Five years have passed and already twenty titles have appeared since Orbis Books launched its FAITH MEETS FAITH series in the late 1980s. The comprehensive vision of Orbis is “to foster the international dialogue that is essential to mission”; this goal takes on a new and significant meaning when directed to questions of the theology of religions and interreligious dialogue.

In the contemporary world which has become a global village, the many religions and spiritualities truly need greater appreciation, communication, and mutual cooperation. At this juncture in history, more than ever before, religions must “speak to, learn from, and work with each other, in order to maintain their own identity and vitality and so to contribute to fashioning a better world.”

The vision statement of this dialogue series continues: “FAITH MEETS FAITH seeks to promote dialogue by providing an open forum for the exchanges between and among followers of different religious paths. While the series wants to encourage creative and bold responses to the new questions of pluralism confronting religious persons today, it also recognizes the present plurality of perspectives concerning the methods and content of interreligious dialogue.”

The series seeks to be comprehensive; therefore, it “does not want to endorse any one school of thought.” Yet, it has a focused goal: “By making available to both the scholarly community and the general public works that represent a variety of religious and methodological viewpoints, FAITH MEETS FAITH hopes to foster and focus the emerging encounter among the religions of the
world."

This present piece, a kind of "review article," seeks to introduce the first twenty books available in the series. This is accomplished through a careful, 350-word review of each title. The author(s) or editor(s) is briefly introduced; an outline or structure of the book is noted; key themes and important insights are highlighted; occasionally a passage is quoted; an evaluative comment may be mentioned.

Probably, isolated reviews of some titles of the series have already appeared in this journal; however, it is valuable and enriching to have a complete overview and panorama of this "library" on interfaith dialogue. This cursory presentation should not substitute for more elaborate, critical reviews; several titles are of particularly high quality and deserve more ample treatment.¹

The General Editor of the series is Paul F. Knitter, a proponent of the pluralistic option in the theology of religions. While this option is fostered by a few volumes in the collection, others take a very different approach. This spectrum of views enriches the debate; it hopefully will result in clearer theology and particularly in a better understanding of God's action, revelation, and salvation in human history.

Three new volumes are in progress for the current year; they are: World Religions and Human Liberation (Daniel Cohn-Sherbok, Editor), Uniqueness (Gabriel Moran), and Leave the Temple: Religion and Liberation in Asia (Felix Wilfred).

It remains the hope of this reviewer that future titles will more adequately reflect non-Western authors as well as more "practitioners" of dialogue (rather than theoreticians). In addition, materials on traditional, ancestral religions and their relation to dialogue will complement the scope of this FAITH MEETS FAITH series. Without further delay, this piece now opens the door to Orbis Books' world of interreligious dialogue.

REVIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL TITLES

¹. All twenty volumes are available in both paper and cloth bindings. All titles, except those numbered 1, 19, 20, have an index. Library cataloging data is also provided in all volumes.

Leonard Swidler, who holds a Ph.D. in history and philosophy (Wisconsin) and an S.T.L. (Tübingen), is Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University. He is co-founder and editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*.

His book is a collection of papers from the conference, "Toward a Universal Theology of Religion," held at Temple University, Philadelphia, October 17-19, 1984. Swidler wrote a pre-conference paper, outlining and promoting the idea of a universal theology of religion. Four persons (Smith, Cobb, Panikkar, and Küng) were requested to write serious, lengthy responses. Twelve additional respondents from the major world religions were invited to the conference itself. This panorama of material in somewhat revised form is contained in this volume. An additional lecture by H. Küng and an afterword by K. Mitra round out the presentation.

Surveying the many, diverse issues in interreligious debate today, Swidler argues that theology must construct "a universal theology of religion" (not to be confused with a universal religion). A "whole new receptive consciousness" (p. 1) must be forged to translate the central insights of one's own faith and those of others into an "ecumenical Esperanto" (p. 46). These universally intelligible concepts, symbols, categories, and images will be based on common human experience — e.g. "limit" situations such as sickness, death, poverty and powerlessness. Swidler creatively incorporates James Fowler's insights into the stages of faith in this presentation. Theologically, Swidler appears to relativize the normative salvific significance attributed to Jesus in the Christian tradition.

W. C. Smith endorses the idea of universal theology and centers it in the history of religions, which he terms "the one true basis for theology" (p. 55). J. B. Cobb calls for a christocentric catholic theology. R. Panikkar argues for radical pluralism and outlines its implications for relations among religions. H. Küng promotes a theocentric Christological approach; he sets forth three criteria for truth: the generally ethical, the generally religious, and the specifically Christian.
One finds a measure of continuity as well as a great diversity and wealth of insight in this book. It immerses the careful reader into the heart of contemporary interfaith issues.


John Hick is Danforth Professor of Religion as well as Chairman of the Department of Religion at the Claremont Graduate School in California. Co-editor Paul F. Knitter is presently Professor of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati and General Editor of Orbis Books’ FAITH MEETS FAITH series.

Hick and Knitter present a collection of papers drawn from a consultation held in 1986 at Claremont, California. Participants included “a representative mix of Christian theologians — Protestant and Catholic, female and male, East and West, First and Third World — who felt both the urgency and complexity of exploring genuinely new Christian understandings of other religions and of Christianity in light of other faiths” (p. viii).

