

# Book Reviews

George D. Chryssides. *Exploring New Religions*  
Cassell, London and New York. 1999. 416 pp. RRP \$24.95 (pbk)  
ISBN 0-304-33651-3 (hardcover). ISBN 0-304-33652-1 (paperback)

The two page introduction indicates the difficulties any author encounters when writing one book about many diverse religions, especially religious groups that are encapsulated under the fairly vague term 'new religious movements'. How to distinguish one from another? How to create typologies that are reasonably accurate so that we may speak about a group falling into this one or that one? What to do with the misfits?

George Chryssides' book explores these questions and his chapter headings indicate his own typologies. After a general introductory comment, each chapter contains three or four representative case studies. As he says, his approach is phenomenological and empathetic. He uses a triangulation approach as his methodology, combining participant observation and interviews where possible with the particular group's own literature, as well as published academic research on the group.

Chapter One discusses methodological issues, and attitudes about gender, texts and credulity. This chapter is useful. The author starts with a brief, but succinct look at Weber, Troeltsch, Yinger, Wilson, and Becker, discussing the church-sect-cult triad, then moves on to other classifications. Each subsequent chapter then discusses groups under specific classes, such as the 'suicide cults', the 'old new religions', the 'new Christian movements', 'new religions in the Hindu tradition', and 'new forms of Buddhism'. He casts a wide net.

About ten to twelve pages of some groups, such as the People's Temple, the Branch Davidians, and the Solar Temple, are included under 'suicide cults'. I was interested in the approach taken towards the Branch Davidians because of the confrontation and ensuing debacle between followers of David Koresh and government agents (the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) and the extent to which the government handling of this group exacerbated its tragic demise. Indeed, many American sociologists say that, had negotiations been handled differently, there could have been a better, and not so tragic, outcome. Chryssides includes these arguments and then moves on to discuss the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate. This chapter is clear and informative. Yet, while other chapters can be viewed as classifications of NRMs, the term 'suicide cults' fails to be entirely useful as a typology because of its retrospective nature.

Chapter Three, 'The Old New Religions', discusses organisations like the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Theosophists. Using Melton's classification scheme he points to a) groups that have been influenced by Mesmer, b) those that are basically Christian in character, and c) those influenced by the Theosophists. This

chapter covers a lot of ground and again, is informative.

Chapter Four explores the 'New Christian' movements, contrasting the technical meaning of the term 'fundamentalism' with the popular meaning given to it. Discussion then moves from Pentecostalism to the Unification Church, with its mix of Christianity, Korean folk shamanism, Confucianism and Mahayana Buddhism. This chapter also includes Sun Myung Moon, as well as David Berg and The Family (formerly known as the Children of God).

The wide variety of new religions in the Hindu tradition is the subject of the next chapter. Chryssides discusses three: ISKCON (Hare Krishnas) the Sai Baba movement, and the Brahma Kumaris. Chapter Six looks at new forms of Buddhism, and suggests reasons why it has become so popular in the West. Rajneesh/Osho, Soka Gakkai, and other forms of Eastern new religious movements, illustrate quite diverse expressions of Buddhism. The author also comments on some of the tensions created by Western adaptations.

Groups such as Baha'i, Subud, and Rastafarianism, all fairly difficult to slot into any particular category, fall under the title of the next chapter, 'Independent New Religions'. Chapter Eight, 'The Human Potential Movement', covers groups that might be better classified as quasi-religions or para-religions, such as Scientology.

Chapter Nine handles the New Age, Witchcraft and Paganism well, and Chapter Ten offers an entire section on the counter-cult movement, a well-deserved inclusion since groups that oppose cults have become as important a study as the groups they challenge.

As Chryssides says, in the late 1960s traditional theology was essentially a quest for religious truth. The implicit assumption was that other religions, even the smaller groups within Christianity, had little claim to such a debate. Later studies, principally sociological, began the attempt to understand the 'other', though continuing to view 'other' as deviant. One of these early studies was Lofland's research on the Unification Church (the Moonies). For reasons of confidentiality, Lofland chose to use the pseudonym 'Doomsday Cult'. Since the 1960s much has been written about new religious movements from specific case studies spanning several years' research, to discussions of methodologies, to focusing on particular aspects of NRMS (such as their emergence, recruitment and conversion techniques, leadership styles and so on). This book is a good contribution to serious academic studies on NRMs.

The historical background, theologies and philosophies as well as information about NRM leaders is extremely useful as preliminary data for those who want to be informed generally about NRMS. Chryssides' book is most useful, both as an undergraduate text and for general readership.

