

BOOKS REVIEWED

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BOOK REVIEWS

What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism? By A.K.M. Adam. New Testament Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xiv + 81 pp.

This is a good and very useful book. One would be well advised to take up the author's offering of himself as a friendly guide to what is rightly regarded as a formidable collection of literature. In a short work that is determinedly modest in its self presentation, Adam makes good on his promise to "blithely simplify" (xi). Yet his tone is never patronizing: he writes like the most courteous of colleagues from another department who, while being an expert, is still full of enthusiasm for what he knows, and is only too willing to introduce his peers to its delights. The sense that predominates is: There is much more to this than I shall be telling you, but with this overview you really will understand many things a good deal better. I see no reason for distrusting him, especially as he offers plenty of suggestions about where to go for more detailed treatments.

The first chapter, "Textures of Postmodernism," summarizes clearly modernity's initial rebellion against the ancients, its reliance on method as a guarantee of truth, and the subsequent fragmentation into disciplines, with its high degree of control of who may speak with authority on a given issue. He then relativizes this viewpoint by explaining Cornel West's threefold critique of modernity's foundationalism, search for totalities, and assumption of "scientific" disinterest. The second part of the chapter amplifies this picture, showing how ill-advised it is to understand as solid entities such elements as the reader, the text, the author, and chronological and disciplinary boundaries. Each of the remaining three chapters develops one of West's three concerns.

Chapter 2, entitled "Deconstruction: On Making a Difference," opens by limning identity as defined by distinction, continues by conveying in some detail the kinds of gains that deconstructive readings of biblical texts can yield (including dethroning and relativizing historical interpretation), and concludes with two illustrations: the signature (from Derrida) and the authenticity question as applied to Pauline letters, especially 2 Thessalonians.

In the third chapter, "Political Criticism: Ideologies and Their Discourses," Adam's points of departure here are Foucault and New

Historicism. He includes a simple but helpful taxonomy of ideology that allows him to situate criticisms based on feminist, economic, and racial criteria. Although this chapter covers much wider ground than the preceding ones, Adam never loses sight of his overarching commitment to explaining postmodernism. Thus, he equips the reader to distinguish postmodern political criticism from that which is merely modern.

“Crossing Up the Discourses” is the title of chapter four, the last full chapter. Here, Adam discusses the possibilities (and some consequences) of transgressing various borderlines, notably those of discipline and genre. A final section, “Prelude: Interpretation as a Kind of Wri[gh]ting,” constitutes a gentle, reasoned encouragement (incitement?) to go and “think the opposite” in biblical interpretation, using whatever materials one has, regardless of the kind of precedents that might limit the possibilities. The aim? To construct something analogous to the vehicles of a cartwright or the wheels of a wheelwright (73).

What do I like about this book? It has a pleasing simplicity that really does make clear what is at stake in postmodernism, shows clearly its primary concerns and possibilities, gently warns about life outside the usual boundaries, gives some attractive samples of the materials available in this world-long, world-wide junkyard/toyshop, and, finally, pushes the reader out to play in it.

More specifically, Adam draws the reader’s attention to the connections between postmodern practices and those of premodern ancients, such as the Fathers of the Church and those who produced the Talmud. He makes available to the reader many “rediscoveries” that the Catholic tradition of biblical interpretation (at its best) has never quite lost sight of: the fourfold sense of Scripture, the acknowledgment that scholarly erudition is not required for authentic interpretation, and the communal situation of biblical interpretation.

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Judges 1–5: A New Translation and Commentary. By Barnabas Lindars, S.S.F. Edited by A.D.H. Mayes. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. xxxiii + 302 pp.

When Barnabas Lindars died in 1991 he was working on a new edition of the commentary on Judges for the International Critical Commentary series. The editors of the series chose Lindars because he was an important authority on Judges, a book that occupied his interest throughout his scholarly career. Also, Lindars was a leading expert on the text of Judges and the ICC places a strong emphasis on textual matters. Unfortunately, the work had progressed only to Judges 5. Since Lindars' manuscript was in very good condition, Professor A.D.H. Mayes, himself an important authority on the Deuteronomistic history of which Judges is a part, was asked to edit the manuscript for publication. Lindars' work was judged so valuable that it should not be lost, even though it was not a complete commentary on the book of Judges.

Those who will profit the most from this book are scholars concerned with the Septuagint version of Judges. Lindars provides them with a primer of how to use this ancient version in reconstructing the original text of Judges. Mayes considers Lindars' textual notes on the first five chapters of Judges his "most strikingly original contribution" (ix).

