

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Indian Journal of Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ijt\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ijt_01.php)

## Book Reviews

*Resistant Hinduism : Sanskrit Sources on anti-Christian Apologetics in early nineteenth-century India* : by Richard Fox Young. Indological Institute, University of Vienna. Publication of the De Nobili Research Library, ed. by G. Oberhammer, Vol. VIII, Vienna 1981. Pp. 200. Price not stated.

This book, answering to the most exacting demands of textual and historical scholarship, is written in a clear, lively and pleasantly readable style. Though it is focused on a particular episode of Hindu-Christian theological controversy in the early nineteenth century, its interest is much more than merely historical : The manifold linguistic, philosophical and theological problems raised by inter-religious dialogue, studied at the occasion of that controversy, make this research work extremely relevant today. Many in the Indian Church have come to realize that genuine inter-religious dialogue is an essential dimension of their evangelizing task; it is also becoming increasingly clear that Hindu orthodoxy today still holds its sway over the minds and religious attitudes of the vast majority of Hindu believers and that its resistance to Christianity is not chiefly social, political or cultural, but that it remains, as it was at the time of that ancient controversy, intellectual and theological.

The controversy referred to as the "Mata-pariksa (MP) Controversy" was sparked off by the publication by Bishop's College (Calcutta) in 1839 of the first edition of John Muir's Sanskrit treatise : *Matapariksa : a sketch of the argument for Christianity and against Hinduism*. Three brahmins : the Maharastrian Somanath, the Bengali Haracandra and the Benares pandit (also of a Maharastrian family) Nilakantha Goreh, took up the challenge and brought out

Sanskrit treatises to refute Muir's argumentation : the *Matapariksa-siksa* (MPS) of Somanath appeared in 1839; the *Matapariksottarom* (MPO) of Haracandra came out in 1840; the *Sastratattva-vinirnaya* (STV) of Nilakantha, in 1844.

Somanath's DPS, a short treatise of 107 verses, is the work of an intelligent and broad-minded man, an authority in the field of ancient astrology but keenly interested in eastern Copernican astronomy, ready to concede that even followers of false religions can be led to salvation through the compassion of Hari, yet unwavering in his religious and faithful acceptance of the *alaukika* sources of his *sanatana* Hindu tradition.

Very different in tone, more sophisticated and tactlessly 'pugilistic' in its attacks against Christianity, the treatise of Haracandra Tarkapancanana, the MPO, in 137 verses mercilessly denigrates Christianity, missionaries and their converts; Haracandra is acquainted with Unitarian literature and with Tom Paine's *The Age of Reason*, he draws arguments from these to show the irrationality of evangelical assertions, all the while contending that the Vedas are coeval with creation, even eternally preexistent.

Much more thoughtful and respectful, the *Sastratattva-vinirnaya* (STV) of Nilakantha, a longer treatise of 784 verses, was published in 1844. Nilakantha insists upon the need of *sraddha*, rejecting Muir's too rationalistic approach; he questions besides the acceptability of Muir's criteria to establish the authoritativeness of Christianity. Vicarious suffering, original sin, predestination, hell punishment because of rejection of one particular Scripture, and other tenets (?) of the Christian Faith offend Nilakantha's sense of justice; the objections raised by Muir against Hinduism are rejected by the author of STV with great apologetic skill and sincere conviction. Nilakantha's resistance is stiff, but never injurious.

On the Christian side of the encounter studied by the author of *Resistant Hinduism* stands John Muir (1810-1882), a Scotch civil servant and a distinguished Orientalist; though a layman, not a missionary, Muir was deeply com-

mitted to the task of bringing educated Hindus to the knowledge of "the true religion" (*satyadharmā*). The Sanskrit treatise in 379 verses which he published in 1839 (two more editions of the same, considerably enlarged, were published in 1840 and in 1852-1854) was written in a flawless, even elegant, *kavya* style, showing how deeply Muir had become familiar with sacred literature of the Hindus. He had also become familiar with the "Church Sanskrit" i.e. the Sanskrit terms adopted or coined to render biblical and theological terms into suitable *devabhāṣa* equivalents. The gradual creation of this "Church Sanskrit" owed much to the pioneering efforts of Carey and his *Dharmapustaka*, to William Hodge Mill's *Christa-Sangita* and to Mill's earlier Sanskrit translations of the Decalogue and the three Creeds (the Apostles', the Niceno-Constantinopolitan and the Athanasian) as also to the joint work of H. H. Wilson and W. H. Mill : *A Proposed Version of Theological Terms with a View to Uniformity in Translations of the Holy Scriptures etc. into the Various Languages of India* (Bishop's College, Calcutta, 1828). R. F. Young's well-documented study of the Christian Church's inter-religious hermeneutics in those days will be appreciated by all concerned today with the Christian presentation of the Gospel in Indian languages.

