

Book Reviews

The World of Gurus: by Vishal Mangalwadi. Vikas, New Delhi, 1977. Pp. 267. Price Rs. 40.

The Nature of Guruship: edited by Clarence O. McMullen. Published for the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies (Batala), by I.S.P.C.K., Delhi, 1976. Pp. 217. Rs. 30.

At times as I read the first book under review, *The World of Gurus* I wondered whether or not the author was a logical positivist in the tradition of Russell or Wittgenstein, who argued that the true method of philosophy is to wait for someone to say something metaphysical and then to pounce on him and demonstrate how meaningless his statement is. This is roughly the methodology employed throughout Mangalwadi's often intemperate examination of contemporary gurus, in which diverse arguments regardless of their self-consistency are utilized to undermine the monistic background of Guruism. Until the final chapter, he attempts (rather unsuccessfully) to conceal his commitment to Christianity. He seems too anxious to promote himself as a strictly cerebral thinker, who takes nothing for granted and always has a battery of unassailable proofs to support his each and every position. But we Christians, too, have our presuppositions; why pretend otherwise?

Mangalwadi asserts that the contents of his book are the outcome of 'total intellectual integrity'. Behind this fabulous claim is an exaggerated and therefore distorted estimate of reason, which in his case is an excessive reaction to the familiar assertion of mainstream Advaitic Hinduism that the human dilemma is not ethical but epistemological. Reactionary thought is necessarily imbalanced, and in Mangalwadi's book it approximates the Thomistic dichotomy between the will and the intellect; the former is vitiated but the latter is not. Specifically this imbalance puts him into the preposterous position of attempting to prove that the Christian dogma of creation *ex nihilo* is more 'rational' than monistic schemes of evolution (whether real or only apparent), despite the scriptural reminder (Hebrews 11:3) to Christian rationalists that, 'By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible.' The central question of philosophy (at least to Western minds) is, of course, why something rather than nothing exists. To most thinking people, however, the most intellectually satisfying answer will remain one that posits a beginningless Being or substance, from which everything is somehow derived, rather than the absolute beginning posited by Christianity. Furthermore, it is futile to claim that Christian theodicy, which is at best silent in the face of evil in a universe created by an omnipotent and benevolent God, is more intellectually satisfying than Indian theories of karma or *lilā*? After all, what *logical*

fault can be found in a god, whose creative activity is like the exuberant play of a little child? We need not be ashamed of our radical Christian solutions (or non-solutions) to these problems, or pretend to have reasons for everything we *believe*, as though we have reasons prior to our presuppositions (or pre-presuppositions!).

Occasionally Mangalwadi lets down his guard and becomes uncharacteristically dogmatic. Is it more 'rational', for example, to assert that Sai Baba is possessed by a demon than to assert that he is an avatar? Clearly both claims are possible only if many specific concepts relevant to disparate religio-philosophical systems are presupposed; but Mangalwadi introduces the idea of demon-possession as though it were a self-evident axiom. Despite such dogmatic lapse, the overall impression left by the book is that Christian faith is the outcome of logical demonstration. But I am afraid that the tottering structure of Mangalwadi's anti-monistic arguments will not survive detailed criticism by another more clever opponent. If such critical methods were reversed and applied to his *Sanātan Sadguru Mahārāj*, could even He remain unscathed?

Factual inaccuracies, some certain and others possible, abound in Mangalwadi's book. He asserts, for example, that, 'In absolute monism (a serious misnomer if non-dualism or Advaita is intended) there is neither any basis for distinguishing reality from fantasy, "dream" from "daydream", nor any basis for being interested or involved in reality more than fantasy' (p. 223). The problem here is basically terminological; 'reality' in this context is subject to diametrically opposed interpretations. Nevertheless, whatever meaning the terms are meant to convey, it is still a remarkable assertion in view of the fact that all Advaitic literature tediously details the distinctions between unconditioned (*pārāmarthika*), conditioned (*vyāvahārika*), and illusory reality (*prātibhāsika*), as well as the specifically enumerated states of consciousness. Is there an Advaitin yet-who has not found this a sufficient basis for cleaving to Brahman?