Still, one does not have to be a textual critic to appreciate this book. It is a commentary that is carefully crafted, lucidly written, and exegetically sound. Lindars offers no idiosyncratic interpretations, nor does he lose his readers in a maze of literary-critical jargon. This commentary reflects what a master of the historical-critical method can offer.

An important question that has to be faced in any treatment of Judges is whether and to what extent this book can be used to reconstruct the history of pre-state Israel. Again, Lindars avoids the extremes. He characterizes the stories in Judges as literary constructions. Still, he asserts that they can shed some light on the period before the emergence of the Israelite state, though they are by no means historical sources. His discussion of the battle of Kishon (Judges 4–5) is illustrative of his measured judgment on the historical value of the narratives in Judges. Lindars asserts that this story has "a real basis in history," though it has "tended to be conformed to the conventional pattern (of Holy War narratives) in the course of transmission" (171).

Another positive feature of this book is that Lindars is conversant with the archaeology of the period and of the sites that he discusses, such as Hazor (176–7), though he was not an archaeologist himself. Too often commentators with strong interest in textual matters considered archaeology an interesting sideshow, but without substantive value for the illumination of the text. Fortunately, Lindars was not of this stripe.

This is a serious, scholarly commentary on Judges 1–5. This should not mean that readers whose interest is more general ought to ignore this book. If they are not conversant with the textual issues that occupy Lindars' attention, they can simply move on to other parts of the commentary. Their efforts at wading through material that is foreign to them will be rewarded. Lindars' life-long study of Judges made him a careful, sensitive, and thoughtful reader whose insights can be ignored only to the detriment of anyone interested in the Old Testament.

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The Language of Faith: Essays on Jesus, Theology and the Church.

By Edward Schillebeeckx. Introduction by Robert J. Schreiter.
Concilium Series. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books; London: SCM Press,
1995. xiii + 270 pp.

Edward Schillebeeckx is now over eighty years old. It would be hard to overestimate his contribution to theology in the last fifty years, and it is surely not an exaggeration to speak of him and his work in terms of two periods. His earlier work on the sacraments, mariology, and various themes from fundamental theology earned him a respected place among theologians of the *nouvelle theologie* and among bishops intent on the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II. His books on the sacraments in general and on marriage in particular are still part of contemporary discussions of these topics. The second Schillebeeckx appears on the scene after the council with his Jesus book in the mid-seventies. It was surely his interest in the dialogue with European secular humanists that kept him rethinking basic questions of Church doctrine and practice. The basic characteristic of the second period of his work is attention to new questions for which not even he has been able to propose completely satisfying answers.

The present collection of essays is published in the Concilium Series. Fourteen of the sixteen essays first appeared in the journal Schillebeeckx founded in 1965 with Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, and Hans Kung. The last two are reprinted from other sources. Robert J. Schreiter, student, friend, and translator of Schillebeeckx, offers an excellent introduction to the essays and to Schillebeeckx's thought in general. The essays are presented in chronological order. The first essay ap-

peared in the opening issue of *Concilium* and the last one in a *festschrift* for Gustavo Gutiérrez in 1989.

As the subtitle indicates, the essays can be grouped under three headings: Jesus, theology, and the Church. Not one of these essays is outdated; each still has something to say. The topics covered include Christian humanism, the magisterium's role and authority, the basis and limits of Christian discourse on the afterlife, religion and political concerns, the interpretation of religious language, the meaning of salvation, Jesus' relationship to God, the gospel of peace, the Church and the poor, the role of history in theological reflection, and religious pluralism. Schillebeeckx's competence and honesty in dealing with all these topics merit respect and admiration.

One theme that moves through all Schillebeeckx's work and is present in each of the sixteen essays in this collection is concern for the *humanum* and Christian faith: What is the relevance of faith to the quest for fully human life in this world? In the first essay, "The Church and Mankind," he speaks out of concern for the widely evident reaction "against any kind of religious practice which is alien to this world" (1). And the final essay, "The Religions and the Human Ecumene," discusses the pluralism of religions as so many "ways to salvation and blessing" (249), with religions understood as "systems that help us come to terms spiritually, emotionally, and especially existentially with our vulnerable, precarious existence in an ambivalent society" (250). The essay "Questions on Christian Salvation of and for Man" analyzes briefly seven anthropological constants that have to be taken seriously in any account or proposal of human salvation or wholeness of life: coporeity and the ecological situation; human existence as coexistence; the relation to social and institutional structures; the finitude and historicity of existence in a particular cultural context; truth and meaning in relation to action; utopian interest in the future; and the balanced synthesis of these dimensions according to norms arising from their interplay. Schillebeeckx presents this concern for the *humanum* as the retrieval of what is central in Jesus' words and deeds, the biblical authors' interpretation of the relationship with God, and early Christian theologians' basic apologetic conviction.