The 25 years Muir passed in India (1828-1853) were a period of great cultural and religious fermentation. Ram Mohan started his Brahma Sabha (soon to be known as *Brahmo Samaj*) in August 1828; Alexander Duff arrived in 1830; Derozio died in December 1831, but David Hare and the Derozian group went on writing and speaking against all forms of blind obscuratism and conservatism; the *Tattva-bodhini Sabha* established in 1893, with men like Debendranath, Vidyasagar, and many other members of what was called the "intellectual aristocracy" of Bengal, became a common platform for social, cultural and religious reforms. During this same period, Christian missionaries from various Western countries and many diverse denominations came in increasing numbers : schools, colleges were started; the Bible and much Christian 'propaganda' literature appeared in more and more Indian vernaculars. This encounter with Western culture and the assimilation in various forms and

degrees of new ideas and ideologies, some of which of a definitely Christian nature or origin, contributed not a little to what has been described as "an Indian Renaissance". Hinduism itself, at least the Hinduism of certain groups and classes of Western-educated Hindus, underwent some transformations : Hindu reformers, more or less influenced by their contacts with this "Renaissance" were preparing the ways of "Renascent Hinduism" or "Neo-Hinduism". J. N. Farquhar, M. M. Thomas, S. J. Samartha, D. S. Sarma and other authors have studied those modern religious neo-hindu movements. The social and cultural interaction between India and the West had far-reaching results; from the religious viewpoint however, resistance far outweighed any kind or measure of acceptance. The book under review is concerned with this resistance.

It is both fascinating and distressing. Without bias, the arguments of the Christian apologist and of his Hindu opponents are clearly presented. Though the Christian, John Muir, and the three Hindu pandits are undoubtedly representative of the century-old Christian missionary theology and of the *sanatani* Hindu tradition, yet there is nothing abstract or merely theoretical in the manner in which they are presented : R. F. Young makes them live before our eyes as very real persons. The gradual change which took place, after this controversy, in John Muir's theological convictions and in his attitude towards non-Christian religions ; his life-long Christian fidelity shedding more and more its unchristian intolerance; his advocacy of new and more respectful missiological methods : all this makes interesting reading indeed. On the other side, the religious evolution of Nilkantha Goreh, whose resistance to Muir's argumentation had been the most theologically and rationally elaborate, is also of considerable interest. Years of thoughtful investigation led him, in 1850 (six years after his outspoken rejoinder to Muir's *Matapariksa* to the conviction that he had to accept the Christian Faith. During the last 35 years of his life, Nilkantha, now Nehemiah, was a leading apologist of Christianity and, as a Christian *sannyasin* and an Anglo-Catholic theologian, a sincerely committed churchman. However, his radical rejection of Hinduism as a purely

human invention and, together with the acceptance of the Christian Faith, his acceptance of philosophical and theological thought systems alien to the Indian mind, brought about a tension between faith and reason which plagued him till the end of his life : he remained a faithful believer but could not become a creative Christian "Indian thinker".

The book of Richard Fox Young is not only fascinating : it is also distressing ! It makes us realise how objectively unchristian has been, for centuries, the most generous, at times heroic, missionary zeal of many preachers of the Gospel. The encounter between Christianity and Hinduism described here as the "Matapariksa Controversy" is a clear evidence of this : a controversy it was, not a dialogue ; confutation, refutation, but no real listening to one another, no desire to learn from one another. John Muir is not to be blamed, his opponents neither. It is clear that the 'resistance' of Hinduism (as well as that of Buddhism, Islam and other great religions of the world) to the preaching of the Gospel cannot be explained without reference to the preachers' theology, a theology which only very gradually and slowly began, in recent times, to think out the grave questions of the mission of Christ as the *one* Mediator and yet the Saviour of the *whole* human family ; of the workings of Divine Grace in the hearts and lives of *all* God-seekers ; of prophecy and divine Revelation outside the Biblical tradition ; of the relation between "the Way, the Truth and the Life" Christ Jesus and all the ways i.e. all the religions of mankind, including the Christian religion in its present state of incompleteness and division.