In a book of this length (405 pp., including bibliography and index), obviously some NRMs have to be excluded. Nevertheless, Chryssides has included a substantial number of cases. The book is broad in its scope, yet contains enough details about particular groups to make the reader want to investigate further.

Peter Connolly (ed.) *Approaches to the Study of Religion*,  
 London and New York, Cassell, 1999; paper; xv, 286; RRP 16.99 pounds  
 sterling.

This useful volume could be employed as a textbook in an introductory undergraduate methodology course, but it does not offer a very challenging account for the more advanced scholar. The seven chapters deal with different approaches to the study of religion: anthropological, feminist, psychological, theological, phenomenological, philosophical and sociological. The authors of the chapters do not pursue a uniform style, and this makes it easy to identify the more successful contributions. Connolly's short introduction speaks of offering the reader a "selection of intellectual spectacles with which to view and make sense of religion" (p. 3), acknowledging that there are a variety of ways to define "religion".

David Gellner's chapter, "Anthropological Approaches", intelligently surveys the trajectory from Frazer and Durkheim, Marx and Weber; through Malinowski and Boas, Radcliffe-Brown and John Middleton, to Geertz and Lynn Bennett. One engaging feature of this chapter are the "boxed" sections, which offer book reviews of classic studies: Durkheim's, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912); Middleton's, *Lugbara Religion* (1960); and Bennett's *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters* (1983). The brief concluding section identifies topical issues in the field.

Sue Morgan's, "Feminist Approaches", is far less successful, in that it has a very limited range and narrow (Anglo-American) focus. The scholars discussed include Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Very few works referred to cover religious traditions outside of monotheism: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The section identifying topical issues mentions Third World women's experiences and "cultural difference", but there is no mention of post-modern or post-structural theory, and the absence of any reference to very influential writers such as Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva (whatever one thinks of their methodologies and conclusions) is a shocking omission. Not only are they not discussed, they do not even appear in the "Further Reading" section. It does not seem possible to conclude that Morgan knows the field of feminist approaches to religion at all thoroughly.

Clive Erricker's "Phenomenological Approaches" covers the influence of Hegel, Dilthey and Husserl on early phenomenologists of religion such as van der Leeuw. He also groups other scholars such as de la Saussaye, Soderblom, Otto and Brede Kristensen as phenomenological, although their philosophical underpinnings were less intricate. Seminal works discussed include James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959) and Cantwell Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1978). This chapter is rather descriptive and general but makes the important point that the open-endedness of phenomenology is one of its greatest strengths. Rob Fisher's "Philosophical Approaches" is one of

the most intellectually satisfying sections of this volume, with an interesting discussion of five positions on the relationship between philosophy: “(1) philosophy as religion; (2) philosophy as the handmaid of religion; (3) philosophy as making room for faith;.. (4) philosophy as an analytic tool of religion;...(5) philosophy as the study of the reasoning used in religious thought” (p. 116). Examples of each approach are provided, and Fisher discusses the contribution of logic, metaphysics and ethics to religion. This issues section succinctly discusses the problem of evil, questions relating to religious language, and problems relating to the action of God in the world.

Peter Connolly’s “Psychological Approaches” provides a historical coverage of the area, including the early work of Starbuck, Leuba and Jame, and moving on to the central contribution of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. Works covered include Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *The Future of an Illusion* (1927); Jung’s *The Integration of the Personality* (1940); Abraham Maslow’s *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences* (1970); and William Sargant’s *The Mind Possessed* (1973). The issues section discusses Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality, Gordon Allport’s distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic forms of religion, and the complex relationship between religion and mental health.

Michael S. Northcott’s “Sociological Approaches” begins with Comte and Saint- Simon, and touches on Durkheim, Max Weber, the Marxists, Talcott Parsons and Robert Bellah. Books reviewed include Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge’s *The Future of Religion* (1985). Unsurprisingly, this chapter focuses on new religious movements rather than traditional faiths. The issues section cover the debate over the secularisation process.

The book concludes with Frank Whaling’s “Theological Approaches”. This section recognises that too often theology is taken to mean only “Christian theology” and that it is helpful to move toward the use of broader terms such a “transcendence” rather than “God” in inter-religious theologising. There is an interesting section on the different attitudes which can be taken to “wider religion” (p. 247): exclusivism, discontinuity, secularisation and spiritualisation; fulfilment; dialogue, universalisation; and relativism. Whaling concludes with a sketch of what a global theology of religion might be like. The book ends, rather abruptly, there. An afterword might have assisted in drawing the strands together. In conclusion, this is a useful introductory volume, of somewhat uneven quality, suitable for undergraduate students.

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Heather Elgood, *Hinduism and the Religious Arts*

London and New York, Cassell, 1999; hardback; ix, 246; RRP 55.00 pounds sterling.