The twelve essays are arranged in three main sections which are seen as “bridges” to cross over from the shores of exclusivism or inclusivism to full religious pluralism. Unfortunately, the comments of critical participants (Cobb, Ogden, and Tracy) are not presented; they hold that “the pluralist move is either unwarranted, unnecessary, or ill-timed” (p. viii). If one is invited to cross the “theological Rubicon,” warnings of dangers are very much appreciated and in fact necessary.

The first crossing is approached by “the Historico-Cultural Bridge: Relativity.” Hick, Kaufman, and Gilkey challenge Christians to be aware of the historical-cultural limitation of all knowledge and religious belief; they therefore assert that Christianity can never claim itself to be the “only” or “best” or “truly salvific” religion.

A second journey uses “the Theologico-Mystical Bridge: Mystery.” Here Smith, Samartha, Panikkar, and Yagi focus on a pluralistic construct of the ultimate mystery spoken of in all religions; since no tradition can exhaust the divine mystery, they hold for the necessity of pluralism.
The third group of essays, "The Ethico-Practical Bridge: Justice," arises from a vision that the movement toward a pluralistic theology of religions will progress by the common concern to eliminate injustice in the world. Ruether, Suchocki, Pieris, and Knitter contribute to this stimulating section.

Tom Driver writes an admirable postscript to summarize "the case for pluralism." He proposes that pluralism is "a step that is ethically, and therefore theologically, necessary for Western Christianity now to take" (p. 207).


Aloysius Pieris, S.J. is founder and director of the Tulana Research Centre in Kelaniya, Sri Lanka and edits the journal Dialogue. He earned the first doctorate in Buddhist studies ever awarded a non-Buddhist by the University of Sri Lanka. Pieris has had wide teaching experience and is a member of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).

This collection of nine essays and a brief postscript is gleaned from Pieris' previously published writings. The book situates the individual pieces within a triple thematic presentation: Part I centers on "Poverty and Liberation"; Part II discusses "Religion and Liberation"; Part III explores "Theology of Liberation in Asia." Pieris notes that the three essays/chapters of Part I on "spirituality, poverty, and liberation" respectively present "a more substantive context" for Parts II-III which unfold "the main elements of my thinking" on Asian theology.

This volume emerges from the womb of Asia and that continent's unique questions about the relevance of Christianity within a context of many poor and many religions. Asian Christians "will not adequately address the problem of Asian poverty unless they do so within the context of dialogue with Asian religions, and . . . they will not carry on an authentic and successful interreligious encounter unless they base that dialogue on a concern for the poor" (p. xi). In short, authentic liberation and dialogue progress through harmonious mutual reinforcement and inter-praxis.

Pieris expresses his vision with urgency and poignancy:
"Hence, my final appeal to the local churches in Asia: Harden not your heart; enter into the stream at the point where the religiousness of the Asian poor (represented by the masses) and the poverty of religious Asians (reflected in our monks) meet to form the ideal community of total sharing . . ." (p. 50).

Undoubtedly, Pieris is struggling to promote an authentic Asian theology. He notes the need for integration between inculturation and liberation; he displays impatience with "some ‘liberationists’ [who] want to duplicate a Latin, Christian model in their non-Latin and non-Christian environments" in Asia (p. 88).

In the Pieris’ book deficiencies are minimal — almost unnoticeable. It has a remarkable unity and flow, in spite of being a collection of previously published pieces. It invites the reader to move creatively into the Asian theological horizon — rich in religious symbolism and challenging to authentic Christian living.²


David Lochhead is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Vancouver School of Theology, British Columbia. As a minister of the United Church of Canada, he has been involved in Protestant-Catholic dialogue and has been a member of the Buddhist-Christian Theological Encounter since 1984.

This short work offers a unique contribution to the theology of religions, emerging from the tradition of Evangelical Reform. Lochhead holds that other religions are "arenas of salvation" where "we can expect to find signs of God’s activity in our encounter with other religious traditions" (p. 44). In an honest appraisal of any tradition, one will find "its dark side as well as its light" (p. 45); thus, discernment is always necessary.

Various sections are contained in the book. The author first outlines four ways that Christians have related to the followers of other faiths. Inadequate relationships have resulted in bad ideas/ideologies vis-à-vis other religions: the ideology of isola-

tion, the ideology of hostility, the ideology of competition, the ideology of partnership. Against these four ideologies, Lochhead outlines the imperative to dialogue. Christians must relate to others in a dialogical manner.

Lochhead creatively presents an excursus on Karl Barth’s theology of religion, which has often been portrayed as closing all doors to dialogue. Here one finds aspects of Barth’s thought that open out to the possibility of an extra-Christian revelation.

Several chapters explore the essential nature of dialogue: dialogue as a preparation for conversion, dialogue as negotiation, dialogue as personal integration, dialogue as relationship to others founded on faith principles. Lochhead holds that the commandment to love one’s neighbor as Christ has loved us “translates for the Christian into the dialogical imperative, the imperative to seek dialogue and to be open to dialogue whenever and from whomever it is offered” (p. 81).