Perhaps the basic unresolved question in Schillebeeckx's theology is this: How can we speak of Jesus and his relationship to God and humankind without dissolving his uniqueness in a universal God-willed concern for wholeness? It is Jesus' own question: "And you, who do you say that I am?" For example, in the opening essay from 1964, Jesus is the Christ and God's project is to form all humankind into a *communio* with Christ as the center (4). The hypostatic union realized in the

incarnation means that “in the Son the eternal has presented itself personally within temporal and terrestrial realities” (9). It is the universal significance of the Christ-event that justifies speaking of an anonymous Christianity and of an anonymous presence of the mystery of the Church in those who share in the grace of God in Christ without explicitly knowing and recognizing it.

In the final essay on the pluralism of religions—a pluralism that will surely get bigger with the founding of more religions—the themes of incarnation, hypostatic union, and anonymous Christianity have disappeared. Schillebeeckx now explicitly rejects the expression “anonymous Christian” (255) and says that “redemption in Christ is only unique and universal insofar as what happened in Jesus is continued in his disciples” (259). He also says that “*in religiosis* we must put behind us both absolutism and relativism” (255).

In an interview published about the same time as this collection of essays Schillebeeckx speaks of himself as a happy theologian. We can be both happy and grateful to have had his help in thinking through our faith again for the world of today.

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In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology. Edited by Ann O’Hara Graff. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995. 234 pp. \$19.00.

This collection of essays is presented as “a first step” in filling the void of feminist work in theological anthropology. Ten women theologians and one man contribute twelve short papers that originated in the seminar on theological anthropology and the women’s seminar on constructive theology of the Catholic Theological Society of America. The editor, now deceased, taught at the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University, Chicago, and at Seattle University. She also provided the introduction, wrote two of the essays, and collaborated on a third.

The first section of the book sets the context by giving an overview, first of feminism in general and then of the development of feminist theology. Readers unfamiliar with either topic will find these essays an excellent introduction, and their endnotes provide a useful bibliogra-

phy. The second section considers some ways in which women's experience can provide a starting point for theology. Two of the three essays are written from the Latina perspective. The third section explores how particular aspects of women's experiences (sexuality, psychology, suffering) lead to a critique and reconstruction of Christian theology. Finally, the last section examines feminist contributions to four specific theological issues: sin, ecological awareness, the image of God, and eschatology.

In contrast to approaches based on finding universal "anthropological constants" in human history, whether by transcendental method or by the incorporation of socio-biological perspectives, the theology of these essays is self-consciously contextual: the basis is specifically female experience. (The idea of "female" as a cultural "gender construct" is one of the problems with which the first part of the book grapples.) Although the authors are committed to the Christian tradition, the brevity of each essay and the concentration on contemporary feminist sources prevents any thorough exploration of its resources. Hence, of the three hermeneutical tasks set by feminist theology (negative critique of the tradition as a locus of patriarchy; retrieval of its positive moments; reconstruction in the light of female experience), the third is emphasized, while the first is engaged more briefly and the second only in passing. Much of the theology here is, in the words of one author, "evocative and not systematic." Nevertheless, the level of scholarship in most of the essays is high. Some authors, however, venture into areas beyond their expertise. The writing in general is clear, frequently impassioned, and comprehensible to the nonspecialist. A few essays lack polish: there are several striking malapropisms and some lapses in syntax that might pass in speech, but that stick out on the printed page.

A major limitation of such a collection is indicated by the recurrence of phrases like "a survey as brief as this," "this initial attempt," "so brief an exploration as this one," "in so limited a space, this essay cannot begin," etc. Despite the number of voices represented and an explicit commitment to pluralism, the volume is given continuity by the authors' common Catholic perspective, similar interests, and frequent use of the same sources. On the other hand, these also lead to a certain predictability and even a degree of repetition in the various essays.