This is the third volume in Cassell's "Religion and the Arts" series. It is a handsome hardback, but as an art book seems a little restrained, with only four pages of colour pictures. The rest of the illustrations are black and white photographs or line drawings. It commences conventionally with a resume of the historical development of Hinduism. Aniconic symbols such as the lingam (phallus shaped stone), yoni (ringstone), and yantra (geometric diagram) are considered, concluding that "these visual references give form to the formless and make visible the invisible" (p.15). The development of iconic images is later, and the first sculptural evidence dates from the first century BCE. Elgood discusses the earlier wooden prototypes of stone sculptures, and integrates Jain and Buddhist image-making into her analysis, claiming that the distinction made between the three traditions is much more "Western" than Indian and that there is considerable overlap between all three.

Chapter 2, "Sacred Images" contains a discussion of the *sastras*, the Hindu texts dealing with the correct performance of a range of activities (including architecture, sculpture, and music). Between 500 and 1000 of the Common Era sculptures became increasingly integrated into temple buildings. The third chapter, "Hindu Deities", discusses the main gods (Siva, Vishnu and his avatars, the various goddesses) and is illustrated with images of each. At this point the chief weakness of the volume becomes apparent: it is not a work of original scholarship, but a synthesis of observations of other scholars; and it contains no penetrating insights. This chapter is merely a description of one god, followed by a description of another god. Elgood's descriptions are often one-dimensional also; her conclusions about the significance of Kali's dual nature would have been more incisive with reference to Mary Douglas, and her discussion of Lakshmi is embarrassingly brief, failing to mention many iconographic elements associated with the goddess, such as the pipal tree.

Architecture is presented in the next chapter, with substantial debt to the analysis of Ananda Coomaraswamy. The erotic *maithuna* sculptures receive particular attention, and there is a brief discussion of the principles of tantra. Despite the avowed intention to integrate Buddhists and Jains into the discussion, the "Indian cosmology" on p. 118 is resolutely Hindu, and Jain and Buddhist temples (strikingly different aesthetically, and lacking the erotic focus of many Hindu temples) are likewise not mentioned.

Chapter 5, "Royal Patronage" is quite interesting, with more detailed text and only eight illustrations for 51 pages; Elgood covers the dynasties throughout the Common Era and lists their greatest artistic projects. Other significant patrons including women, ascetics and court officials are briefly discussed, and rituals associated with the kinship such as ritual bathing and rites to regulate rainfall and other natural processes are considered.

Chapter 6 moves from "high" religious art to "low" and concentrates on tribal

and village patrons of the arts, and the brief (five page) "Conclusion" draws the work to a close. There are errors and strange locutions scattered throughout the book: the reference to "ancient pre-Zoroastrian Indo-European culture" (p. 4) is meaningless, as Indo-European culture is not limited to Iranian or pre-Zoroastrian; Varuna is correctly identified as a sky god on p. 9 but incorrectly as a "wind god" on p. 19 (the wind god is Vayu); the Persian Empire and culture is variously referred to "Achaemenian" and "Achaemenid" throughout; and Maya is defined as the "dreaming phenomenal world" (p. 44) where it is standard to translate it as "illusion" (and there is a difference). Lest these examples appear trivial it must be stressed that this phenomenon occurs throughout the book. There is also the persistent use of "man's" when referring to humans, and the punctuation leaves something to be desired.

In short, Elgood's work has some merit, and provides a fairly adequate introduction to Hindu art. However, this book could not be recommended. For a history of the subject Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India*, (2nd ed. 1993, Weather Hill, New York and Tokyo), is immeasurably superior, and for an introduction, T. Richard Burton's lavishly illustrated *Hindu Art* (1992, British Museum Press, London) is to be preferred.

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Rita M. Gross, *Soaring and Settling: Buddhist Perspectives on Contemporary Religious Issues*

The Continuum Publishing Company, New York 1998 ix +238pp  
ISBN 0-8264-1113-4. Recommended Retail Price A\$44.95

Rita Gross is a leading American feminist Buddhist writer and academic. She is frequently invited to address Buddhist conferences; some of her papers are included in this book. Her major previous work was *Buddhist after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (Albany: State of New York Press. 1993).

The present book is divided into three parts. The first is unashamedly autobiographical, describing Gross's childhood as a Wisconsin farm girl and her rise to be a Buddhist scholar-practitioner. It is an impressive story as she began life on a dairy farm yet longed to progress above the poverty, prejudice, intolerance and anti-intellectualism of her parents and their religion. Gross 'saw the female gender role in mid-America in the mid-fifties as a dead end that would curtail any attempt to live a life of contemplation and creative activity'. (p36). Rebellious, she used education to escape.

