

in the closing chapter Jesus, God, and the New Testament documents are so disjunctively allotted their respective fields.

Third, perhaps least penetrating is Wright's handling of the category of 'story'. This is not because he is wrong, but because his treatment of the Bible's 'story', of Jesus' 'story' and of the 'little stories' within the New Testament, is so indiscriminating that almost all new Testament scholars could cautiously agree with Wright, but not with one another. How is Wright's 'story' related to 'salvation history' (in the various meanings ascribed to that expression)? Which of the standard criticisms of 'salvation history' might apply to Wright's 'story'? What criteria have enabled Wright to construct the five 'Acts' that constitute the Bible's story? I am more than happy with his second 'Act', viz. the Fall; but many are not, and some who are will interpret it as a purely *theological* category in the Bible's story-line, without any space-time referent. Many related questions cry out for additional comments.

Perhaps Wright will clarify some of these matters in the later volumes of the series. If they are as stimulating, as informed and as clearly written as this one, all of us will profit greatly.

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The Spirit of Hinduism, A Christian perspective on Hindu thought

David Burnett

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RÉSUMÉ

Burnett survole l'histoire de l'Hindouisme et propose une approche chrétienne. L'ouvrage est une bonne introduction à la tradition religieuse hindoue mais l'approche chrétienne qu'il propose demeure inadéquate.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Burnett bietet einen geschichtlichen Überblick über den Hinduismus und gleichzeitig auch eine christliche Perspektive dazu. Während der Teil über den Hinduismus gelungen ist, bleibt der Autor eine adäquate christliche Perspektive schuldig.

It takes a brave man to attempt a description of

the spirit of Hinduism. Yet, as Burnett shows in his introductory chapter, Hindu ideas and practices have become such a part of the New Age movement in the West that some knowledge of this ancient religious tradition is now essential for any Christian apologist.

Having more than justified his enterprise, the author chooses to begin his journey by going back to the second millennium B.C. to the pre-Aryan culture of the Indus valley. The journey then continues through the Vedic and Upanishadic periods. Having dealt with the key ideas of 'Karma and Reincarnation' and the ideal way of life of classical Hinduism, he devotes two chapters to popular Hinduism dealing with 'Gods, Ghosts and Spirits' and 'Astrology'. This is followed by four chapters on the devotional tradition including a chapter each on the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna, Silva and 'The Divine Feminine'. He then deals with Yoga and Tantrism before returning to a more historical mould with a chapter on 'Reform and Renewal' since the eighteenth century. The volume then concludes with chapters on Guruism, 'God Incarnate' and a concluding chapter on the Western reaction to India and on Sadhu Sundar Singh as a model of Indian Christianity. A useful Glossary, a bibliography and an Index complete the volume.

The volume is a very good and reliable introduction for someone who is not familiar with the Hindu religious tradition. There are points at which it is particularly good as, for example, in the section on class and caste (p. 91ff). It does, however, have its weaknesses.

1. Its historical approach. Because 'Hinduism' is such a complex phenomenon the historical approach has been favoured as a way into it. In this way one is able to look at some of the many aspects of this tradition in isolation as they appear historically. The danger is that we are introduced to what the Indian religious tradition could have been in the past rather than to what it is in the present. From my limited knowledge of India, Burnett is not guilty of this too often but the sense of immediacy which comes with a study of contemporary Hinduism rather than with its history is lost.

2. Its explanations. Burnett is particularly fond of Jung's explanation of various aspects of the Hindu tradition. This is understandable because of Jung's influence in the New Age movement. But Jung needs to be handled much more critically than he is in this volume.

3. A more serious criticism is its failure to fulfil the claim of its sub-title to be 'A Christian perspective on Hindu thought'. It was a mistake to emphasise Hindu thought in the first place because the Hindu tradition lays heavy emphasis

on experience which is one of the main reasons why Westerners brought up on subjectivism find it attractive. But, that apart, Burnett fails to give us a Christian perspective on most of the 'Hinduism' which is described in the volume. A serious attempt is made to compare the Christian and Hindu view of divine incarnation in the penultimate chapter and the chapter on Yoga does contain a Christian perspective. Otherwise the question in my mind at the end of most of the chapters was: but what about the Christian

perspective?—and there are chapters such as those on 'Gods, Ghosts and Spirits' or 'Astrology' where one felt that a Christian perspective was desperately needed.

Despite the criticism above, this is a very useful source of information on the Hindu religious tradition but we do need a more adequate assessment from the Christian perspective.

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