

Strangely enough, the volume lacks an overview article on India, even though the world's second most populous nation lies within the delimited region. This is glaring, particularly when much smaller countries such as Brunei and Nepal are given overviews. Such omissions leave readers questioning the book's claim to cover the history of "Asian" Christianity. As it stands, the volume is primarily concerned with eastern and southeastern Asia.

A second weakness is the fact that treatment of various religious groups is quite uneven. Overall, the book seems to betray an evangelical and mainline Protestant bias over against Roman Catholicism and newer religious movements. For example, the book is deficient on the influence of Catholicism in India and the Philippines, even though it is the largest Christian group in both countries. The number of pages allotted to various denominations and movements is also uneven. The articles on Methodism and Anglicanism span eleven and nine pages, respectively, whereas the ones on Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches have just three pages each. The articles on Roman Catholics, Baptists, and Seventh-day Adventists are about six to seven pages long. The article on cults—written by the senior editor—places the Latter-day Saints, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Unification Church in this category without defining the term "cult." Neither the Latter-day Saints nor the Jehovah's Witnesses are treated in their own articles, but the Unification Church does receive such separate treatment. The article on cults contains information on such movements in Japan and Vietnam only, omitting the flourishing progress of various new developments in Korea and the Philippines, for example.

The six-page article on Seventh-day Adventism was written by Chek-Yat Phoon, Thomas van den End, and Man Kyu Oh. Phoon and Oh are theologians teaching at Adventist colleges in Singapore and Korea, and van den End is a Reformed Church missionary in Indonesia. The article is divided into ten geographical areas where Adventism has been active. Although not comprehensive in scope (Mongolia is omitted), and uneven in emphasis (Adventism in Japan receives a mere paragraph, compared to a full page for Indonesia), it is an informative article on Adventism in eastern, southern, and southeastern Asia.

In spite of some obvious weaknesses, *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* successfully fills a gap. As indicated by Sunquist in the introduction, it should be "seen best as a first edition resource for the study of Asian Christianity as told by Asians" (xxiv). No doubt the *DAC* and the scholarly fellowship fostered during its production will lead to the creation of more resource tools in the future. This book is definitely a must-own reference work for all theological libraries and students of Asian Christianity.

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Tennent, Timothy C. *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. 270 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

Several recent books have drawn attention to the dramatic, if not startling, ethnic and religious changes in Western nations during the past 20 years. One does not now have to cross oceans to engage members of the major world religions. Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and other religious communities are now in our midst and constitute a significant presence in many Western societies.

This study by Timothy Tennent, Associate Professor of World Missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, who also serves as a visiting professor at the

Luther New Theological College in India, invites the reader to explore the religious thought of, and engage in dialogue with, members of the major world religions. The subtitle of the book, *Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism*, accurately describes its contents, and the word *Roundtable* in the title serves notice of the approach. Christianity is no longer at the head of the table; open dialogue, in which each view/understanding is seriously considered, is advocated.

The study commences with a concise chapter in which Tennent clearly outlines his own position regarding dialogue between evangelicalism and representatives of the world religions, on the pattern and methodology of dialogue employed in the study, and on the relationship of Christianity to other religions. The body of the book is comprised of three parts of two chapters each, which are devoted successively to details of the dialogue with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Part 4 is devoted to "historical dialogue" with three great Christian missionary apologists of the past. Justin Martyr's use of *logos spermatikos*, Bramabandandhav Upadhyay's restatement of trinitarianism using Hindu categories, and A. G. Hogg's distinction between faith as a subjective existential trust in God and an intellectual assent to creedal formulations are analyzed with the purpose of uncovering patterns of thought relevant to contemporary dialogue.

The value of this book lies both in its distinctive approach and in the finely honed and clearly defined theological positions analyzed in the dialogues. First, Tennent makes a case for dialogue from an evangelical perspective. At the outset, he forthrightly rejects any tendency to downplay Christian distinctives and harmonize the beliefs of the world's religions, as is the case in the fulfillment theology of the liberal tradition. On the other hand, he just as vigorously rejects the reluctance of conservative Christians to engage in dialogue lest in so doing the gospel be placed on an equal footing with non-Christian religious affirmations. After concisely outlining the triad of traditional views regarding the relationship of Christianity to other religions, viz., exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, he describes himself as an "engaged exclusivist." As such, he pursues a middle course between that of H. Kramer, who recognized no revelation of God in the world other than that in Scripture, and the fulfillment theology of J. N. Farquhar, who recognized a certain continuity between other religions and Christianity. Over against Kramer he takes a more open stance in recognizing general revelation as a *preparatio evangelica*.