But even at university her struggle continued. Her feminist approach in teaching was regarded as a threat to an androcentric world of a profoundly conservative campus.

Being excluded, Gross's only option was to be a pioneer in her chosen field. She dared to cross boundaries between her three major allegiances: 'the cross-cultural comparative study of religions that I have been taught as the history of religions at the University of Chicago, the feminism I had discovered on my own and to my peril as a graduate student, and the Buddhism that had unexpectedly complicated my allegiance to both the history of religions and to feminism, even as it clarified all aspects of my life and work'. (p41). Gross was regarded as heretical in mainstream discourse. She rejects the view of conservative Buddhologists that Buddhist scholars cannot do unbiased and worthy scholarship about Buddhism. She claims that white, Caucasian feminists in the West have useful insights to offer.

In writing, Gross's approach is typically feminist, rejecting the compartmentalisation more characteristic of men. 'I regard weaving scholarship, spirituality and politics into a seamless garment as infinitely more mature and healthy psychologically, emotionally and spiritually than its alternative'. (p35). Consequently Gross's work is original, controversial and stimulating.

In the second part of the book, Gross addresses Buddhism's engagement in contemporary issues. These include environmental ethics, work, community, family and friendship, the problems of pro-natalism and conservatism, children's rights, family well-being and the appreciation of finitude and death. Gross views Buddhism 'as an evolving spiritual discipline and world view that is shaped by modernity, and especially in its Western forms by the concerns that are particularly urgent to Westerners, such as feminism, ecology and social activism'. (p ix). Its ideals and wisdom allow natural progression from meditation to involvement in world-wide Engaged Buddhism. 'Like Engaged Buddhists, I see Buddhism as a potent force for social criticism and social change, not only as a path for developing personal serenity'. (p 51). The bodhisattva path leads naturally to social change. Gross considers social and psychological issues rather than economic and political ones. She realises that personal transformation leads to systemic change. As modern communities are in motion and inter-dependent, she sees the need to be at ease with impermanence.

Of particular interest to Gross are conventional views on human reproduction and consumerism. 'Our present technologies now consume and reproduce in ways which, if not moderated, are almost certain to destroy the ecological basis of human life'. (p 77). A religious ethic is needed to change people's values and practices, enabling them to consume less. Relevant Buddhist teachings are harmlessness, the Middle Way, right view and detachment, which Gross considers to be the most common concepts in Buddhism ethics. She compares the simple lifestyle of her childhood and the expectations of today.

Gross presents three possible alternatives for the future:

1. A small world population living on stable self-renewing resources;
2. A few people living well but most barely surviving;
3. An excessive population living inadequately in degrading conditions with insufficient resources.

Gross considers only the first alternative to have merit, the second as incomprehensible and the third morally obscene. These alternatives have contemporary relevance as the world's population reaches six billion. Reproduction, says Gross is the only fully negotiable element in this situation. She suggests that reproduction should no longer be regarded as a religious duty; birth control should be practised so that only children who can be well cared for in every way should be conceived, and pro-natalism should be countered by all means available.

As for families, Gross does not regard nuclear families as ideal. Instead she wishes to build the lay *Sangha* to be 'as genuine a matrix of enlightenment as the monastic *Sangha*.' (p 107). She considers that Americans spend too much time on work and family distractions and too little on community and friendship. Buddhist practitioners regard work and family as meditation in action, but in America Buddhists are without maps and models to guide them in workable paths. Therefore the lay *Sangha* is of great importance for social relationships and spiritual development. In particular Gross emphasises that 'the deliberate cultivation of female gurus and teachers is the most critical requirement for achieving a genuine post-patriarchal Buddhism.' (p 185). Such a development would benefit both men and women.

For feminist readers, Gross uses her own tradition, the Karma Kagyu lineage of Vajrayana Buddhism, to encourage the practice of the *sadhana* of Vajrayana to develop the 'feminine principle' in oneself and the world. The practice fosters the full development of women's energy and appreciation of truth. Yet Gross acknowledges that 'balance involves images that convey strength, independence, inter-dependence, complementarity and co-equality.' (p 193). The confluence of Buddhism and feminism in the West provides the opportunity to combine a non-sexist egalitarian access to deep spirituality which can be influenced by women.

Gross poses challenges and offers some solutions for Buddhist women. Although critical in her approach, she has a positive attitude. In her pioneering way she follows the Middle Path, seeking balance. The presence of both men and women in meditation halls she sees as essential to the transmission of Buddhism in the West, giving it poignancy, urgency and an explosive potential for first generation Western Buddhists.