The final chapter contains Lochhead’s views on “the alternative Christologies advocated by Hick, Race, and Knitter” (p. 89). Lochhead does not feel the need to develop any revisionist Christology; he believes that a traditional “high” or Chalcedonian Christology is fully compatible with dialogue as non-prejudgmental openness to the other.

Several insights in this work require refinement and further elaboration; however, it stands as a fine contribution to the literature on interfaith dialogue.


Aloysius Pieris, S.J., from the predominantly Buddhist nation of Sri Lanka holds a doctorate in Buddhist studies. Immersed since birth in a Buddhist milieu, Pieris creatively and intuitively explores the social and spiritual dimensions of Buddhism, its doctrine and political vision, as well as related issues pertinent to an interreligious understanding between Christians and Buddhists.

In his preface, Pieris elaborates the threefold goal of his book: “it seeks to construct (1) a theological framework enabling Christians to find within Christianity itself a space where (2) an
intuitive and empathetic [sic] grasp of the Buddhist Ethos can be realized so as to allow (3) a fruitful dialogue with contemporary Buddhists that would enrich both partners of the encounter” (p. xi). This goal is clearly achieved in the book’s ten chapters. A glossary of Buddhist terms treating over one hundred items adds to the usefulness of this volume, particularly for those participating in, or just encountering, the Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

Although this collection is drawn from more than fifty articles Pieris wrote in the 1970s and 1980s, it has a clear central focus: the experience of spirituality and its interpretation in both Christian and Buddhist traditions. Chapter Ten is a masterpiece: “Christianity in a Core-to-Core Dialogue with Buddhism.”

This work is filled with fresh, inviting insights and challenges. Its spirit is reflected in a few representative, selected quotes. “There are two irreducibly distinct languages of the Spirit, each incapable without the other of adequately mediating and expressing one’s experience of God and of the world. Gnosis or the language of liberative knowledge is one; agape or the language of redemptive love is the other” (p. 85). “The only meeting point of the gnostic and the agapeic models of spirituality is the belief that voluntary poverty constitutes a salvific experience” (p. 87); “... voluntary poverty must be practiced in direct relationship to the forced poverty of the masses” (p. 91).

The book’s title Love Meets Wisdom is most appropriately selected. Listen to Pieris’ poetic description of Christianity encountering Buddhism; one must appreciate the encounter between the “tree of love” and the “tree of knowledge” — “the tree beneath which Gautama, the Indian mystic sits in a posture of contemplative calm, and the tree upon which Jesus the Hebrew prophet hangs in a gesture of painful protest; in short, between the tree that bears the fruit of wisdom and the tree that bears the cost of love” (p. 111).


Eugene Hillman writes from a missionary perspective, having spent more than twenty years among the Maasai people of
Eastern Africa. In addition, Hillman has lectured widely in Europe and the U.S.A. In this volume he expands and updates key themes of his earlier works: *The Church as Mission* (1965), *The Wider Ecumenism* (1968), and *Polygamy Reconsidered* (1975).

The book is divided into four lengthy chapters. The first views religion as a component of culture, considering the meaning and role of religion. Hillman holds that “all religious experience, aside from its myriad historico-cultural particularizations, consists at bottom in the experience of God, the experience of self and the encounter with our neighbor” (p. 20). Such a broad assertion requires careful substantiation and nuance.

Chapter Two, probably the most central of the book, reviews the historical and theological reasons for the gradual clouding of the Tradition which saw salvation as universally offered by God. Hillman argues for “retrieving the Authentic Tradition” on the ubiquity of grace; to this end he praises and quotes the works of “some of this century’s greatest theologians (for example, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx)” (p. 35).

In a third chapter Hillman examines the implications of the first half of this volume for a “new Christian theological interpretation of non-Christian religions and for a trusting participation in interreligious dialogue worldwide” (p. x). Christological questions are approached in this section, but receive only a brief, cursory treatment.

The final chapter presents the thesis that dialogue and evangelization are not incompatible; they can progress in creative, fruitful tension. While both are distinct, there is no need to abandon one or the other. Such a tension will produce a “radically renewed understanding of Christianity’s traditional missionary ministry among the followers of other religions” (p. x).

*Many Paths* raises several important issues in interreligious dialogue: religion as a cultural-linguistic system, commonalities in religious experience, the universality of grace, the role of Christ, the purpose of Christian mission and interfaith dialogue. Hillman succeeds in moving the contemporary theological debate forward from his Catholic perspective on religious pluralism.

Raimundo Panikkar has mixed Hindu and Spanish-Catholic parentage, rooting him in both Eastern and Western cultures. Holding doctorates in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, he brings an extensively broad perspective to all his work: writing (over thirty books and hundreds of scholarly articles), lecturing (Harvard, Santa Barbara, and Benares), and analysis (Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian traditions). This richly diverse perspective is manifested in this most learned book; as with all Panikkar’s works, it is sui generis and requires dedicated effort to wrestle with its content.

Originally written in Spanish, this book is a type of spiritual autobiography which tests the meaning of being Hindu-Buddhist-Christian in the contemporary world. Panikkar requires three acts of fidelity in exploring what it means for him to be a believer today: to Buddhist intuitions, to trinitarian Christian experience, and to contemporary culture and humankind as influenced by atheism (p. xv). Panikkar sets these stringent criteria for his exploration of “the ultimate mystery of reality” (p. 14).

