



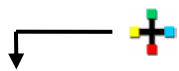
A Review of "Faith Meets Faith Some Christian Attitudes to Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," By Eric J. Sharpe SCM Press 1977.

1978

J.E. Lesslie Newbigin

*Theology* 81, 680 (March): 142-143.

All material is reprinted with permission from the Newbigin family, the Newbigin Estate and the publisher. All material contained on the Newbigin.Net website, or on the accompanying CD, remains the property of the original author and/or publisher. All rights to this material are reserved. Materials are not to be distributed to other web locations for retrieval, published in other media, or mirrored at other sites without express written permission from the appropriate parties. The material can be used for private research purposes only.



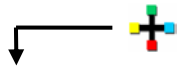
Professor Sharpe has provided, in a clear and attractive style, the best survey of its kind that I know of a very large and complex field.

'Hinduism' is itself a European idea. If one could imagine a professor in Tokyo offering a course of study on all the philosophical and religious ideas and practices which have occurred in Europe from Pythagoras to Tillich and entitling it 'Europeanism', one would have a comparable entity to what in Europe is called 'Hinduism'. Moreover the European involvement in Indian affairs has been long and deep. The range of material is therefore enormous. The field is littered with cliches and stereotypes. Professor Sharpe deals very faithfully with them. He shows how many of the currently accepted judgments are shallow and anachronistic. He puts things in their right perspective. He brings out very well, what other writers have often forgotten, that there is a great difference between the attitude of a man surveying with academic detachment the various human ideas of God, and the attitude of a man who is asking passionately and insistently 'What shall I do to be saved?'

Just because the book is so good I feel bound to register the points where I was disappointed. I think that more space should have been allotted to the work of Indian Christian theologians. There are brief references to Chakkarai, Chenchiah and David Moses, and a somewhat fuller treatment of Devanandan. I think that all of these should have had much fuller attention. Neither Appasamy nor Kulandran is mentioned, although the latter's work on Grace in Hinduism and Christianity is surely an important contribution to the debate. It is also surprising that there is only passing mention of M. M. Thomas, and his major work *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* is only mentioned in an Appendix.

I must also say that I do not think that Sharpe is fair to Kramer. He does indeed explode some of the mythology about him, but he seems to fall short of his own best insights when he faults Kraemer for not being, what he never claimed to be, a philosopher. Hogg defined the

difference between himself and Kraemer by saying that while Kraemer insisted that the uniqueness of the Gospel lay in the fact that revelation had occurred, he (Hogg) saw the uniqueness in what had been revealed. Sharpe quotes as Hogg's final word the sentence 'Whether to Christian faith or to non-Christian, God reveals himself; he does not reveal ready-made truths about himself.' This leads inevitably to a polarization between a theology which emphasizes the subjectivity of God and one which emphasizes the subjectivity of man. In fact, as Moltmann says, what God (according to the Bible) reveals is his promise concerning



the whole of his creation. And this is the point at which (I am convinced) the real issue between Hinduism and Christianity lies. It is whether the future of human history is involved in what we mean by salvation. It is a weakness of Sharpe's book that this issue is not brought out.

All material is reprinted with permission from the Newbigin family, the Newbigin Estate and the publisher. All material contained on the Newbigin.Net website, or on the accompanying CD, remains the property of the original author and/or publisher. All rights to this material are reserved. Materials are not to be distributed to other web locations for retrieval, published in other media, or mirrored at other sites without express written permission from the appropriate parties. The material can be used for private research purposes only.