The book is not one for beginners, but for readers with more experience. It is a valuable contribution to the relatively recent movement of Engaged Buddhism and women's role in religion. Although occasionally repetitive, it generally provides stimulating material on both philosophical and practical levels.

*Enid Adam*

M.R. MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope:  
Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*,

Crossing Press, Sydney, 1996, pp. iii - viii and pp. 1-440, ISBN 095867131

Rosa MacGinley initially describes her work as 'merely an introduction to a rich field for religious, sociological and historical research' (p. 30). Later in the book she tells us that her aim has been 'to take those religious institutes of women recognised as such in the legislation crystallised in the 1917 code of canon law and to trace their stories over the formative years of Australia's own national development'. The work, however, covers almost 2000 years and takes more than 200 pages to reach Australia.

The book begins with a substantial and rather questionable survey of early monasticism and the Middle Ages where MacGinley is clearly not comfortable. Those well versed in medieval history would not accept the claims that the 'Monastery's ritualised round of prayer was as essential to the feudal economy as the role of the military aristocracy' (p. 8). Nor would they accept that the 'enduring organisational mould of female religious has been largely a feudal construct' (p. 333). Although the division between choir nuns, who said the Divine Office, and lay sisters who did the work to free them for their liturgical duties, manifested themselves in feudal society, they were not feudal but social, reflecting the class structure of that society. The vast majority of people in a feudal society were not part of the feudal system which encompassed only the lay and ecclesiastical nobility. Apart from some fairly dubious history, my main objection here is not to the acknowledgment of the significance of the Middle Ages when the great orders were founded, but to the lack of integration with the sections dealing with Australian women's institutes and a resultant superficiality in the discussion of them.

This account of the Australian institutes is largely the same old story told again. Although MacGinley is dealing with a hierarchical institution and its relationship to religious institutes, she sees these relationships almost *solely* in hierarchical terms. It is true that if it came to the point, religious women could not openly defy those in authority with impunity but as one recent study has demonstrated, religious women could employ various stratagems to achieve their goals without conflict. Sometimes they used their personal authority and at other times their womanly charms. But their dealings with their bishop could also involve apparent acquiescence. Shrewd bishops (and there were some) were usually aware when they were being manipulated and were not always unbending. Archbishop Mannix, advising a coadjutor bishop who foolishly contemplated intervening in an issue at the local convent, warned him that 'Nuns are like bees buzzing; leave them alone and they will make honey; interfere and you will get stung!'

The bibliography is extensive but largely consists of in-house histories which have their problems. In short, MacGinley becomes the prisoner of her sources which

lack catholicity. Those who are well versed in the area of Irish and Australian historiography will be aware of notable lacunae. The very rosy-hued, partial and outdated account of Catholic schooling is a case in point. Women's Institutes in Australia were not just the product of Catholic history. The question of schooling in the second half of the nineteenth century which was one of the great defining issues in our history, was the product of Australian society as a whole. Our history was not only defining for the Catholic Church in an exclusive way but it also limited the role of most women's institutes. Schooling was more than a Catholic concern and a sectarian issue. It was caught up in the great debate about the future nature of Australian society. Was society to be inclusive, to have a common culture encompassing a variety, or was it to be exclusive in defining who was an Australian?

Teaching became the *raison d'être* for many Australian religious. Mary McKillop's foundation, for example, was specifically for teaching children in isolated areas. Catholic schools became the measure of the usefulness of individuals and institutes alike but at the parochial level, they were unable to compete with the resources of the state. Many children, the poor, in particular, were quite deliberately denied the opportunity in Catholic schools to improve themselves. Discrimination on a class basis was rigorously and cruelly practised by some religious institutes until comparatively recent times. Results became all important and also the means of humiliation. The in-house histories upon which MacGinley has relied have contributed to her largely sanitised, triumphalist, sentimental and self-justifying account of this central aspect of the Catholic Church in Australia and our history.

A work packed with facts concerned with who, where and when, this book can best be described as a compilation, a ready reckoner and reference book. As that it has its place, but I have serious historical and methodological reservations. It is fairly typical of publications which have come out of the Institute of Religious Studies in Sydney. At best it is antiquarian, at worst amateurish. It is as if the great revolutions in historical writing, dating from the 1960s, have never happened.

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Choong Mun-keat, *The Notion of Emptiness in Early Buddhism*  
Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999 (2nd revised edition). Hardback. xv + 132 pp.

