

**THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS** edited by Stewart Sutherland, Leslie Houlden, Peter Clarke and Friedhelm Hardy. *Routledge*. 1988. Pp. xiv + 995. £50.

Shopping around in today's religious markets is a perplexing task. Economic and social forces mean that the average westerner could have access to hundreds of different religious options—and many within a single religion. 'Good Food' guides recommend the product; religious encyclopedias describe them. Some of the latter now thankfully specialise in the contemporary market (ed. F. Whaling, *Religion in Today's World*); others are lavishly illustrated coffee table productions (eds. P. Bishop and M. Darton, *The Encyclopedia of World Faiths*); and others will be definitive multi-volume, multi-cost productions (eds. M. Eliade et al, *Encyclopedia of World Religions*). Is this new book a re-run of existing products? I think not.

*The World's Religions* contains fifty-eight articles by established academics, divided into six sections (of varying length). They cover the study of religion, the five major world religions, traditional religions and new religious movements. The sections are arranged so as to give a sense of chronological development and contain some fine chapters on the development of a tradition in a single country or continent. The latter are uniquely helpful in showing how the development of a tradition is deeply affected by the soil in which it grows. This is an obvious point perhaps, but one often obscured by introductory books on the 'essentials' of Hinduism or whatever, giving the impression that religions exist in a time vacuum. Another attractive feature is that there is no attempt to impose a single overarching structure based on a uniform comprehensive method. This allows for the religions to be treated in ways appropriate to their character and development. To attempt a summary of a near thousand-page book would be futile. Suffice it to say that one will probably find something about anything related to the major religious movements. Such comprehensive scope and fine detail in a single volume is welcome. As with all large collections, the standard of the essays varies although most are of good quality. The book can be used for dipping in selectively, or for general overviews of an entire tradition. However, the claim by Sutherland in the introduction that a principle of producing the volume was to offer a 'series of interlinked essays' is a little deceptive in that it implies that each essay makes explicit links with others. However, their interlinking is purely thematic or chronological, and it would have been helpful for the editors of each section briefly to review and comment upon the essays under their purview so as to give a feeling of cohesion.

The following comments are offered in the hope that this collection will be periodically updated and revised, because it is an indisputable aid for the understanding of the world's religions. I will begin with some general comments. There is no standardised style for end notes and bibliographies. Some authors give only a list of works mentioned in the essay, others give a helpful annotated guide to further reading, and some do both. If this is to act as an effective text book, the latter style should be uniformly adopted. There are no general maps or statistical tables about demographic, geographic and other factors. This is surprising, as Sutherland alludes to these crucial factors in his 'General Introduction'. People will always

complain about omissions! My special plea would be for a separate essay on Bahaim and more on Jainism. The greatest fault of omission is related to Judaism. Section 2, dealing with 'Judaism and Christianity', contains two essays on Judaism (23pp on 'Israel before Christianity' and 31pp on 'Judaism', Israel after Christianity!) compared to eleven separate essays on Christianity. This is unbalanced and oddly not given justification in the section editors' otherwise excellent introductory piece. A. Friedlander's essay on Judaism, fine though it is, cannot compensate for this problem.

I would like to conclude with a few random and specific points. Byrne writes a good piece in the first section defending and explaining the phenomenological approach. He mentions Cantwell-Smith in the bibliography, but does not discuss his radical interpretation of 'religion', the subject of the essay. Anders, surprisingly, has no discussion of the Frankfurt School or Bloch in an essay on 'Religion and Ideology'; although what he has to say is most interesting, it suffers from this neglect. Richards, in an essay on 'Modern Hinduism', mistakenly conveys the impression that modern Hinduism ends with Gandhi! Something should be said of important contemporary Hindu groups—only some of which are briefly mentioned in the section on New Religious Movements (and categorizing some of them thus, is very misleading). These and other minor points apart, this book is a thoughtful and rewarding adventure for the reader.

GAVIN D'COSTA

**UNEXPECTED MESSIAH. HOW THE BIBLE CAN BE MISLEADING**  
by Lucas Grollenberg, *SCM*. 1988. Pp viii + 199. £6.95.

Fr. Grollenberg writes 'as a result of feelings of irritation and amazement' which came to a head during a service voicing the frequently made claim that 'Prophets foresaw and prophesied' the coming of Jesus the Messiah; for we know that prophets did not 'prophesy' for the distant future, and the claim ignores the fact that the Jews of Jesus' time totally failed to recognise him as the Messiah supposedly thus clearly presented in their own Bible. Yet in the same service the living Jesus was truly proclaimed in the sharing of the bread and wine. Indeed, 'How did it come about that a pious Jew who lived two thousand years ago ... was crucified as a criminal, ... still brings people together now ... people for whom he is still alive, and has to do with the depths of their existence?'

This book is a completely honest and lucid effort to deal with these and many related matters. Recognizing fully the necessity of asking about the books of the Bible, 'by whom?', 'for whom?', 'with what purpose?', 'from what thought world?', and, to quote the author, 'how did all this become one book and how did that collection of writings function over the centuries?' The subtitle is itself 'misleading': it might have been, 'How to understand the Bible'; for a distinguished Dominican scholar who thus candidly accepts the necessity of a historical approach, lamenting that 'unfortunately the circulation of Bibles goes on, as zealous as it is thoughtless', leads us to expect positive as well as critical virtues.

We are not disappointed; Fr. Grollenberg has the rare ability to address even minds for whom the whole Bible is alien, seeking to make clear the extent to which we can place the gospel story in the context of history