Part One of this volume establishes the problematic of the Buddha’s supposed “atheism”; this is accomplished by exposing the variety of opinions about the nature of Buddhism. Part Two consists of four sets of Buddhist texts which Panikkar elucidates to correct some common misunderstandings of the Buddha’s message.

Building upon the context established in the first two parts, Panikkar moves to Part Three, which is an interpretation of the Buddha’s silence before “God”; in this exploration Panikkar seeks “to recover silence — the silence of things, and even the silence of God” (p. xxiv). It becomes an invitation for humanity to learn to be still before the silent mystery. Panikkar presents an apologetic as to why the “Enlightened One” refused to make any pronouncements on issues of ultimate reality; silence was the only adequate answer.

Panikkar descriptively elucidates the realities faced by contemporary believers in an atheistic milieu. He notes the limits of theism (p.126), the need to respond by praying Buddhism (p.150),
and the importance of tasting something of the Buddha’s silence (pp. 148-76). In brief, he invites the reader to enter the depths of silence and hear the Word speak from Silence.

While this reviewer found the book stimulating, he in turn raises the question of the Buddha’s silence vis-à-vis the Christian view of God who has spoken and still speaks. The book’s multi-lingual bibliography and extensive notes are a thesaurus of literature on Buddhism; Robert Barr’s translation is eminently readable.


The Muslim-Christian Research Group (GRIC — Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chrétien) was formed in 1977; it is a joint effort of nearly forty Muslim and Christian scholars from North Africa and Europe. Members of GRIC come together on an equal footing to work harmoniously and promote new directions in appreciating each other’s religious tradition, while remaining faithful to the essentials of their own faith.

Scripture is central to both the Christian and Islamic traditions; frequently, challenges, tensions, and misunderstanding arise from varied perceptions about each other’s view of the “Word of God.” GRIC took five years (1978-1982) of research and discussion to formulate the scriptural material in this volume, first published in French in 1987.

The book begins by noting the group’s background and general guidelines for true dialogue. Chapter One turns to the process whereby the Word of God is codified into texts (“objectifications”) and how communities encounter the Word through these written sources.

A second chapter presents the manner in which the Scriptures are transmitted, read, and studied among Muslims and Christians. The third chapter elaborates how each religion has viewed and can view the Scriptures of the other; there is a suggested Christian approach to the Qur’an and a possible Muslim attitude toward the Bible. The book’s conclusion offers an agenda for the continuing reflection of people of both traditions.

The committed, rigorous, scholarly dedication of the GRIC
participants has borne much fruit; they note one clear advance in understanding the process of how the Word of God is received by the believer: "We feel that we have at least located exactly where this difference lies by speaking, for Islam (or for the Our'an), of a literal tradition and, for Christianity (or for the Bible), of an interpretative tradition (in the constitution of the actual corpus of scripture), thus opening ways toward mutual recognition of our authentic scriptures" (p. 6).

This book is a fine example of dialogue in action. It follows a rigorous, systematic approach to dialogue (not one of polite compliance). The harder, systematic approach herein results in mutual respect and solid foundational progress. Here is serious interfaith encounter at its best!³


John P. Keenan writes from the perspective of an Episcopal priest, intimately familiar with Christian theology as well as Buddhist philosophical and mystical categories. He has served as a resident scholar at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya, Japan. He is currently professor at Middlebury College.

The book consists of eleven chapters, grouped in two parts. Part One, entitled "Western Understandings of the Meaning of Christ," elaborates the Christian mystical tradition. Subjects treated include: the Wisdom tradition of the Old Testament, the New Testament confession of Christ as the wisdom of God, the meaning of Christ in Patristic mysticism, particularly in Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius.

Reflecting a Buddhist perspective, Part Two bears the title: "Māhāyana thought as Theologiae Ancilla"; it explores the suitability of Māhāyana philosophy to be a "handmaid" of Christian theology. Keenan expounds Madhyamika philosophy, Tathagatagarbha theories, and Yogacara thinking on consciousness.

The foregoing elaborate preparation sets the stage for Keenan’s Christian theological interpretation of the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity by employing Buddhist, especially Yogacara, mystical and philosophical perspectives. The author also takes great effort to answer objections against the adoption of Māhāyana philosophy in the understanding of Christian faith (pp. 187-220).

Keenan’s analysis is rigorous and difficult — especially for anyone new to Buddhist-Christian interfaith dialogue. However, his vision remains clear: Buddhist insights can enhance the theological and mystical framework of Christian teaching on the Incarnation and the Trinity. Keenan is to be complimented for initiating a “hybrid dogmatic interpretation” from a Buddhist-Christian perspective.

In both the “Introduction” (p. 1) and in the “Afterword” (p. 263), Keenan quotes Ephesians 4:14: “Wake up from your sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you.” This scriptural passage captures the book’s purpose: awakening to a new Christ-meaning — through a Māhāyana theological perspective.


Harold Coward is Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Humanities Institute at the University of Calgary in Canada. He is known for his scholarly articles and books, especially Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions (1985) and Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions (1988).