Emptiness, as a Buddhist doctrinal concept, is usually thought of as characterising Mahayana schools, and it is almost always in that context that emptiness is studied and written about. Choong's book, however, has a different focus. It is concerned with the antecedents of the Mahayana notion of emptiness that can be discerned in the early Buddhist schools (that is, before the emergence of the Mahayana). This is a subject that has hitherto received little attention. By comparative study of the Pali nikayas and their counterparts in the Chinese canon, Choong

demonstrates that emptiness has a larger place in early Buddhism than is usually supposed.

The book comprises two large chapters, together with a brief introduction and conclusion. It also includes an appendix, which reproduces (with English translation) Lamotte's reconstruction (based on the Chinese) of the Sanskrit versions of three short sutras on emptiness; and there is a brief but helpful index. Chinese terms are given in characters throughout, sometimes accompanied by pinyin transcription.

The two-chapter format proves to be appropriate and effective. Chapter 1, "The Meaning of 'Emptiness' in Early Buddhism" deals with the meanings that the term "emptiness" appears to bear, in relation to other doctrinal concepts. Chapter 2, "The Practice of 'Emptiness' in Early Buddhism", discusses the apparent significance of emptiness in accounts of meditative practice and attainment, for example as the first member of the triad, "emptiness concentration, nothingness concentration, signless concentration". This chapter includes a detailed comparison of the Pali and Chinese versions of the *Discourse on Great Emptiness* and similarly for the *Discourse on Small Emptiness* (so the author's rendering of the two titles).

The technique of comparing the Pali and Chinese versions of relevant sutras is used to good effect in this study. This is a welcome departure from the all too common practice of relying entirely on the Pali canon, as if that were our only significant source of information about early Buddhism. As this study amply demonstrates, comparison of the Pali sutras with their available Chinese versions often reveals significant doctrinal divergences. It can provide the researcher with a basis for discussion of the various ways in which particular teachings are presented in different Buddhist schools, which in its turn can yield evidence that those teachings have changed over time, thus providing historical depth.

In the present study, a number of interesting facts emerge as a result of doing this Pali-Chinese comparison. One conspicuous example is the fact that the Chinese texts (in most cases representing the *Sarvastivada* tradition) consistently include emptiness alongside the familiar "three characteristics"; that is, they recognise a set of four characteristics: transience, suffering, emptiness, non-selfhood. The Pali texts rarely include emptiness in this way. Differences of this sort are highlighted in the book by use of a helpful parallel text format. They provide graphic evidence of the value of such comparison, and of the limitations of relying exclusively on the Pali canon.

Choong's investigation leads him to recognise three principal meanings of "emptiness" in early Buddhism. The first is the common, familiar meaning, the reference being most commonly to an empty place where the monk practises meditation – or, by symbolic extension of this, to the resulting meditative state. The second meaning is "not-self"; things or the world are said to be empty because they are empty of any self entity. The third meaning is "nirvana", the state that is empty of desire, hatred, and delusion, and hence empty of suffering. Of these three meanings, the second, "not-self", raises the question why emptiness was given a place alongside

not-self in the set of characteristics – a question on which one would have welcomed further discussion.

This small book is of value not only for its coverage of a most interesting and doctrinally important subject, but also for the demonstration it provides that the research technique its author has employed is indeed appropriate and efficacious. Though a little technical and specialised, the book should be welcomed not only by researchers in Buddhist studies but also by readers with a more general interest in Buddhism.

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Arvind Sharma (ed.) *The Sum of Our Choices: Essays in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe*, Atlanta, Georgia, Scholars Press, McGill Studies in Religion, 1996; paperback; ix, 422; RRP US\$39.95.

A Festschrift is, of its nature, likely to be of uneven quality, a “mixed bag”. This is manifested in occasional differences in referencing styles and paper formats, as well as in the disparate subject matter of the essays. There is, however, much to commend this volume, which celebrates the contribution to Studies in Religion of Eric Sharpe, who is well-known to our readers. It is divided into four discipline areas: Theory of Religion; Comparative Religion; Christianity; and Religion and the Imagination.

The occasion of this volume was Eric J. Sharpe’s sixtieth birthday in 1993. The volume begins with two tributes: Arvind Sharma’s chatty reminiscences of working with Sharpe at the University of Sydney; and the sequence of poems, “Itinerarium Vitae Erici” by L. Vidar Sund. The poems are charming and personal, a genuinely original touch in the otherwise well-worn format of the Festschrift. The essays that follow cover a wide range of material. Papers such as Don Wiebe’s, “Toward Founding a Science of Religion” (which reviews the intellectual legacy of C. P. Tiele), and Robert Segal’s, “Tylor’s Theory of Myth as Primitive Science” dovetail neatly with Sharpe’s work in *Comparative Religion: A History* (2nd edition 1986, London, Duckworth), filling in chapters in the intellectual history of Studies in Religion. The scope of Kees Bolle’s, “Theorizing about Religion” is wider, but the essay is somewhat shapeless and inconclusive (perhaps appropriately in view of the subject).

