

## Reviews & Notices

**Anantanand, Rambachan. *Pathways to Hindu-Christian Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022. pp. 158. ISBN: 978-1506474601. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/2008pslix179br1>**

Anantanand Rambachan is an Indian descendant who was born in Trinidad and Tobago. Rambachan is a religion, philosophy, and Asian studies professor at St. Olaf College. He has written several books and participated in critical interfaith dialogues organized by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. His Hindu heritage, education in Christian institutions, and long-standing interaction with Hindu and Christian individuals gave him a profound grasp of Hindu and Christian traditions. *Pathways to Hindu-Christian Dialogue* is the result of such encounters. So, this book is not about the theories of dialogue; instead, it is about the practice and experience of dialogue written by the author as a participant.

In 158 pages, Anantanand Rambachan enhances readers' understanding of the significance of Hindu-Christian communication, the problems experienced during this discourse, and the paths to improve Hindu-Christian interaction.

The first chapter of this book emphasizes mutual respect and mutual giving and receiving in humility as the beginning point for Hindu-Christian conversation. He argues, particularly to the Christian reader, that while preaching Christ in a multi-religious society is vital, it should not be done with the goal of converting Hindus to Christianity. According to him, the Church's mission should be marked by mutual respect, tenderness, and collaboration in the quest for justice, peace, and the common good. (p. 17) Combining evangelism with dialogue is detrimental to discourse. (p. 29)

Rambachan discusses "theological resources and challenges to Hindu-Christian dialogue" in Chapter Two. The author poses several questions to the audience, such as, Are Hindus interested in dialogue with Christians? Is discussion a Christian problem? Is there anything to talk about? Is there anything to learn? Or Is there a future for Hindu-Christian dialogue? He wants the reader to understand through these questions that Hindus are not interested in discussion with Christians. The author sees this difficulty as a result of the

Hindu religion's decentralized leadership. There is also a widespread belief that Christians begin discussions with the goal of converting Hindus, which limits Hindus' willingness to engage in discourse.

The author discusses Hindu Nationalism, often known as *Hindutva*, in Chapter 3. The author criticizes those who divinize the nation under the banner of *Hindutva*. This separates the Hindus from other religious traditions and diminishes the importance of other faiths' truth. He claims that when truth is reduced to ethnocentric truth, discourse is impossible. In Chapter Four, the author expresses worry about the widespread caste system in Hindu culture. He observes that the vast majority of Christians in India are Dalit. Because of the higher caste Hindus' tyranny and injustice, many Dalits have converted to Christianity to establish a place for themselves outside of the caste system.

After addressing the critical barriers to conversation, the author devotes two chapters to examining what Hindus may learn from Christianity and what Christians can learn from Hindus. In the former, the author recounts how Hindu luminaries such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi were drawn to Jesus' teachings. Jesus' ethical teachings provided resources for the Hindu community and nation-building. He emphasizes Jesus' teachings on forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and Jesus' suffering for others as examples of what Hindus may learn from Christianity. In terms of what Christians may learn from Hindus, he notes that it is simpler for him to identify what he learned from Christianity than it is for Christians to offer what they might learn. With this recognition of the need for humility, he suggests that Hindu texts, such as the *Upanishads*, provide helpful words about the God-Universe relationship, the human problem, and a Hindu vision of liberation (*Moksha*), which includes freedom from ignorance and an awakening to the reality of the divine, and is present equally in all beings and the head of each self (p. 117).

The final chapter of this book (Chapter 7) offers new lines of discussion with political and religious elements. In other words, he believes that Hindu-Christian dialogue is critical for developing mutual trust and hearing each other's ideas for a good society. He emphasizes the importance of conversation to deepen the theology in each religious tradition. During such a discourse, one may find specific ideas from another tradition appealing and persuasive. When this happens, we must be ready to accept and live these truths. As a Hindu, the author recognizes that his discussion with Christians has expanded his understanding of divine relationships.

This book offers fascinating insights into Hindu-Christian discourse. It is a required reading for anybody who wishes to establish a dialogue with people of various religions. With extensive expertise in Hindu-Christian dialogue, the author is considered an expert. Having said that, the reader had the impression that the author was creating this book to favour Christians rather than be impartial. The reader may sense that the author is biased in presenting his opinions at times, which may be due to his Christian acquaintance or engagement in the discourse, which Christian institutions usually organize.

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