Church's commitment to dialogue. The requirements for fruitful dialogue are explored in Chapter Eight. Dialogue demands spirituality and holiness (Chapter Nine). Does interreligious dialogue have a future? Arinze concludes that "the balance is in favour of interreligious dialogue. Let it go on." (72)

This practical handbook deserves wide dissemination and translation. It probably communicates the Church's vision and practice of dialogue better than most academic treatments. Arinze's popular, narrative style, mixed with quotes, personal experiences, faith insights, and common wisdom, effectively communicates and convinces. *Meeting Other Believers* could well bear the subtitle: "A Primer on Interreligious Dialogue."

Reviewed by James H. Kroeger, M.M.


Thomas Thangaraj is Associate Professor of World Christianity at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia. In a warm and engaging manner, he presents to Christians the motives, paths, and basic confidence about relating to people of other faiths. His approach is autobiographical, anecdotal, biblical, and practical; the result is an easily read book that communicates effectively.

Because of his lengthy personal involvement in interfaith
dialogue, Thangaraj has a positive approach to the followers of other religious traditions. His chapters often begin by narrating a personal encounter: “Ganga [my new neighbor] and I are fellow pilgrims on the journey of faith” (7); “Ganga and I have had long conversations . . . [and we] discover many similarities; but we know we are very different . . .” (75, 87). This narrative style brings the reader directly into the heart of the question in a personal, concrete way.

Recognizing the fact that in today’s global community “Christians will be increasingly drawn into interaction and conversation with other religious communities in our mission to serve humanity,” Thangaraj explores several “different modes of relationship between Christians and others.” (18)

Six of the book’s nine chapters explore various possible stances of a Christian vis-à-vis other religionists. Creative chapter titles capture these positions: “We Know and They Know Not” (Chapter Three) [an exclusivist view]; “We Perhaps Know; They Perhaps Know; Who Knows?” (Chapter Four) [a skeptical or relativist view]; “We and They Together Need to Know More!” (Chapter Eight) [an inclusivist view]. Although Thangaraj does not use the nomenclature found within the bracketed words, he explores those issues and attitudes; the mode of exploration is narrative, experiential, and attitudinal. The reader will find the approach engaging and insightful.

Some recurrent themes are played throughout the work: the God of the Bible “does not fail to celebrate plurality” (20) and “revels in the multiplicity of peoples, cultures, and religions” (24); balanced judgment is needed in evaluating the missionary enterprise, because for many believers (Thangaraj’s own ancestors) the Gospel “liberated them and helped them to affirm and assert their self-worth and dignity” (47); dialogue includes “every act, word, and thought carried out together with others in a spirit of mutuality” (92); it is “an exercise in
humility and love.” (95)

The book does not romanticize other religions; the author is not compromising of his Christian faith. The thoughts of theologians (e.g. Panikkar, Rahner, etc.) are used for the insight they offer. The Bible is frequently quoted to affirm a positive and open approach to other believers. A study guide with practical suggestions for each chapter concludes the work.

This is a helpful book; it could become a basic resource for a short course on interfaith dialogue. It is easily understood, but never proposes simplistic solutions to complex problems. In a word, Thangaraj has followed the advice found in 1 Peter 3:15-16a: he has witnessed to his Christian faith and hope “with gentleness and reverence.”

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