The “Comparative Religion” section is notable for Willard G. Oxtoby’s interesting reflection, “Some Meanings of ‘Pagan’”, which traces the history of the term with particular reference to the translation of Biblical texts. The age of some of the contributions is apparent here, as he concludes with the possibility of a revival in the use of the term among the “neo-pagan” and “feminist” communities,

which the second half of the 'nineties has seen become a powerful reality. Garry W. Trompf traverses a similarly ambitious historical trajectory for the term "millenarian" in, "When was the First Millenarian Movement? Qumran and the Implications of Historical Sociology".

The "Christianity" section ranges from New Testament text criticism, through the early church, to questions of eating and drinking in Indian Christianity, and finally the 1933 Methodist Hymn Book. These four essays all have merit but the reader is impelled to ask whether there were not other, thematically more satisfying ways, of organising this material. Would not Birger Gerhardsson's reflection on Matthew 5 and the late William Jobling's piece on the relations between the early Christian church and the Nabataeans sit more comfortably with Trompf and Dorothy Sly's, "Reflections on Philo, Plotinus and the Great Chain of Being" (in "Theory of Religion")? And Duncan Forrester's "Commensalism and Christian Mission: The Indian Case" with Gerald James Larson's, "India's Agony over Religion" (in "Comparative Religion")? There is a lesson in this, in that the categories are intended (somewhat) to reflect the range of Eric Sharpe's contribution to the study of religion, yet he is one individual in which all these strands converge; the study of religion too is a unity and breaking it into categories always feels artificial, even when the reasons for such classification are obvious.

The final section, "Religion and the Imagination", is more of a piece, with the three papers focussing on works of literature which would not sit better with any other contributions. Carl-Martin Edsman's "Myth in Literature and Religion" begins with the Bramavaivarta Purana and moves through the attitudes to myth expressed by figures as disparate as Heinrich Zimmer, Thomas Mann, and Sigmund Freud. Two pages are devoted to the "Inklings", Clive Staples Lewis and John Ronald Tolkien, then there are brief discussions of critical approaches to modern fantasy, and Simon Weil's attitude to the Eleusinian Mysteries. There is so much richness in this essay that it is a pity that it is such a mish-mash as a whole. Catherine Runcie's "The Reader, the Interpreter and The Waste Land Recycled" is an interesting investigation into readers (who "share two characteristics: they are able to read and they want to read" (p. 360) and interpreters. She critiques the notion of the artwork as a unified whole (which is held by critics as different as Northrop Frye and Umberto Eco, and philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Iris Murdoch. After an examination of a number of episodes from Eliot's great poem, Runcie concludes "interpretation goes on, not because of unlimited semiosis but because artworks are complex simultaneities, rich experiences; and because interpretation - that is, making statements about a work's meaning - is limited" (p. 377). The final paper in this section is John R. Hinnells' entertaining review of novels written by or about Parsis which have appeared in English, a comparatively recent phenomenon (in 1968 none had appeared). Perhaps the best-known of the authors considered is Rohinton Mistry, but the short "snapshots" of the other novels is intriguing enough to persuade readers of the essay that they should sample the novels themselves.

In conclusion, *The Sum of Our Choices* is a generally high-quality volume of studies on religious topics, which suffers from the varied content that such tributes inevitably contain. As a testimony to the work of Eric J. Sharpe, I am very glad of its existence.

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Southgate, Christopher *et al.* *God, Humanity And The Cosmos: A Textbook in Science and Religion*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999. 449pp. Price \$47.99.

Christopher Southgate lectures in theology at the University of Exeter. His background is research biochemistry. He has assembled seven co-authors with qualifications in science and religion (if not theology specifically), all of whom evince broad knowledge of their sources. Two are women. Southgate is the principal drafter for five of the twelve chapters and five of the authors worked collaboratively to generate nine chapters. The result is a volume that achieves a high degree of coherence for being the product of so many writers.

It is designed to be read as a whole, as individual chapters, or as 'books'.