Although I am not anxious to defend the personal integrity of Sai Baba, I regard the unsubstantiated allegations of sexual misbehaviour as a breach of fairness of equal magnitude. As long as Mangalwadi conducts his examination in the atmosphere of a judicial inquiry, then I must side with the accused. A more subtle and conciliatory approach is imperative if we Christians are to be credited with just views.

Throughout his book Mangalwadi relied heavily upon a distinguished Christian critic of modern Western culture, Dr Francis Schaeffer, with whom readers in India may not be familiar. Schaeffer (the American founder of L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland) is responsible for refining what is now called 'presuppositional apologetics', which in brief is the attempt to bare both the foundations of non-Christian thought, whether religious or otherwise, and to demonstrate that their adherents can neither think nor live consistently with them. With this approach he has had great success in exposing the weaknesses of modern Western culture. The present reviewer, for one, although not entirely in sympathy with the pre-eminent role of reason in his apolo-

getics, highly appreciates his contribution. Mangalwadi is best when he is most dependent on Schaeffer, especially when citing his trenchant interpretation of the current popularity of Hinduism in the West. However, without Schaeffer to guide his critique of the renaissance of Guruism in India, Mangalwadi's comments become conspicuously weak. The quotation cited above, for instance, is an inept transfer of Schaeffer's analysis of drug-culture psychology to an Indian context. The question must, therefore, arise: for whom is the book written? Western students conversant with Baudelaire or Indian students steeped in Shankara? Presuppositional apologetics as applied by Schaeffer is a tribute to his sophistication, sympathy and humility; as wielded by Mangalwadi it becomes a bull in a china shop.

I heartily commend Mangalwadi for his serious approach to the problem of truth, with which any inquirer into Guruism is confronted. It is, indeed, either a true or false proposition that a particular guru is God or an avatar, just as Jesus Christ is or is not the Son of God in the orthodox sense. A carelessly rationalistic apologetic, however, will only provoke an acrimonious reaction. I, for one, would not be surprised to hear from serious Hindus a rebuke such as the following: *bhavatā kalpyate yathā| anyeṣāṃ matasaṃcāre yuktiḥ sātrāpi kalpyatām||*. (Or: The argumentation used by you when perusing the religions of other people ought also to be used here in regard to your own.)

For reasons which require no elaboration here, Christians in India are obligated to utilize legitimate social structures whenever possible. The second book under review, *The Nature of Guruship*, is both an attempt to assemble individualized and composite pictures of the guru (or the equivalent) in each major Indian religious tradition, and to assess judiciously whether or not Christianity can or even needs to legitimately incorporate Guruship into itself. Readers can be confident that even though many of these articles are more sectarian than academic they will, nevertheless, convey accurate information about how gurus are perceived by their devotees rather than by their critics. A few articles, however, such as the first ('The Nature of Guruship in the Hindu Scriptures,' by B. B. Chaubey), suffer from their extensive breadth. One word of caution is necessary: readers should regard with skepticism any definition of 'guru', which relies upon folk etymologies rather than upon more reliable (though less interesting) philological analysis. Although some articles betray an anxiety to portray Christianity as if the ultimate concern is to prove that whatever Hinduism has we also possess (and not necessarily in larger measure!), the theological assessments are by and large responsible. The Roman Catholic contributions I found especially attractive, particularly their approach to Guruism in terms of its 'enlargement'. While maintaining that Guruship in Christianity is Christocentric, the authors have allowed their minds to explore alternative approaches to the indigenous expression of this fact. It is well for us to engage in such reflexion, for one can plausibly argue that Christianity's meagre impact upon India is largely due to its emphasis upon literacy and Bible reading and its abhorrence of man-mediated knowledge of God. The success of de

Nobili, the earliest Christian guru-samnyāsi, ought to prompt us to reconsider our methods of evangelization.

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First Century Faith: by F.F. Bruce. Leicester, IVP, 1977. Pp. 107. Price 95 p.

Paul and Jesus: by F. F. Bruce. London, SPCK, 1977. Pp. 87. Price £1.50.