A number of issues treated (e.g., female psychology, different forms of women's suffering, sin from a female point of view) are of interest to pastoral ministers, but the focus here is theological reflection rather than practical action. Beginning theological students will find much of value in this collection if they approach it in the light of the editor's

admonition: "Consider these essays the journey, perhaps more truly the wanderings, of diverse people committed to etching new maps on the charted and uncharted territory of the human and Divine."

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The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link between East and West. By Joseph A. Bracken, S.J. Faith Meets Faith Series. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books; Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 1995. xi + 179 pp. \$21.00.

Of the many dimensions of interreligious dialogue, Joseph A. Bracken of Xavier University in Cincinnati focuses on the often neglected role of metaphysical speculation in searching for structures of intelligibility that can embrace widely different religious affirmations. In his earlier work, Bracken developed an understanding of God that combines central themes of Whiteheadian process theology with Christian trinitarian theology. In the work under review, Bracken places this model in dialogue with perspectives from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. While the writing is succinct and clear, this work is intended for a speculatively-minded audience with a background in philosophy.

The center of his proposal is the insistence on viewing ultimate reality as an ongoing activity in process and not as an ultimate entity transcendent of the world. The divine matrix is the underlying infinite activity that grounds all reality; it is "an energy source or principle of activity" immanent to all entities, creaturely or divine (5). Bracken begins by grounding his proposal in a creative reinterpretation of Western metaphysical texts ranging from Aristotle to Aquinas and Schelling and Heidegger. Meister Eckhart furnishes the clearest support for distinguishing the divine ground as infinite activity from the divine persons as entities.

Adapting the philosophy of Whitehead to interpret the Trinity, Bracken sees the divine matrix as the ground of the divine persons themselves. The divine persons are finite entities, limited by time and ignorant of the future, and they participate in the infinite divine nature. They are one because "they share . . . the same intentional field of activity which in its basic structure never changes" (62).

Bracken then turns to the East in part II and questions the Upanishads, Shankara, the Buddha, Nagarjuna, Kitaro Nishida, Lao Tzu, and Chuang Tzu on whether they view ultimate reality as an entity or an activity. In each case, Bracken finds resources within the Asian tradition for affirming that the true ultimate is ongoing activity. He interprets Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist affirmations of nonduality in light of his own metaphysics, repeatedly rejecting any drift toward either monism or a transcendent entity. Brahman, dependent coarising, and the Tao all turn out to be different names for the divine matrix.

The breadth of Bracken's proposal is daring and refreshing. Readers familiar with traditional perspectives, both Eastern and Western, may well have questions, however. Bracken acknowledges that his reinterpretation of Asian texts repeatedly goes against the traditional interpretations of these texts by members of the religions themselves. Whether the radical diversity of these religious traditions can be accommodated by the simple affirmation of the ultimate as infinite activity is questionable. Bracken's own metaphysics shapes the terms of the conversation at every turn.

Moreover, limiting the consciousness of the divine persons by time raises problems for contemporary cosmology. After Einstein, science views space-time as a four-dimensional continuum. If the divine persons are limited by our dimension of time, it would seem that they are also limited by our dimension of space. The future of which the divine persons are ignorant would appear to be relative to a particular region of the universe. Whitehead himself had adroitly avoided this problem by viewing God as the one nontemporal actual entity. By viewing the divine persons as ongoing societies of actual entities, Bracken faces difficulties in light of relativity theory itself.

Nonetheless, this is an exciting and thought-provoking proposal. While the work does not directly address questions of pastoral ministry, it does offer much material for reflection on the cosmic and interreligious context of all ministry. Bracken has accomplished his goal of offering a stimulating invitation to further metaphysical reflection among the world's religions.

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Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity.

By Gary Dorrien. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Gary Dorrien, an Episcopal priest and associate professor of religion at Kalamazoo College (where he also serves as dean of its chapel) has produced a truly marvelous synthesis of developments in Protestant social ethics. This volume provides a clear, concise introduction to the major movements and figures that shaped the churches' social vision.

Dorrien focuses particularly on the works of Walter Rauschenbusch, Paul Tillich, Jurgen Moltmann, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Catholics unfamiliar with the history of the Social Gospel and Christian Realism as defining movements in twentieth-century Protestant thought will find this volume an eye-opener. Individual chapters, as well as the book as a whole, are a ready-made resource for use in college and seminary courses as well as more advanced adult education programs.