This volume emerges from a research project at Calgary University. It is a thoroughly researched and well documented collection of eighteen original essays with a foreword by R. Panikkar and an introduction by Coward himself.

Coward notes that “Hindu-Christian dialogue has had a long and checkered history” (p. 1). This book, recognizing that history, describes “the state of the art [by providing] knowledge and insights that are indispensable for proceeding further and deeper in the encounter between these two major traditions of the world” (p. ix).

This collection is structured around three aspects of Hindu-Christian dialogue. Part One deals with historical perspectives
and includes six contributions. Diverse topics include: the early contacts between Christians and Hindus in India, responses to Christianity by the Hindus, dialogue as envisioned by Gandhi, and recent dialogue in Europe.

Current perspectives are the thematic of the eight essays in Part Two. The variety of topics provides an update on dialogue in India, Canada, and America as well as an examination of the influence that dialogue has had on the spiritual-liturgical practices of each religion.

Part III looks to future perspectives and concerns. The four contributions examine the role of academic study within dialogue, the experience and appreciation of scripture, and possible approaches for improving dialogue with effective results.

This reviewer was attracted by the practical and realistic emphasis that frequently emerges in this collection. Dialogue must focus on “the arena of life, the daily struggle for justice, peace, happiness” (p. ix). “True dialogue takes place not only in life; it is an exchange of life, a dialogue of life” (p. x). S. Wesley Ariarajah, in speaking of the future of Hindu-Christian dialogue, notes it is “pregnant with promise”; however, “this promise can never become a reality unless persons like you and me are convinced that the promotion of this encounter is an essential part of our own ministry” (p. 261).


John B. Cobb, Jr. is the Ingraham Professor at the School of Theology in Claremont, California. Co-editor Christopher Ives is an Assistant Professor of Theology at the University of Puget Sound. Collaboratively, they have edited an excellent example of theological dialogue. Well over half of this volume is formed by a lengthy seminal essay and a concluding rejoinder written by Masao Abe, unquestionably one of the leading figures in the ongoing Buddhist-Christian dialogue in North America and in Western Europe.

Abe’s introductory essay of sixty-three pages is entitled: “Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata.” In it he suggests that “in
Christianity, the notion of the kenotic God is essential as the root-source of the kenotic Christ, if God is truly the God of love." He also affirms that "in Buddhism, Sunyata must be grasped dynamically not statically, since Sunyata indicates not only wisdom but also compassion." Abe sees clear parallels between the kenotic God in Christianity and the dynamic Sunyata in Buddhism. Here, he asserts, is a common basis by which "Christianity and Buddhism can enter into a much more profound and creative dialogue" (all quotes, p. 61).

Seven leading Christian and Jewish theologians respond to Abe's provocative essay. From perspectives as diverse as American feminism, post-Holocaust Judaism, process thought, and hermeneutics, they reply to Abe's proposals for considering God to be intrinsically self-emptying.

The respondents frequently disagree with Abe's formulations and analysis; they often disagree among themselves. For example, Catherine Keller challenges Abe's emphasis on self-sacrifice and surrender; she wonders if it is prone to lead to further subordination of women. Both Tracy and Ogden hesitate to center a Christian understanding of God on kenosis alone.

In the forty-four page rejoinder, Abe carefully notes the different comments and criticisms; he responds and clarifies his views on some of the major themes common to several respondents. As a result, the reader is immersed in a wide variety of complex issues surrounding Buddhist-Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Of particular value are the introduction of C. Ives (it traces Abe's spiritual and academic journey) and the Masao Abe bibliography (a comprehensive catalogue of Abe's works to date). This volume manifests dedication and professionalism in approaching genuine interfaith dialogue.


Paul J. Griffiths holds degrees in theology, classical Indian religion, and Buddhist studies. He has taught at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and at the University of Chicago. Currently, he writes and lectures at the University of Notre Dame
in Indiana.

This book originates from an undergraduate theology course taught by Griffiths at Notre Dame. The course is entitled "Pluralism and Christian Faith"; one of its goals is to show a Christian audience "how the problem of religious pluralism appears from beyond the bounds of Christianity" (p. xi).

The volume is divided into four parts, each about one of the four traditions (Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu). Griffiths provides a helpful introduction to each section and situates the present state of dialogue between the tradition concerned and Christianity; a list of "Suggestions for Further Reading" is also presented in each section.

Each of the nineteen individual contributions is introduced by comments on the author's background and the context from which the piece emerged. Extensive notes and a bibliography of all works cited complete this carefully designed book. All these aids greatly facilitate the practical useability of the work.

Griffiths' choices are drawn from authoritative twentieth-century writers of each tradition; yet, he wisely notes that "there is no such thing as the Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic, or Hindu position on Christianity, just as there is no single Christian position on the significance of any non-Christian religious community" (p. 3). All in all, the selections are fair and representative.

A great number of these texts have previously appeared in other publications; however, they acquire a new and unique value when they form a composite picture as presented by Griffiths. And, the total impact of all contributions is most enlightening: a rare and insightful portrait of how the Christian faith appears from the perspectives of an outsider-looking-in.