Of course, the history of Christian missions shows the importance of hermeneutics to express in new languages biblical, doctrinal, theological terms specifically Christian ; it also shows how important for all evangelical workers is the knowledge of the people they are to evangelize, their customs, rites, scriptures, together with as much indigenisation or acculturation as possible in order to make Christianity appear no longer a strange and foreign way of life. R. F. Young has carefully studied this question of hermeneutics while surveying the work of Christian missionaries from the time of Nobili, Thomas Stephen, Ziegenbalg, Carey, John

Wilson, Mill. He has also shown how much John Muir was acquainted with Indian ancient literature (Muir, like several other Civil Servants and not a few missionaries, was a learned Indologist); besides, his contact with Indian life was very close. Even closer was this contact in the case of men like Nobili, Ziegenbalg and Carey. And yet, their theological convictions prevented them from seeing anything but error, falsehood, or mere human invention in the religious beliefs of Hindu orthodox believers. Ziegenbalg wrote of the "verdammliches Heidentum", John Wilson subjected to ridicule inconsistencies in the Puranas, W. H. Mill held Hindu legends to be "monstrous and demoralizing", Muir was determined to combat the "hydra-headed paganism"; Goreh himself, after his conversion, was to write :

Now, as to my having renounced Hinduism, let it be known that I have not done this without enquiry, but having by incontrovertible arguments seen its falsehood, I have renounced it. Thousands of your so-called divine teachers have described God in a thousand contradictory ways ; from which it is clear that they know nothing at all about him... As to the Purans, they are full of nonsensical stories...(quoted by R. F. Pong, pp. 169-170).

The aggressive approach of the preachers of the Good News was bound to provoke the resistance it did ; this resistance, though often accompanied by much intolerance on the part of the orthodox defenders of Hinduism, may have been more healthy and religiously more esteemworthy than many of the later syncretisms and relativisms.

In fine, *Resistant Hinduism* is an important contribution to missiological literature.

PIERRE FALLON, S.J.

*Santi Nir, Calcutta.*

*The Christian Characteristics for a Religious Dialogue with Hindus* : by Maurice D' Souza. Oecumenische Pockets; Genk, Belgium, 1983. Pp. 169. Price Rs. 60 in India.

This extremely valuable and practical book concerning the requirements for a meaningful religious dialogue with Hindus, according to Indian books and theological journals during the years 1966-1977, was first presented as a thesis to the Faculty of the Ateneo de Manila University in 1979. Its author, Fr. M. D' Souza, a Mangalorean priest of the Calcutta Archdiocese, has had a long and personal experience of dialogue with non-Christians : the informal and friendly dialogical contact he had as a young student with his mostly Hindu Companions in his Mangalore government school and college ; and later, the pastoral ministry he has been exercising, since his priestly ordination in 1973, in a Calcutta parish where the large majority of his "parishioners" are Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and other non-Christians. Though this personal experience has been the animating and guiding principle of his research, M. D' Souza, in the book under review, chose to nearly entirely disappear behind those whose dialogical experiences and reflections he has gathered together from a host of books and theological journals. Avoiding any vain pretence to encyclopaedic knowledge, the author set definite limits to his research, starting from 1966 with the post-Vatican-II period and, with the one exception of the Bulletin and other publications of the Vatican Secretariat for non-Christians, surveying only Indian books and periodicals which published, in English, dialogue literature written by Christians of the various Christian denominations. These self-imposed limitations give this book and research an increased value of authenticity and practical usefulness : M. D' Souza has himself read and studied the writings he has listed, and inspired himself from them.

Besides, most of them may easily be found and read by all those concerned with Hindu-Christian dialogue here in India. But M. D' Souza's book gives us much more than mere bibliographical help for fruitful dialogue : in a succinct and sober manner, it describes the most important qualities which Christians intent on dialogue should especially culti-

vate. Some of the best pages of the book are those in which the author insists on the spiritual qualities required : a deep faith-commitment, a personal religious experience and awareness of God, a life of prayerful interiority.

**PIERRE FALLON SJ.**

*Santi Nir Calcutta*

*Shankara's Concept of Reality* : by Moti Lal Pandit. Select Books Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1981. Pp. xv+96. Price \$ 9.00, Rs. 45.

Shankaracharya, the founder and propounder of Advaita Vedanta, occupies a prominent position among the religious and philosophical thinkers of India and his philosophy of Brahmapada or Mayapada has remained a challenge and paradox to Christian theologians and philosophers alike. He has also influenced Indian thinking and views of the world.