Dorrien does not entirely ignore the Catholic tradition of social ethics (although he largely avoids consideration of the social encyclicals and Vatican II documents). John Courtney Murray, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo, and Rosemary Ruether receive some attention, but the perspective of a major American Catholic figure such as Msgr. John A. Ryan, who was central to the interreligious coalition that garnered religious support for the New Deal among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, goes virtually unmentioned. I point to this omission not so much to critique Dorrien as to indicate an area where his book would need to be supplemented with other material. What he chooses to cover he does in a very accurate, concise, and readable way in a text that runs some 389 pages.

Dorrien's purpose in writing *Soul in Society* is not merely historical analysis. His goal in a sense is to rescue the tradition of social Christianity for contemporary American society "after the disestablishment of American Protestantism and the loss of any unitive source of moral value in American culture" (16). In his introduction (viii-ix) he posits a series of questions, a response to which he regards as critical if social ethics is to continue to thrive. They include the possibility of a reconstructed common good in the face of the current stress on race, multiculturalism, and anti-imperialism and the development of a spirituality and sustainable praxis that can help heal the natural world.

In the final two chapters of the volume Dorrien begins to lay out his own response to the questions he posed in the introduction. Taking the "dethronement" of liberal Christianity in the postmodern age more as a blessing than a curse, for the Church is now free to define itself without feeling beholden to the dominant order, Dorrien believes that the new social ethics must move beyond the currently available options of neoliberalism, liberationism, feminism, etc. Its focus needs to be on the democratization of power in every sector of society—the political, the

economic, and the “living place.” It must give more realistic attention to economic matters than the generally socialist-oriented ethics of twentieth-century Protestantism. On the other hand, it must pick up on issues such as health care, child care, housing, a clean environment, and healthy neighborhoods that figures such as Rauschenbusch and Tillich tended to overlook.

To put a name on his model, Dorrien turns to James Gustafson’s “participant Church” proposal, which neither condemns modern society nor affirms it as an unqualified failure. Rather, the model envisions the Church as a partner in the human conversation that will give direction to the way people use technical and political resources so that they might result in a humane society. The Church’s social ethic must be for the here and now, not for the age to come. It must be seen as a part of the process of incarnating the way of Christ and transforming society into Christ’s reign of justice and peace. In this sense, for Dorrien, Christian social ethics must be rooted in a theology of the kingdom.

The incompleteness of Dorrien’s own perspective is a drawback to an otherwise masterful volume. He is clearly moving in the right direction, but he has not answered, or even taken up, critical issues such as appropriate language, pluralism, or the use of political power by the Church. It would be exciting to see Dorrien turn his attention to this more constructive task now that he has presented us with the history.

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An American Emmaus: Faith and Sacrament in the American Culture. By Regis Duffy. New York: Crossroad, 1995. 184 pp. \$15.95.

When setting out into unfamiliar territory, it is useful to have a guide who knows the terrain. Regis Duffy is such a guide in *An American Emmaus*. As Duffy employs it, “Emmaus is not only the name of a town in the Gospel of Luke; it is also a stage of mind . . . [which] refers to the ongoing conversion of people who had already thought of themselves as disciples of Christ” (1). *An American Emmaus* thus serves as a metaphor for the journey of twentieth-century Christians attempting to recognize Christ within the pluralistic cultures of the United States. Since the author believes that this journey cannot be separate from the

way a community celebrates the liturgy and sacraments, he focuses on the impact of post-technological American culture on Catholic faith and worship and, conversely, on the impact of Catholic worship and witness on the culture in this country.

Duffy examines this dual question through six chapters. The first of these considers the image of new creation, and asks to what extent our culture helps or hinders us from seeing God's footprints in creation and giving thanks for this presence. Through a series of historical and cultural vignettes in chapter two, he demonstrates how the American Church has sometimes been prophetic in its liturgical/devotional practices, and other times has colluded with some of the more negative aspects of our culture. Placing the images of American individualism and ecclesial communitarianism in dialogue in chapter three, the author asks whether the recent liturgical reforms have resulted in authentic redemptive reception of the meaning announced in those rites. Duffy treats American's sense of time as a kind of case study in the subsequent chapter to further examine this question. In the penultimate chapter the author proposes the image of America as a "new wilderness" where the dual forces of American individualism and a communal ecclesiology need to strengthen and purify each other. The final turn is to American sacramental praxis where this long-time advocate of active participation in the liturgy questions whether current liturgical participation is authentic enough to provide liturgy with a prophetic edge in U.S. culture.