Theologians and practitioners of interfaith encounter have seen that dialogue must necessarily include not only the great traditions or "world religions" but also examine primal religious traditions. Although the Griffiths book lacks such a section, it remains a valuable tool in promoting interfaith knowledge and appreciation. It is a forward step in encouraging followers of all persuasions to approach other religions and their adherents with an attitude of deep respect and empathetic openness.

Gavin D’Costa, an Indian Roman Catholic who studied at the Universities of Birmingham and Cambridge, is Professor of Theology at the West London Institute of Higher Education and lectures at the Institute of Education, London University. In 1986 he published Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions. This present volume continues promoting the same inclusivist position D’Costa has competently elucidated in his previous writings.

A word about the title is necessary. Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered bears the subtitle The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions. It specifically is designed as an “inclusivist” response to the “pluralist” Hick and Knitter volume entitled The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions. This reviewer judges the D’Costa book a very professional response to Hick and Knitter.

In his fifteen-page comprehensive preface, D’Costa notes that the “issues raised by the pluralists go to the heart of Christian theology and practice” (p. ix). They must be seriously addressed within the Christian community. D’Costa takes up the challenge and assembles fourteen competent essayists from varied Christian backgrounds and parts of the world with diverse skills and experiences. There are philosophers, theologians, indologists, sociologists, and hermeneutic specialists — all “united by varying degrees of dissatisfaction at the pluralist project” (p. x).

The result is a three-part volume. The first section (three essays) considers religious pluralism in light of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Part Two (five essays) looks to Christology as the proper foundation for constructing a Christian theology of world religions. The final section (six essays) examines hermeneutical and epistemological difficulties in the formulation of a pluralistic theology of religions. This simple catalogue of contents is most inadequate to unfold the treasures of this fine work.

Two additional items must be noted. The long preface by D’Costa is a fine overview of the book’s contents; it proves a
helpful key to orient the reader. In addition, thumbnail profiles of each of the fourteen contributors are most informative.

D'Costa's edited volume proves stimulating and challenging; it is not easy reading. But, for anyone seriously interested in the issues of dialogue among the great faiths, it shows "creative, imaginative, and socially sensitive ways in which Christian theology can proceed in its encounter with the world religions" (p. xxii).


Maura O'Neill is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Chaffey Community College in California. She draws on her own background as well as from the literature of feminist theory in philosophy, hermeneutics, and other disciplines to present the challenges that arise when women engage in interreligious dialogue.

O'Neill states that the ultimate goal of her book is "to suggest how the current interreligious dialogue can be more inclusive and therefore, more effective in forwarding understanding and peace" (back cover). Necessarily, many questions must be asked and faced. Feminist theologians question current approaches to interfaith dialogue so as to improve the dialogue and so that "fuller human interaction can take place" (p. 20).

This slim volume is organized in three parts. Part One, entitled "Women and the Philosophy of Interreligious Dialogue," deals with women's role in dialogue and its implications for world religions. Viewing interreligious dialogue as "persons communicating about their relationship with and experience of the ultimate reality or realities" (p. 3), O'Neill asserts that the feminist perspective is an essential dimension of a "truly plural" dialogue (p. 29). With this optic, O'Neill examines Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity.

The second part of the book examines specific issues; it is entitled "Problems Unique to Women's Dialogue." Admitting that much of women's dialogue concerns the experience of oppression in both social and religious contexts, O'Neill asks if this experience is universal. She again looks at the major world
religions and questions if they are liberating for women.

Part Three ("Considering Women’s Dialogue") notes “the enormous amount of diversity that can and often does exist among women engaged in interreligious dialogue” (p. 89). This diversity must be used to enrich dialogue, not dilute it. O’Neill advocates the use of “personal narrative” (women sharing their names and their stories) to broaden the perspectives of current dialogue (pp. 89-93).

What results are to be expected of this inclusive approach? “First, women will have a greater awareness and appreciation of diversity among themselves; second, there will arise the need for women to reflect on and write about their conversation; and third, women will be more prepared to act for social change” (p. 103).

This book is hopeful of a more inclusive, open and profound search for truth among believers of both genders. And, it notes how much work still awaits accomplishment.


The authors of this book are two pairs of dialogue partners. Leonard Swidler (Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University and Editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies) dialogues with Lewis John Eron (Associate Rabbi at Temple B’nai Abraham in Livingston, New Jersey). Lester Dean (Instructor of Religion at Temple University and Cabrini College) dialogues with Gerard Sloyan (past professor at the Catholic University of America and current Professor Emeritus of Religion at Temple University).

Possessing an interesting and unique format, this volume consists of two dialogues. In Part One, Swidler (Christian) and Eron (Jew) sustain a lengthy exchange on the understanding of Jesus/Yeshua in their two traditions. Part Two has Dean (Jew) in conversation with Sloyan (Christian) about the significance of Paul. In both parts of the book a final summary-overview of the issues is presented as well as a select annotated bibliography. Altogether, forty-six units of material are presented in this
volume of theological-biblical dialogue.

These constructive dialogues emerged from a project organized by Temple University's Religion Department between 1980 and 1986. The goal was to place four Christian and Jewish scholars in discussion about two central figures in Christian thought and belief: Jesus and Paul. The challenge the four authors faced was: “Can the [Christian] story be retold in such a way as to foster any measure of reconciliation without studious avoidance of the facts”? (p. 1)

Succinctly presented, the topics of the “Jesus” section of the book are: the nature of dialogue, Jesus within Jewish life of his time, whether Jesus was a Torah-true Jew, Jesus’ identity (Messiah? Christ? Human? Divine?), and Jesus and Judaism.