Unfortunately, modern day gurus, swamis and avatars are harming him by making him a part of 'pamphleteering Hinduism'.

Shankaracharya was confronted with the question of what is the nature of reality ? Is that reality one or many ? His search in locating that reality, in essence is his philosophy, the *advaita vada*.

Shankara approaches the problem of reality or being from the perspective of *paramarthika*, the Absolute, and from the angle of *vyavahrika*, the empirical. Viewed from empirical glasses, reality appears to be many, but when seen from the angle of the Absolute, reality is *advaita*, non-dual. Brahman, the ground of all experiences and the world of objects is that reality. Brahman, the Universal Self, and Atman, the individual self, are identical.

The book under review, another addition to a long list of volumes on Shankara, is an honest attempt by Moti Lal Pandit to let Shankara speak for himself. In doing so, he has consciously relied upon the use of primary sources.

There are five chapters and an epilogue. The first chapter is important because the author explains the problem of 'being' as set out by Shankara and points out that Shankara's "philosophical methodology is directed towards that which is ontologically real, that which is" (p. 1).

Chapters two, three, four and five deal with the categories of *Brahman*, *maya*, *Sagunabrahman*, and *jiva* as interpreted by Shankaracharya. Upto this point, Moti Lal is honest to the teachings of Shankara. I am disappointed that the author, who has a good knowledge of Sanskrit, still translates *maya* as 'illusion' perpetuating the old confusion and misunderstanding. The term *maya* comes from the root *mr* and means 'that which is tangible, measurable' or that which 'appears'. Instead of applying the term 'illusion', the word 'appearance' would have been a better choice.

Moti Lal's concern is to affirm a personal God who creates, and to put man at the centre of the world and of the world and of history. He finds it difficult to understand the nature of ultimate reality without taking into account the finitude of man (p. 54). Man being the highest expression of 'being' (p. 71), is the "being par excellence". And, so "Man is not identical with his creator" (p. 72). Naturally, Moti Lal is critical of Shankara's identification of Atman, the individual self with the Brahman. This identification, the author asserts, "dissolves the ontological status of the world as well as of God" (p. 54).

One wonders why Moti Lal should be interested in writing an epilogue when he nowhere gives an impression that he proposes to offer a Christian response to Shankara's concept of reality. Moreover, in an era of dialogue and understanding, revival of a nineteenth century missionary posture *vis-a-vis* other faiths and cultures does not fit within the framework of the title of the book. Nevertheless, for those who are looking for an alternative to the Advaita Vedanta model, Moti Lal's epilogue is helpful.

The book is well written and documented, and the author has supplied a selected bibliography of primary and second-

dary sources. It is readable and reliable and could be recommended as an introduction to Shankara for theological students.

SATISH C. GYAN

*Bangalore*

*Tradition and Innovation: A search for a relevant ecclesiology in Asia*: edited and published by the Commission on Theological Concerns, Christian Conference of Asia, Singapore, 1983. Pp. iv+136. Price US \$ 3.

This book has two functions. It is partly meant as a report of a conference held in Kandy, Sri Lanka in August 1982, and partly intended to be study material for further reflection within the CCA on a search for a valid Asian ecclesiology. The conference accepted the assertion by Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe that 'the way we must follow must finally express what is simultaneously both deeply Christian and deeply Asian' (p. 39), and concluded that an Asian ecclesiology should be 'holistic', 'open-ended' and 'inclusive'. The latter term was meant to indicate in particular that it was necessary to take more seriously the place of women and the variety of ways in which Christ is experienced, and to adopt a Kingdom of God perspective that valued para-church and inter-faith social action groups (pp. 13-20).

The thirteen papers presented here vary considerably in length, style and content. Readers will no doubt differ in their assessment of each on its own merits and as a basis for further discussion. The formal framework of the whole is given by four papers: the first two on 'Ecclesiological issues emerging from Asian manifestations of the life, worship and witness of the church' by Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios and Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe; and the last two, 'Search for an ecclesiology in Asia' by T. V. Philip and 'Models of the church in history' by Maen Pongudom. But it is important that the solid and very useful material here is read in the light of

some of the other contributions written with the complexities and untidiness of particular situations in mind.

Perhaps the most exciting of these accounts are those concerning the workers' Community Church in Hong Kong (pp. 60-65), the Christian Workers' Fellowship in Sri Lanka (pp. 66-75), and the development of ecumenical Christian communities in Indonesia (where the extended family tradition finds the biblical image of the church as the 'household of God' very meaningful) (pp. 83-90).