The book entitled *First Century Faith* was first published by the Calvin Foundation in 1959. The present revised edition by the Inter Varsity Press is the first in England. This is the fourth book which the IVP have published written by Professor Bruce. F. F. Bruce is Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester, the seat of the labours of the renowned N.T. scholar, T. W. Manson.

As the subtitle states, it deals with 'The Apostolic Defence of the Gospel'. Leaving the first two chapters and the last one which deal with the Gospel as such, the rest of the book, which contains the main thesis of the author, deals with the heresies and deviations of Christian faith in four sections: The Gospel confronts the Jews, Paganism, the Roman Empire and Christian Deviations. The author in lucid style takes up these external heresies and internal deviations from the true Gospel which the early Church faced and shows how the answers they gave formed the Christian apologetics. The contextualisation of these apologetics is the main achievement of the author in this volume. He tries to show that the apology given by the early Church was not a barren debate to score a victory, but had the main object of commending the Saviour to others. The application of this study is (in the author's own words) as follows: 'The men and women who commended the Gospel in the first century "had understanding of times"; the Kingdom of God calls loudly for such men and women.'

The book closes with the chapter entitled 'The Finality of the Gospel', wherein he shows how the Epistle to the Hebrews dealt with this problem and how there should be no compromise for the sake of accommodation to the given situation. Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man. In his own words: 'Christianity will not come to countenance or accommodate them.' This is his strong note and most probably the IVP took this book for reprint on this score, as it is the chief emphasis of the Evangelical wing of the Christian Church.

The second book, *Paul and Jesus*, is a reprint of the first edition in 1974 by the Baker Book House, U.S.A.

This volume has six chapters: Christ after the Flesh, Paul's Gospel as Revelation, as Tradition, the Way of Salvation, the Teaching of Jesus and Jesus is Lord. The main emphasis of this volume is the teaching of Paul which the author terms as 'Paul's Gospel'. But he takes pains to show that this does not mean that Paul was teaching a different

Gospel from that of Jesus. Rather the main thesis of the author is the criticism of those who treat Paul as one who muddied the pure Gospel of Jesus and who therefore advocate 'back to Jesus' and 'away from Paul'. So for F. F. Bruce it is not a matter of a 'Paul or Jesus' choice, but 'Paul and Jesus'.

He very aptly substantiates his argument by Scriptural exegesis and also by drawing parallels between Paul's teaching and that of Jesus, as given in the early Church tradition. The areas where Paul differs are shown as those areas or issues which were raised in the context of the Gentile Mission, which did not come up in the Jewish context of the ministry of Jesus, e.g., the woman seeking separation from her husband (in the Jewish setting it was the husband who took the initiative); the case of eating meat offered to the idols, which did not arise when Jesus sent his twelve disciples, as they were sent to the lost house of Israel.

In the final chapter entitled 'Jesus is Lord', Professor Bruce seems to brush aside the much debated 'redeemer myth' of Gnostic origin, in his attempts to argue for the O.T. Wisdom source. It appears that he is not open to think of that possibility, which is a drawback for unbiased discussion.

On the whole these two small books by the gifted New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, are an asset for any student of the New Testament and I recommend them for study.

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Words with God: by R. H. Lesser. Allahabad St Paul Society, Better Yourself Books, Allahabad, 1975. 2nd revised edition. Pp. 127. Price Rs 2.50.

Fr Lesser's little book, of a convenient size for fitting into the pocket, is an edition of the Psalms using a free translation of his own in contemporary idiom. He has taken about half of the total Psalter and arranged the contents as prayers according to subject, leaving out not only the 'cursing' passages but also others which because of their historical reference or any other reason would not be so helpful devotionally. The arrangement is 'according to the order of one's dispositions as one approaches the Almighty'—joy, praise, sorrow, love, thanks, confidence, self-examination etc.

The result is an excellent book of prayers to put into the hands of anyone who needs to be introduced to the Psalter as a treasury of private devotion or is only a beginner, for it removes most of the difficulties they are likely to experience if they start with the complete, unexpurgated Psalter, even if in a modern translation. Those, however, who have used the Psalms daily over the years and have made their language their own will probably find that, helpful though Fr Lesser's book can be for a change, they will want to go back to the complete Psalter that has become part of their own spiritual life.

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