The “Paul” section addresses these areas: Paul’s representation of Judaism, Paul’s problems with the Law, who can and must follow Torah, Paul’s hope for the Jews, and the center of Pauline theology (justification by faith or transfer of lordship).

At every turn the discussion is enlightening, honest, and constructive. This is a model of fruitful dialogue with positive results; it seeks to “burst the bonds” fettering Jewish-Christian relations and perceptions. The contributors to this demanding dialogue have achieved their goal: “increasing amity, not enmity” (p. 10).

16. ONE CHRIST — MANY RELIGIONS: TOWARD A REVISED CHRISTOLOGY.

Stanley J. Samantha has lectured and served as director at Karnataka Theological College, United Theological College, and Serampore College in India. He holds the distinction of being the first director of the Dialogue Programme of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. He now teaches at the South Asia Theological Research Institute in Bangalore, India.

The purpose of this book is to examine religious pluralism and its implications as well as to indicate the contours of a revised Christology. It is built on the conviction (twice stated in similar words — pp. ix & 95) that “in a religiously plural world, a christology that is biblically sound, spiritually satisfying, theologically credible, and pastorally helpful is both necessary
and possible — without making exclusive claims for Christianity or passing negative judgments on the faith of our neighbors."

A volume of ten chapters, the work unfolds with a clear internal logic. The first five chapters prepare for the central thesis of Samarth’s presentation. Succinctly stated, they cover the phenomenon of religious pluralism, the responses of various religions to Christian-initiated dialogues, possible relationships between economic and theological injustice, the role of religion in community life, and hermeneutics in a multicultural situation.

Chapters six through nine are the centerpiece and substance of the book; they deal with “the content, methodology, and substance of a revised christology in a religiously plural world” (p. x). Samarth asserts Jesus Christ to be foundational for Christian faith and life as well as Christian witness and service in the world. The missing factor in Western Christologies, he holds, is the recognition of other “lords” and other “saviors” in a multireligious context. Particularly in Asia, this factor must no longer be ignored (cf. p. 93).

Samarth proposes a revision not in the substance of the Christian faith but in its formulations inherited from a previous era and a different culture. Yet, where the distinction lies is not always clear. Questions remain. For example, Samarth asks: “What right have human beings to limit God’s freedom to intervene in history to a single moment in the stream of time”? (p. 102); this reviewer responds: “Can we say that God cannot act in a definitive intervention”? Additional examples could be cited.

The volume insightfully formulates many important questions regarding Christology vis-à-vis world religions. Additional debate is needed for satisfying resolutions. Finally, the book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography of the works of S. J. Samarth.


David J. Krieger completed his studies in philosophy, theology, and the history of religions at the University of Chicago. He has served as Director of the Theology of Religions Project at the
Evangelische Studiengemeinschaft in Zurich, Switzerland. Currently he teaches in Lucerne at the Theology Faculty.

Composed of four lengthy chapters, this work explores the philosophical issues latent in plurality. It is Krieger's goal to construct a clear method and philosophical foundation for resolving ideological conflicts and carrying out an acceptable appropriation of other religious traditions.

Chapter One attempts to open up the horizon of the theology of religions. It begins with an analysis of the current situation — characterized as that of radical pluralism. In this context, the problem of a theology of religions has emerged as the central task confronting the human community today.

From this contextual analysis, Krieger moves to methodological considerations in Chapter Two. He attempts to answer the question of how a transcultural, global theology can actually be carried out. A seven-step method is proposed (drawing upon the pioneering work of R. Panikkar). This method, based in communication theory, is presented in summary form at the end of the second chapter (pp. 75-76).

The third chapter tackles "the thorny philosophical questions which arise as soon as one admits the fact of radical pluralism on the one hand, and on the other hand still wishes to avoid skepticism and relativism and uphold the possibility of universal understanding and communication" (p. 5). Krieger advocates the need for global thinking as well as a global form of life.

Finally, the last chapter discusses the conditions which will make global, universal discourse possible with members of other cultural and religious communities. Krieger uses the insights of Mahatma Gandhi on Satyagraha ("holding on to truth") to promote a solution to the problem of interreligious understanding. Krieger concludes this philosophical treatise by noting: "Our search for a global form of life, that is, the pragmatic conditions which make universal claims convincing, has ended in satyagraha" (p.162).

This volume is clearly a philosophical approach to religions and plurality; it provides an important perspective — one that must now dialogue with the insights of other approaches and disciplines.
Jacques Dupuis, S.J. is Professor of mission theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he edits *Gregorianum*. He has served as consultor both to the Commission on Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches and to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Already published in French and Italian, this book has a clearly defined focus: “The subject is *the relationship between the mystery of Christ and other religions*” (p. ix). It does not deal with comparative religions, a phenomenology or philosophy of religions but is precisely focused on a Christian theology of religions, which “begins with Christian faith and develops each successive step in the same faith” (p. 201).