The fundamental questions raised in *An American Emmaus* are not new. What is fresh, however, is Duffy's nuanced approach to these issues. Demonizing U.S. culture is a well accepted pastime among many students of the liturgy. So is lamenting the quality of worship and linking that poor quality with prophecies about the demise of Roman Catholic identity in this country. *An American Emmaus*, however, does not resort to such culture bashing nor breast beating. Rather, while pointedly underscoring the need for Christian faith as symbolized in our worship to be prophetic and countercultural, Duffy simultaneously demonstrates how aspects of U.S. culture contribute to authentic faith and worship. Thus, for example, our well touted individualism enables us to honor the unique divine gifts in each of us. Similarly, a culture that needs to be challenged for its consumerist tendencies also needs to be acknowledged for its ability to nourish a unique spirit of freedom, toleration, and even generosity.

This balance is achieved, in part, through a well-acknowledged reliance upon and dialogue with the writings of Andrew Greeley: a resource this volume demonstrates has not yet been appropriately

respected nor seriously employed by liturgists. As Greeley often points out, the sociological data on the U.S. Catholic Church does not support many of the “myths” about the demise of our religious identity or the collapse of our religious imagination. Constructing a dialogue with this society requires taking the data from this society seriously. Duffy is one of the few U.S. liturgists who has done so through the work of Greeley and social scientists in such a sustained and accessible manner. While he has not mapped the entire terrain, nor marked every path on the way, he has provided important directions for the journey. For that, and the always constructive insights of this liturgical visionary, we are truly grateful.

Edward Foley, Capuchin

Invisible Harmony: Essays on Contemplation and Responsibility.

By Raimon Panikkar. Edited with introduction by Harry James Cargas. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xiv + 210 pp. Paper.

This book is comprised of nine chapters, each of which is an original or edited talk or article of previously published materials of Raimon Panikkar, ranging in time from 1973–1991. As the book jacket indicates, the volume functions as a mini-*summa* of Panikkar’s chief insights.

The introduction by Harry James Cargas gives background on the person of Panikkar, “a Catholic priest, a Hindu, a Buddhist, and a Secularist . . . (who) is comfortable communicating in eleven languages . . . (and writes) in six” (vii). Cargas emphasizes Panikkar’s rich life experience, including his multicultural background, which gives him a particularly unique perspective from which to reflect on and critique the contributions of both Eastern and Western theological and philosophical thought. This introduction acquaints the reader with a number of themes central to Panikkar’s thinking. Some of these themes are developed in the essays; others, with appropriate references, are teasers to the reader who might enjoy further investigation of Panikkar’s thought.

These essays have several recurrent themes: the need for pluralism, the fallacy of the notion that universal concepts or symbols are possible, the importance of “being” as well as “doing” in the exploration of truth, and, related to the latter, the need to cultivate interior silence out of which the word emerges.

Panikkar purports that the Western view of reality is too narrow and, perhaps, chauvinistic. As an extension of colonialism, the West tries to export its own world view. In seeing reality through its Western lens, which it judges superior to others, the West negates the value and contribution of other cultures and ways of thinking and being. Panikkar is critical of the West insofar as it attempts to reduce everything to rational categories, to create "universal concepts," and to see unity as synonymous with uniformity. Panikkar, from an Eastern perspective, suggests that humankind, using theological and philosophical categories, cannot capture ultimate reality. Far from being a monolithic "concept," ultimate reality has multifaceted expressions and is a mystery to be lived into.

In today's immediately accessible world with so many options presenting themselves, a concrete day-to-day dilemma is created by the encounter of mutually incompatible world views and philosophies. Panikkar observes that suggesting that one world view is superior to another is courting disaster, and that one should be embraced by all. Pluralism, according to Panikkar, must be embraced if our world is to survive peacefully. By pluralism Panikkar means an acknowledgment and acceptance of the fact that no one world view embodies the whole truth. Each has a piece of it. Pluralism requires a humility to embrace the limitations of one's given perspective, a confidence that ultimate reality is manifest in a variety of ways, and a trust and respect of the other world views as carriers of part of the mystery. Panikkar sees the interplay among the variety of world views as creating an "invisible harmony" that resounds in a richness of expression rather than a monotony of a single note.

In this reader's opinion this book is not for the popular audience. Although all readers would profit from having their world views expanded and challenged by exposure to a non-Western approach to Ultimate Reality, the pastoral value of this book is limited. For maximum benefit the reader should have some familiarity with Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian categories and philosophical concepts. Panikkar makes many allusions to these, which, without the appropriate background, deprive the reader of the power of the point being made.

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