquated religion, which has no relevance for the modern man. He looks at Leviticus as part of the story of God's grace enacted in the midst of and on behalf of the community of Israel. He shows that the divine instructions of the book are not viewed as oppressive burden, but as actualization of God's love and grace. The author deserves our special thanks for helping us to discover what it means to live the life in the presence of Holy God.

**Prof. Paul Kalluveettil**

**Thomas Sebastian Panachickavayalil**, *Ethical Perspectives of the Waste Land. A Study of T.S. Eliot's Poem in the Multi-Religious Context of Today*, Rome: Collegio San Lorenzo, 1999, pp. ix+260.

T.S. Eliot [1888-1965] is one of the most eminent poets of English language of the twentieth century. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948. Besides being a great poet, Eliot is also a philosopher, theologian and perhaps also a social reformer. As the bibliography of this brilliant work testifies, numerous are the works written on *The Waste Land*, which is Eliot's *magnum opus*. These works view and judge *The Waste Land* from the poetical, philosophical, theological and ethical viewpoints and perspectives. There are also a few works on the influences of Indian thought and culture on *The Waste Land*. But there may not be any work which brings out the ethical implications of *The Waste Land* and their bearing on the multi-religious context of today's world.

Eliot definitely had a very open attitude and friendly approach to the world religions. He learned Sanskrit language and Indian philosophy at Harvard University. He had a very good knowledge of Hinduism and Buddhism. He was also interested in primitive religions. *The Waste Land* refers to some Upanisadic passages and Indian philosophical concepts. It is believed that Eliot had even seriously thought of becoming a Buddhist at one time.

The present work, which was originally written as a doctoral dissertation at one of the Universities of Rome, has five chapters in three parts. The first

chapter is about the life and works of Eliot. The second and third chapters meticulously analyze and critically study the contents of *The Waste Land*. The author, who holds post-graduate degree in English literature, exhibits great interpretatory skills and poetical acumen in these two chapters. The fourth chapter entitled "Search for Values" and the fifth chapter entitled "Fusion of Religious Ideas" concentrate on the study of the explicit and implied ethical and spiritual message of the work to a world where different religious traditions have to co-exist and co-operate. The general conclusion gives a resume of the whole work and evaluates it. Here the author also puts forward some relevant suggestions and challenges for the moral and spiritual excellence of the world of today. He calls these suggestions 'Ethical Provocations'. The author states: "These ethical provocations are to be taken seriously by men and women of every caste and creed, for it is vital for our own meaningful existence as well as for the cultural, ethical and spiritual transformation of today's world."

Eliot directly witnessed both the World Wars and painfully experienced the moral degradation and spiritual degeneration and the general desperation of the peoples. He saw world as a wasteland, which was miserably short of freshness of life and joy of growth. He analyses the physical and moral ills of this desperate world and suggests ways and means to get out of this sad situation and ameliorate the inner life of humans. In this effort he also seeks helps from the oriental religions. His reference to the three 'da' of the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad*, which stand for the imperative verbal forms *damyata (dama)*, *datta (dana)* and *dayadhvam (daya)*, which in turn means, 'self-control', 'self-gift', and 'loving kindness', is a powerful example of his inclination to use eastern remedies for western illnesses. He also sees hope for the future.

Perhaps the author could have given a little more attention to the multi-religious context of today. He very ably delineates Eliot's rapport with Hindu India. But other religious traditions and their impact on Eliot and Eliot's message to them are perhaps not adequately dealt with.

This excellent work definitely will be interesting and beneficial to the students of English literature, students of comparative study of religions and of moral theology.

**Augustine Thottakara,cmi**