This seminal work divides into two broad sections. Part One traces the encounter between Jesus Christ and the Hindu tradition. After presenting the thought and experience of several Indians, Dupuis elaborates the various Christological models that emerge from this interaction with Neo-Hinduism and notes how the models can be “stepping-stones” to interfaith dialogue.

Part One also contains a chapter on the experience of the Hindu-Christian Benedictine monk Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) as well as a pivotal chapter which carefully raises foundational questions surrounding “Which Christian Theology of Religions”? One appreciates Dupuis’ resolute and eminently clear theological method and style of presentation.

Part Two, entitled “Christ, One and Universal,” addresses christological, theological, and missiological problems raised by today’s religious pluralism and the praxis of interreligious dialogue. Topics presented (again with precision and depth) include: multiple divine covenants, salvation without the gospel, the economy of the Spirit, the unicity and universality of Jesus Christ, and dialogue in the Church’s mission and theology.

Dupuis presents a viable theology of religions and dialogue that remains faithful to the tradition of the Church. He is a master at integration, synthesis, and balance: “uniqueness and universality are not exclusive, but inclusive; not closed, but open; not sectarian, but cosmic” (p. 92); “It would be erroneous, then, to
set christocentrism and pneumatology in mutual opposition" (p. 153); "There can be no Christian theocentrism without christocentrism; but neither can there be a genuine christocentrism that will not at the same time be theocentric" (pp. 10-11). Readers will find these perspectives (and many more) presented with great depth and nuance in this comprehensive, demanding, closely written work.4


Paula M. Cooey holds her Ph.D. in the Study of Religion from Harvard University and is Associate Professor of Religion at Trinity University. William R. Eakin and Jay B. McDaniel are professionals with the Marshall T. Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy at Hendrix College in Arkansas. Along with Charles Birch, Eakin and McDaniel have edited Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology.

This volume emerges from the experiences of the three editors as teachers of religious studies in various contexts. As they note, students of world religions frequently express the hope that religions "can somehow meet social and spiritual needs by transcending patriarchy" (p. ix). This book is envisioned as a resource and sample of opinions on this precisely defined question. It reveals the transformations necessary to reshape religions and "retrieve a liberating core that will be emancipatory for all" (back cover).

A brief word on these eight diverse, loosely connected essays will reveal the scope of this volume. The first piece by D. Williams treats the black women's surrogacy experience and Christian redemption. Next, several authors examine their religious traditions for post-patriarchal openings; L. Gupta examines the figure of Kali in Hinduism; R. Hassan writes on post-patriarchal Islam; R. Gross explores Buddhism after patriarchy; and, J. Plaskow argues for a feminization of Israel.

The final three essays feature P. Cooey on the reconstructions

of Christian doctrine, I. Talamantez on images of the feminine in Apache tradition, and E. Culpepper on her spiritual journey as a postmodern free-thinker.

The three editors assert in their brief introduction that the volume includes feminist thinkers "from within the various world religions" (p. ix); serious questions can be raised if several essays are truly written with a sensitivity and perspective "from within." Is some type of external reconstruction at work? Is this truly helpful to authentic interfaith dialogue?

The editors' introduction provided a short overview to the volume's contents; their definitions of patriarchy and androcentrism are helpful. Some kind of integrating conclusion or synthesis would have improved the volume and could have avoided the book's abrupt ending.


Paul J. Griffiths, author of the successful Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes, is a specialist in Buddhist studies and Indian religion. He has taught and lectured widely; presently, he is Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

The central thesis of this short book focuses on "the need for the traditional discipline of apologetics as one important component of interreligious dialogue" (p. xi). Very accurately titled, the volume seeks to show that a spirited or dedicated defense of each religious tradition ought to be made by people who are both committed to the truth(s) of their own faith and are receptive to critique by members of other religious traditions.

Griffiths clearly locates his book within the broad field of philosophy and religion. He admits that a book on apologetics belongs to a genre almost entirely démodé in the academic world. Yet, with firm convictions and clarity, he writes in defense of a particular position and in refutation of others that seem incompatible with this thesis. He professedly desires to stimulate debate.

In the discussion on the goals and functions of interreligious dialogue, Griffiths asserts that there is an "underlying scholarly
orthodoxy” which suggests that mutual understanding is the only legitimate goal. Judgment, evaluation, and criticism of religious beliefs or practices other than those of one’s own community are deemed always inappropriate. Defending the truth of those beliefs and practices to which one’s faith community is committed ought to be shunned. Griffiths adamantly stands against this view; in his opinion, such lazy pluralism produces “a discourse that is pallid, platitudinous, and degutted” (pp. xi-xii).

Thus, the entire volume promotes the logic of interreligious apologetics; it centers on the principle of the necessity of interreligious apologetics (the NOIA principle). A formal statement of this principle is presented early in the book (p. 3); its component elements, applicability, conditions, and use within dialogue are elaborated with great care throughout all six chapters of the book. In Griffiths’ words, the “potential benefits [of the NOIA principle] are thus much greater than is the case for artificial apologetics” (p. 100).

This rigorously argued analysis of the significance of religious differences and the need for interreligious apologetics will no doubt stimulate the debate it seeks to introduce; and, if it succeeds in doing so, as Griffiths writes, “it will have achieved its aims” (p. xi).