The emergence of such para-church groups is a worldwide phenomenon which has occurred almost without church leaders or theologians being aware of it. Certainly there has been little theological thinking about their relationship with the institutional or traditional church based on congregation and parish. Can these new groups avoid the traps of clericalism, parochialism, congregationalism and denominationalism, or will they, in their turn, become institutionalised? Or, to put the question in a more positive way, are the para-church groups rediscovering what should be true about the life and doctrine of every congregation? Readers of the concise paper on the theology of the local congregation in this book will no doubt want to extend their reflections on the subject. It should be easy to obtain *The Local Congregation: its mission in India* edited by Mathai Zachariah (ISPCK, 1982), and to find a copy of *Debate on Mission* edited by H. E. Hoefler (Gurukul, 1979). Libraries may also be able to obtain other useful studies like *Into the City* by J. J. Vincent (Epworth, 1982) on new methods of inner city mission or *The Liberation of the Church* by David Clark (National Centre for Christian Communities and Networks, West Hill College, Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK 1984) which attempts a theological assessment of para-church groups and their place in the mission of the church.

PHILIP N. HILLYER

*Indian Christian Sannyasa and Swami Abhishiktananda* : by Emmanuel Vattakuzhy. Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1981. Pp. xix+244. Price Rs. 20.

Dom Henri Le Saux O.S.B. (Swami Abhishiktananda), the companion of Abbe Monchanin in Santivanam and co-founder of the Saccidananda Ashram, came to India in 1947. He was thirty-seven years old if he had lived eighteen years as a Benedictine monk in his native Brittany. This French priest was to pass the following twenty-six years of his ascetic and contemplative life in India, ten years with Monchanin in Santivanam on the banks of the Kaveri and, after the death of Monchanin, sixteen years of eremitical *Sadhana* at Gyansu in the Himalayas.

His monastic Benedictine vocation had made him realise the primary importance of prayer and contemplation; in India, he entered more and more deeply into personal contact with the world of traditional Indian spirituality. From Santivanam, he went again and again to the Arunachala ashram of the great and saintly Ramana Maharshi whose guidance and example led him existentially to discover the spiritual richness of the upanishadic *Advaita sadhana*; he resolutely made his own Yoga techniques of meditation and conformed his way of life in dress, diet and other exacting observances to that of Indian ascetics. The Christian monk became a truly Indian *sannyasin*. There were anguishing struggles and "spiritual nights" before he could, fully and joyfully, assume within his unwavering Christian Faith this *Advaita* experience, before his upanishadic contemplation of the *Saccidananda* blossomed into the blissful contemplation of the Trinity. His last years were years of radiant peace and joy; they were also years of untiring evangelical witnessing.

Swamiji wrote many books and articles in his Gyansu hermitage; he often came down from his Himalayan solitude to share with priests, religious and Christian laity his own experience. He would gently chide them for not giving enough importance to prayer and contemplation, for their exaggerated concern with "doing things for God and neigh-

bour" while neglecting the primary duty of "being in and with God". In word and writing, he never ceased to repeat that, if a true dialogue has to be started between Hinduism and Christianity, it has to be at the deepest level of spiritual experience, and that real inculturation demands, more than adaptation in externals, the assumption by the Indian Church of the richest theological and mystical traditions of Hindu India.

The doctoral thesis of Fr. Vattakuzhy *Indian Christian Sannyasa and Swami Abhishiktananda*, because of its very subject, is bound to arouse great expectations. Besides, the kind foreword of Dom Bede Griffiths, the prestigious names of the Gregorian University and of the Alwaye Pontifical Seminary, the generally high standard of "Theological Publications in India", and the help sought from people intimately close to Swamiji, like Fr. R. Pannikar, Fr. J. Stuart, Sister Vandana and others, increase the attraction of this book.

But the book is extremely disappointing, even at times painfully irritating. This study of *sannyasa*, Indian and Christian, never defines what its author means by *sannyasa*. In one place (p. 111), the author says that "Indian *sannyasa* is a sublime expression of God-experience", he goes on to say (p. 112) that *sannyasa* is an unfathomable abyss of God-experience, an inner experience and it is just that." He had said before (p. 106) that an Indian *sannyasi* enjoys "complete freedom of commitment to God and society...As soon as he feels that he has some duty or obligation toward anyone else, whether it be self-chosen or imposed on him by others, he has fallen away from the true ideal of *sannyasa*."