1. Book 1 introduces the science and religion 'debate', with key historical examples; then gives a philosophical analysis of science and theology as related rational enterprises.
2. Book 2 examines how three types of science (physics, evolutionary biology and psychology) interact with theological and religious claims.
3. Book 3 explores theological resources for proposing a model of God, humanity and the cosmos, and how these can be applied to the concept of divine action in the light of contemporary science.
4. Book 4 addresses science's place in society. It looks at science education and the role this can play in relating science to values, social and religious. It looks also at the Islamic tradition, at technology and specifically biotechnology.
5. Book 5, which is really a conclusion, speculates about the future of the conversation between science and religion. It concludes with the sobering observation that "scientific knowledge confers power, that religious values are necessary if just and appropriate use is to be made of that power." (397)

The chapter that seems not altogether to 'fit' is Michael Robert Negus on Islam and science. Whilst acknowledging "the flourishing of science and technology in the Golden Age of Islam" (313), it seems more like a recognition of Britain's Muslim population than a real attempt to broaden the base of the book. Perhaps its value lies partly in noting the pitfalls once Muslims are engaged in the conversation. Negus notes that "if there is a contradiction between science and the Qur'an, then the science is likely to be assumed to be wrong." (312) Notwithstanding this, he finds "about half a dozen Muslim writers who seem to support the theory of evolution

and who have gone as far as trying to find evidence to support it in the verses of the Qur'an." (319)

There are also, in Southgate's chapter on models of God in an ecological age, brief references to Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism. In essence, however, this is a really a textbook in science and Judaeo-Christian thought – with emphasis on Christian. In fact, aside from some attention to process thought (and to Jurgen Moltmann as process theologian) in the above chapter, the theological assumptions underlying the work appear to be solidly orthodox.

This is not to say inherited dogma is inviolable, much as some guardians might wish it to be. Of Christian belief, Paul Murray notes in his chapter on truth and reason in science and theology that, "at the level of theological practice it is all too frequently smothered by a somewhat less humble tone rather more at home with certainties than it is with open questions." (87) And in his own opening chapter, Southgate reminds us that, "one task of theology is to generate *new, vital and creative ways* (my emphasis!) of speaking about the relationship of God to human beings and the non-human creation, and students should feel free to generate such ideas." (42)

It is solid without being dense, as one would hope with such a work. However, the reader with limited scientific background may have some difficulty here and there; for example, Lawrence Osborn on theology and the new physics and Southgate on theology and evolutionary biology. The sections I enjoyed most – probably because I was more familiar with the territory – were Southgate's introduction, sketching out the nature of the debate/dialogue, Paul Murray's chapter on where science and theology diverge and converge, and also Southgate's chapters on models of God and divine action. "How can God be considered to act, to have acted, and to be going to act in the course of the history of the cosmos?" (245)

The issue of theodicy is met squarely, but left for the theologians to explain why "evolution seems to contain such cruelty, waste and ugliness as to make it hard to defend as the means to a divine end." (141) Southgate obviously finds this one of the major anomalies for faith; he reintroduces it in the chapter on divine action, noting that the evolutionary process, "raises the question whether we have to envisage the God of this creation designing, or at least permitting, a process which has used millions of species merely as a means to an end, and then tossed them aside." (275)

The chapters on technology and Christianity, and on the challenge of biotechnology to theology and ethics – both contributed by women – identify a range of justice issues, by implication reminding one that no statement should be made about the divine without considering its moral implications. Jacqui Stewart, who teaches theology and biology at the University of Leeds, is responsible for the first, and *inter alia* reminds the reader of some sordid incidents. "When domestic refrigeration was first developed, both gas and electric refrigerators were made. Gas refrigerators were cheaper to construct and run. They would have been the technology of choice, were it not for the economic factors that gave the electrical

companies in the USA at the time the power to limit research and promotion of gas 'fridges, and to fund the development of electric 'fridges instead." (331)

Celia Deane-Drummond, who lectures at University College, Chester, in applied theology is contributor of the chapter on biotechnology. She too picks up on the significance of economic factors, noting that "more money has been spent on the development of strawberries that can withstand frost conditions for the spring USA market than on improving the yield of basic subsistence crops, such as cassava, maize or bean plants in the Third World." (362)

A 32-page bibliography includes most one would expect to find, although there are to my mind some striking omissions. These include Isaac Asimov, Freeman Dyson, John Eccles, Langdon Gilkey, Charles Hartshorne (although Whitehead is there), Carl Sagan and Kevin Sharpe. Nor is there any reference to that hefty report entitled "The Flight from Science and Reason", from the NY Academy of Science's conference with that title, edited by Gross, Levitt and Lewis. Adelaide's Mark Worthing is there, and so is Charles Birch – but with his best work in the area, "On Purpose", somehow omitted.

As a street directory to guide one around this vast and sprawling territory, *God, Humanity and the Cosmos* fills the role well. Like a street directory, it depicts a plethora of possible routes, offers clues to those more likely to get you somewhere and leaves it at that. As the editor says, "It is of the nature of this book that it functions quite largely as a signpost to more specialised material." (6) For those constructing courses in this area, it could be an excellent resource.

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