Secondly, engaged exclusivism affirms the missionary dimension of dialogue. As such, it is not a one-way apologetic of Christianity, but encourages an open and vigorous two-way exchange of ideas. Tennent lays down four ground rules for the ensuing dialogue: differences should be shared honestly and fairly; dialogue relates to the big picture, and peripheral exaggerations should not be exploited; discussion should be firmly held to the central theme; and, finally, there should be no compulsion on either side for change in religious affiliation.

Parts 1 through 3 consist of successive fictional conversations between an evangelical Christian and representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. These are based on numerous real-life dialogues Tennent has conducted with members of these religions. At the outset of each, Tennent presents a concise overview of the major tenets of belief, particularities, history of the founding and developmental trajectory, and practice of the particular religion. These introductory sections provide an invaluable foundation for the ensuing discussion at the "Religious Roundtable."

Two key doctrines are focused upon in each dialogue. The first in each case relates to the doctrine of God, or ultimate reality, as this is defined within each tradition. The second is different in each case. The discussion regarding ultimate reality (Brahman) with representatives of Hinduism naturally leads into discussion of understandings of

creation and the nature of the world (Maya). This is important because the concept informs much in Hindu thought and practice and is not well understood in the West. With proponents of Buddhism, dialogue moves into the discussion of ethics, which is generally regarded as one of the most important contributions of Buddhism to world thought. Inasmuch as the Quran presents its own doctrine of Christ and this constitutes a significant frontier between Christianity and Islam, the dialogue with Muslims progresses to consideration of understandings of Christ and the incarnation.

The study is brought to a close with a brief "Epilogue"—perhaps "Conclusion" would be premature at this stage—in which Tennent makes three fundamental personal affirmations: first, dialogue neither implies nor necessitates a pluralistic view in which the distinctiveness of Christianity is lost; second, dialogue and witness are not mutually exclusive; third, dialogue stimulates and sharpens our own concepts of truth. Finally, there is a brief statement of the gains and losses inherent in postmodern patterns of thought and of the applicability of aspects of the latter to discussion at the religious round table.

This is a timely book. Most Westerners have little knowledge of the religious thought and practices of the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities in our midst. This book provides not only the information necessary to understanding, but also thoughtful introductions to paths of discussion. On a more academic level, it is valuable on account of its distinctive approach to Christian dialogue and the vigorous clarity it brings to foundational theological positions on each side. Even fairly advanced seminary students are likely to find that it helps them define some Christian beliefs more sharply than is the case in general theological studies. It constitutes an invaluable tool in Missions courses dealing with world religions and the theology of religions, and an invaluable resource for missionaries relating to members of these religions. It is scholarly, without bias, and written from a conservative evangelical position. Whether this pattern will be followed to any extent by evangelical missionaries and, if so, what the results will be, remain to be seen. I, for one, will be keenly interested in further developments.

The book contains a Glossary of terms used, a fairly extensive Bibliography, and both Subject and Scripture Indices. Error noted: *homoiousios* on p. 155 should surely be *homoousios*. *Homoousion* on p.171 is correct.

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RUSSELL STAPLES

Ward, Pete. *Liquid Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. 107 pp. Paperback, \$14.95.

Imagine church without conferences, unions, and divisions. Better still, can you imagine the church existing without local congregations meeting together each week? Yet this is precisely what Pete Ward is suggesting in this challenging book. Ward defines the present structural church as "solid church." This is the church all are familiar with—local congregations, sessions with regular boards, committees, and meetings; yet Ward points out the problems encountered by "solid church." The biggest failure is the inability of the church to fulfill the mission of Christ.

In contrast, Ward suggests what he calls "liquid church" as a possible solution. Liquid church is one that exists without all the organizational paraphernalia of the modern church. He envisions church as groups of people spontaneously getting together for fellowship and worship, as well as outreach. The liquid style of church, Ward feels, would better appeal to the postmodern mind.

In reality, Ward admits that such a church does not yet exist. The purpose of this book is not to describe the intricate details of such a church, but to help people begin