According to the author, no Hindu takes up *sannyasa* before he has obtained complete spiritual freedom and has become "established in the mystery of the non-dual" (p. 138). While the Hindu *sannyasa-diksa* is the consecration of a *realization*, for a Christian religious his profession of vows is only a *promise*! Yet, the author says that there may be as many as 15,000,000 *sannyasis*. In fact, the ideal

for the sake of which many take up the arduous path of renunciation (ideal which undoubtedly not a few realize) is again and again described as if it were the already attained by millions of Hindus the very day they don the garb of *sannyasis*. *Sannyasa* does mean detachment, renunciation, the going out of the world of earthly preoccupations : the goal may well be, in the case of many genuine *sannyasis*, death to self and undistracted absorption in the contemplation of the Absolute, but *sadhana* and *siddhi* are not synonymous.

In the first chapter, Fr. Vattakuzhy gives a "synthesis of Indian *sannyasa* with its spiritual characteristics in the form of a brief historical and phenomenological study. It is so sketchy and inaccurate that it ought to have been entirely re-written. Did the *Bhagavad Gita* really "usher in a decisive development towards the *monastic* ideal?" Was Mirabai living in the 18th century, and was she a devout adorer of *Rama*? Is it a fact that the *majority* of *sannyasis* today are women? Does "half of the religious-minded humanity today believe in Buddhism?" Can Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen and Mahatma Gandhi be called *sannyasis*? Is all mystic God-experience apophatic, and do all the *sannyasi bhakti-margis* of the various *advaita* traditions realize the So 'ham experience?

These and many more questions make one wonder whether three years of study and research in Rome are the best way to carry on study and research on Indian *sannyasa* and on the lifework of a man like Dom Le Saux who had so much identified himself with India? Four years before Fr. Vattakuzhy, a Dutchman, Fr. L. F. M. Van Bergen had presented to the Catholic University of Nijmegen a doctoral thesis on Indian *Sannyasa*, published in 1975 under the title *Sannyasa Dipika*; though not an Indian, this missionary (at present in Indonesia) has written a book remarkable by the objectivity and richness of its information; he had come to pass a full year in India, carrying on his study and research on the spot, visiting Indian ashrams and monasteries, interviewing living gurus and *sannyasis*, not reading

books in Rome! It is a pity that this work has been ignored by the author of the book under review.

We are however thankful to Fr. Vattakuzhy for having given us this book which makes Swami Abhishiktananda's inspiring and lovable personality to be once more present before us. The writer rightly emphasises the need for all priests and religions in India to be more contemplative if they wish to be truly apostolic; for the whole Indian Church to strive for a deeper spiritual inculturation. Both Swamiji and Fr. Vattakuzhy himself deserve our gratitude for their insistence on a new Christian approach to the *Advaitic* experience of Sankaracharya, Ramana Maharshi and many others among the greatest mystics of India. Too often in the past, because of a lack of familiarity, on the part of Christian and non-Christian scholars, with the great *jnanins* and mystics of the Church, Christianity has been made to appear as a *bhakti-marga* based upon metaphysical dualism, bound to reject the non-dualism of *Advaita* as if this were damnable monism or pantheism.

The experience lived by Swamiji was a convincing proof that Christian spirituality is not in any way bound with any kind of dualism. Yet, is the non-dualism of the Sankarian tradition, though rightly transcending dualism and monism in its affirmation of the *nirguna Absolute*, the *Ekam Advitiam* undifferentiated and unrelated in its pure simplicity, not to be itself transcended or completed if it is to be reconcilable with the "I-Thou" of religious adoration, the personal Love of God for men and the personal love of men for God?

Is the identify of the *jivatma* with the *Paramatma* which the *jnan i* experiences in his deepest mystical *Advaita* realisation the last word (when words try to express the ineffability of the experience) about the relation between man and the Absolute? Last word perhaps for man to utter as long as he has not heard the Word God Himself eternally utters that transcendent Mystery of the Trinitarian life, the Word made audible, tangible, visible in the Mystery of the Incarnation. When Christ says: "The Father and I are one", it is both the revelation of the indivisible unity and simpli-

city of the Godhead and the revelation of a personal pluralism within this absolute unity. When Christ says that, in the Spirit, man is called to die to himself and be born anew to the sharing of the divine Life, he does not say that is to become God. Only through faith and in the contemplation of the theandric Mystery of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, can the *advaita* experience be both accepted as a true and precious *mystical* realization of divine transcendence and integrated within a fully *religious* life of loving surrender to God's infinite love.

