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World religions: our quest for meaning

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This book will be of interest to anyone who is sensitive to the inter-religious realities within today's global village. Given the nature of its contents, this text will be of particular value to students in religious studies, to seminarians (who can no longer be regarded as adequately trained for pastoral ministry if they know only their own religion and tradition), to professors in religious studies and theology, to clergy and laity serving in today's pluralistic world. This book's instrumental and educative value will, of course, be realized most fully if its contents can be engaged within the contexts of interreligious dialogue.

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World Religions: Our Quest for Meaning

David A. Rausch and Carl Hermann Voss

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989

xv + 212 pages

Fourth in a series on world religions, the purpose of this volume is to survey faith traditions for students and laity. The authors presuppose that "No one can understand the human race without having encountered the faiths of humanity" (xii).

Rausch and Voss purport that they are writing out of a wealth of first-hand study, teaching and encounters in relation to adherents of the world religions. They profess to have studied their subject matter in a "value-free" manner; but, alas, the attentive reader discovers numerous examples of Caucasian, male, North American, middle-class influences.

According to the authors, all major religions share the common ground of: ritualistic and belief systems, ethical codes, rites of passage, a preferential language of origin, influence upon social, political, economic and legal institutions.

Rausch and Voss ponder the origins of shamanism; unravel the intricacies of the Hindu caste system; observe the misogynistic beliefs and practices in Jainism; clarify the differences between Theravada, Mahayana and Zen Buddhism; provide biographical tidbits of Confucius and Lao Tsu; discuss the emperor worship of Shinto; elaborate on the significance of *Eretz Yisrael* for Judaism. In addition they focus on the universal, inclusive nature of Jesus' teachings and practices; underscore that Muhammad, according to Muslim scholars, married a Jewish woman and a Coptic Christian for compassionate reasons. They do all of this and a great deal more; yet the volume has several lacunae.

The authors fail miserably in their chapter devoted to Christianity. They seem oblivious towards the significant contributions of contemporary

feminist and liberation theologies as well as the key role Protestant churches played in organizing the World Council of Churches. Indeed, throughout this work, Rausch and Voss do not give adequate attention to women's roles and their contributions to the world religions. Moreover, if the audience is students and laity, then why did the authors not spice up their presentation with anecdotes in order to communicate their first-hand encounters with adherents of each religion? After all, story-anecdotes are often one of the best methods of teaching.

The reader will need to supplement this work with other surveys for a more comprehensive, thorough presentation of the world religions.

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Liturgies of the Future: The Process and Methods of Inculturation

Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB
New York: Paulist Press, 1989
220 pages \$13.45 Cdn. paperback

This book is about *inculturation*, which along with globalization, will be a major theme for theology in the 1990s. Here, Father Chupungco, professor of Liturgical History and Liturgical Adaptation at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome, carries forward the work he began in his "Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy" (Paulist Press, 1982). He writes from the context of the Roman liturgy and its changes since Vatican II. With the first stage of recovering the classical shape of the liturgy now complete, the second challenge emerges, to inculturate the liturgy.

What is "inculturation"? He defines it as "the process whereby the texts and rites used in worship by the local church are so inserted in the framework of culture, that they absorb its thought, language, and ritual patterns.... inculturation allows people to experience in liturgical celebrations a 'cultural event' whose language and ritual forms they are able to identify as elements of their culture" (29).

He begins by comparing what must happen in worship today to what happened historically when the early Roman liturgy moved north and was adapted to the Franco-Germanic style of expression. Today the sobriety and simplicity of the early Roman liturgy has again been recovered; but this is not the cultural style of all peoples today, any more than it was in the eighth century! Although uniformity may be a blessing, it should not preclude cultural variation and adaptation.

Realizing that there are pitfalls in inculturation, Chupungco warns of two dangers: liturgy imposing a meaning on culture which is alien to culture; culture overcoming liturgy so that it assimilates the original meaning