Dom Le Saux has been a living witness to the fact that the *advaita* experience is existentially reconcilable with Christian faith; his theological and philosophical discursive writings often lacked precision and discerning accuracy; a genuine contemplative, he was also the enthusiastic herald of the discovery he had made, and which he wished to share with his fellow-Christians, of the depth and illuminating value of the *Vedanta sadhana*. We may regret that, in a theological doctoral thesis, a style often dithyrambic and panegyric, many exaggerations and imprecisions, preclude a sober and discerning approach. Swamiji, in his humility, would not have approved this hero-worship.

PIERRE FALLON S. J.

*Santi Nir, Calcutta.*

*Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels:* by Barnabas Lindars SSF. SPCK, London, 1983. pp. xi—244. Price £ 15.00.

*Jesus Son of Man* by Barnabas Lindars, the Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at Manchester University, is a significant contribution to the study of the meaning and use of the Son of Man sayings found in the New Testament.

While challenging the commonly held theory that in using the term "Son of Man", Jesus identified himself with an apocalyptic figure at the centre of Jewish expectations

of his time, the author has also opened up a new perspective on the relevance of the authentic Son of Man sayings of Jesus for a better understanding of his mission. The sayings reveal Jesus as one who was wholly committed to his vocation to herald God's kingdom, though they are not to be taken as including any claim on his part to be the Messiah. "The Son of Man is not an expression which carries with it any messianic significance in the authentic sayings. In fact, it is not a title at all.... Jesus identifies himself with his eschatological mission, but he avoids identifying himself with a particular figure or popular eschatological expectation" (pp. 187f).

There are only nine Son of Man sayings which, according to Lindars, could be regarded as authentic. They are the ones which preserve the idiomatic use of the Aramaic *bar enasha*, understood in a generic sense. Several of these sayings belong to the context of the opposition Jesus faced during the course of his ministry, e.g., Matt. 12 : 32 (= Luke 12 : 10), Luke 11 : 30, Matt. 9 : 6 (= Mark 2 : 10f. = Luke 5 : 24). In the generic *bar enasha* he found a device whereby he could defend himself in a subtle and ironical manner, referring to himself as one called by God and possessing the divine authority, without making any exaggerated claim about himself.

The nine authentic sayings also include the "passion predictions" in Mark. With regard to these sayings, the author tries to show how Jesus might have been influenced by Isaiah 53, though this could not be proved. In any case, they "testify to the resolution and deliberation with which he faced the inevitable march of events" (p. 84). The *bar enasha* idiom served to express his deep sense of responsibility and commitment to his eschatological mission and his unwavering resolve to fulfil his duty. There is nothing in it to suppose that it carries any messianic significance.

"Son of Man" is an unusual form of self-reference on the part of Jesus, and the way he uses it often suggests that it is more than just a way of referring to himself alone. The author explains that there are three ways of referring to oneself by means of the third person; and if we reject the

view that Jesus used the phrase Son of Man as a messianic title for himself, we ought to take one of these three ways as the clue to the meaning of his Son of Man sayings. First of all, there is the general statement in which the speaker includes himself. Thus one might say that in their original form the Son of Man sayings of Jesus described what is true of every man including himself. This is the view generally adopted by Maurice Casey in his *Son of Man: the Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London, 1979). But according to Lindars it was the mistake of Casey to have supposed that this way of self-reference is the clue to the meaning of the Son of Man sayings in the Gospels.

Secondly, by using the third person the speaker can make an exclusive self-reference in which he refers to himself alone, though in that case the real generic quality of the term is lost. This is the direction in which Geza Vermes has tried to interpret the Son of Man sayings in his lecture on "The Use of *barnash|barnasha* in Jewish Aramaic" (Appendix E in M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, Oxford, 1967). His view also is rejected by the author as erroneous.

Thirdly, the speaker may refer to a special category of persons with whom he identifies himself. It is this way of employing the third person to make a self-reference that Lindars takes as the real clue to the Son of Man sayings of Jesus.

The following examples could illustrate the way Lindars has applied this clue to bring out the significance of the genuine Son of Man sayings. In response to the request of a prospective disciple, Jesus says, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but *bar enasha* has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8 : 20 = Luke 9 : 58). In addition to its being a self-reference to Jesus, the Aramaic phrase could forcefully convey the truth that *a man such as he*, and for that matter, anyone who follows him, shares in the conditions described here. The intended effect of this statement would not be achieved either by an exclusive self-reference or by a reference to man in general.

To take another example, in Matt. 12:32 (= Luke 12:10) we have the saying, "Whoever says a word against *bar enasha* will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven". That there is a generic use here of *bar enasha* is confirmed by an independent version of this saying found in Mark 3:28-29, where "the sons of men" are mentioned instead of "the Son of Man". Moreover, to take this as an exclusive reference to the eschatological Messiah would be somewhat confusing. At the same time, it is most unlikely that the saying had no reference to the particular circumstances in which Jesus in his personal vocation found himself. Lindars would, therefore, paraphrase the saying thus: "Anyone who slanders me as a man can be forgiven; but anyone who slanders the Spirit who works in me cannot be forgiven" (p. 37).

As already stated, the author isolates only nine Son of Man sayings as reproducing traditions in which the underlying *bar enasha* idiom can still be detected. But he has also made a good attempt to account for the rest of the Son of Man sayings, many of which have a clear future reference. They are the ones in which the Son of Man functions as an exclusive self-reference. In his opinion, they were developed only after the transference of the sayings tradition from Aramaic into Greek, and are therefore to be regarded as inauthentic. They have their origin within the literary activity of the early Church and in the use of the collections of the sayings of Jesus by the evangelists themselves. Our author regards them as a remarkable commentary upon the larger process of the developments in Christology after the time of Jesus. The question as to how Daniel 7 might have influenced these developments has been dealt with quite skillfully.

*Jesus Son of Man* is one of the most valuable studies available in English on the meaning and use of "Son of Man" in the New Testament, and it provides important insights relating to the origins of Christology. It is an indispensable book for every serious student of the New Testament.

ABRAHAM P. ATHYAL  
*Bishop's College, Calcutta*

*Women in Praise and Struggle* : edited by Jyotsna Chatterji.  
I. S. P. C. K., Delhi, 1982. Pp. 74. Price Rs. 5.00.

*Women in Praise and Struggle* is a small booklet containing nine Bible Studies written mainly for women by women. It is the second of its kind published from the WCSRS-CISRS Joint Women's Programme and William Carey Study & Research Centre for use at women's fellowships, organisations and other groups. The first book was entitled *Good News For Women*, and it has had a good response from many quarters.

The present book, in the words of the editor, has "evolved out of an exposure to the sufferings and struggles of women at different levels in society" and is "aimed at creating an awareness in Christian women to share in the pain and struggle of all women everywhere, to bring to them hope and newness through faith in and love of our Lord Jesus Christ".

The contributors to this booklet belong to different places and backgrounds in India and are engaged in various kinds of occupation and service. Thus they have brought together insights from their reflections on the World of God within a variety of contexts in India. And yet they all have a common concern, namely, to spread the message of God's indiscriminate love for all human beings. They would particularly want to affirm their common vision of a new community where there can exist no discrimination against women and would invite others to join in their struggles against the oppressive forces in today's Church and society.

The different chapters in the book deal with matters like the creation of woman and man in God's image, the need to work for the realisation of God's plan to establish a new community in Christ, women's role in Church and society, the kind of specific actions needed to bring about social changes, and the meaning of true discipleship.

Each chapter includes a statement of the aims of the study, a selection of biblical passages relating to the main

theme, and detailed inquiry into the meaning and relevance of the passages for today from a woman's perspective. Most of the chapters also include a case study that would be of some help in relating the biblical message to concrete situations in life. Questions for discussion and suggested actions listed at the end of each chapter are quite helpful and thought-provoking. The chapters are structured in such a way as to provide sufficient flexibility and freedom for conducting the Bible study.

Though the book has been written by women from their own perspective and with feelings of deep concern for their struggles at different levels in society, it contains valuable lessons for all people, and as such, it can also be used in men's groups or in mixed groups. It is clear that the ideal upheld in the book is that of *partnership* between women and men, and this is the right approach to the question of the relation between women and men particularly within the Indian context.

It is a matter of regret that the book contains several printing mistakes which should have been avoided. Also, the identification of the woman caught in adultery, mentioned in John 8 : 3-11, with Mary Magdalene (p. 26) is a sheer conjecture that can hardly be supported.

*Women in Praise and Struggle* is a book worth recommending for wide use among Christians all over India.

LEELAMMA ATHYAL  
*Bishop's College, Calcutta*