

because Palmeiro was not supposed to be “distinguishable from the mass of his brethren” (49), in step with the Society’s corporate identity.

As soon as Palmeiro reaches Goa, he is presented as the man responsible for resolving crises often caused by excessive missionary zeal or ego. While inspecting the Jesuit missions in South Asia, Palmeiro is confronted with various conflicts of factional strife, linked to the oversized egos of three fathers: Antonio Rubino, Alberto Laerzio, and Roberto Nobili. While all three were Italian, Brockey argues that it is time “to move beyond clichés about national character” (103), especially since, if this conflict is analysed along national lines, the Portuguese are almost invariably depicted as close-minded, xenophobic, and intellectually mediocre (102). Instead, Brockey argues that the core of the conflict is the manifestation of charisma against pragmatism. While Brockey’s argument is well-founded and convincing, it is important to keep in mind the blurry lines of the (semi-)colonial environment the Italians were working in. As the precise lines of Portugal’s colonial authority were debatable and since the edge of the empire was never far, it was perhaps not a surprise that the schism between different factions of Jesuits ran along lines of nationalistic feelings. However, Brockey’s representation of a clash between excessive proselytizing zeal on the Italian part and Palmeiro’s more pragmatic approach is without a doubt an in-depth analysis of missionary expansion strategies: a zealous missionary was not per se a great leader able to govern ever-expanding missions with little resources. Just as in his 2007 work, Brockey repeats that the Jesuits in Asia were not handpicked but rather a disjointed collection of dispensable men (160). If the Society had sent more “made men” with experience as leaders in the European Jesuit colleges like Palmeiro to the missions, it may have produced better leaders.

The issue of the different degree of colonial influence in India versus East Asia prepares the transition to part two. Brockey reassures the reader that Palmeiro was not an administrator with “lash in hand”, but more of a diplomat. His careful behaviour corresponds to East Asia’s political context where only one node, Macau, is in Portuguese hands, and Brockey is quick to signal that even this control is completely at the mercy of the Ming and then the Qing empires. Within the East Asian missions, the unfolding tragedy in Japan (referred to in the Prelude) was the most substantial crisis which made “all other enterprises sideshows” (201).

Time and again Brockey’s meticulous research unravels Palmeiro’s confrontation with one Gordian knot after the other: rarely, if ever, did Palmeiro rush to judgment (219), but rather proved to be a problem-solver aided by his calm of being a “made man” in addition to the refreshing perspective of an outsider. Meanwhile, Brockey also convincingly develops Palmeiro’s character: he is not all pragmatic, but will occasionally, even in documents that he knew would have a wider circulation, express his desire to be a passionate missionary (273). In conclusion, Brockey has produced a well-written, meticulously researched biography of the type of Jesuit, a visitor, of which we needed more scholarly analysis.

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R.S. Sugirtharajah. *The Bible and Asia: From the Pre-Christian Era to the Postcolonial Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. 320 pp. ISBN: 9780674049079. \$32.50.

The title alone of R.S. Sugirtharajah’s wide-ranging, thoughtful book is a provocation. For the most part, the history of Christianity in Asia has been told as one of transmission from Europe to Asia. Scholars have focused on how Western missionaries, as agents of Western

imperialist expansion, brought the Bible with them to Asia. These accounts show how missionaries clashed with or learned from the local cultures they encountered. Indigenous readings of the Bible appear as voices of anti-colonial or anti-imperial protest. Thus, we have many books that examine the Bible *in* Asia. By using the word *and*, Sugirtharajah highlights a mutually reciprocal relationship, rather than a hierarchical one. Influenced by post-colonial theory, Sugirtharajah seeks to unseat the “West’s pervasive presence” in biblical studies (12).

To do so, Sugirtharajah begins by suggesting that the Bible itself was never solely a “Western” text. Sugirtharajah argues that stories from the Bible, such as Solomon solving the dispute between two women over a child and Abraham’s pleading with God to not punish Sodom, originated from India (29). Sugirtharajah’s reading shows us the payoffs of assuming that the Bible was a product of global, transnational flows: it is thrilling to entertain the possibility that the wrathful God that Abraham encounters could have been modeled on a deity in an Indian folktale.

The heart of Sugirtharajah’s book concerns how the Bible factored into the colonial and post-colonial encounters between the West and Asia. He covers a wide-range of figures who grappled with the Bible within these contexts: among them, we meet Western missionaries, colonial bureaucrats, anti-colonial revivalists, Buddhists, Hindus, post-colonial feminists, indigenous peoples. Throughout, Sugirtharajah shows how difficult it is to characterize the place of the Bible in these encounters. At times, the Bible was used to justify oppression, at others, it was a source of liberation.

An example of such slipperiness appears in a chapter on John Z. Holwell (1711-1798) and Louis Jacolliot (1837-1890). Both were colonial bureaucrats who “vigorously defended and rescued Indian philosophies, mythologies, and especially Brahmanical tenets” (78). Both contradicted the dominant trends among contemporary orientalist, who saw in Asian religions a way to justify the superiority of Christianity. Yet Sugirtharajah shows that Holwell and Jacolliot were not motivated purely by an enlightened cosmopolitan solidarity with the Other: they were both anti-Semites who sought to “erase the identity of the Jews and then reintegrate them by subsuming them under the ancient Brahmins” (81).

Sugirtharajah is at his best when he shows how Asian readers of the Bible received it, creatively misinterpreted it, and used it for their own political, social, and cultural ends. He finds a whole host of characters who drew upon the Bible to advance their anti-imperial agendas. Plumbing the works of the Bengali Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), the Chinese Hong Xiuquan (1814-1864), and the Indian Christian J.C. Kumarappa (1892-1960), Sugirtharajah shows how the three sought to wrest control from Western missionaries and advance a new political and moral vision for their communities. Yet Sugirtharajah is careful to delineate between the three, and he helps readers navigate the drastically different political, cultural, and social contexts that shaped the solutions that each interpreter proposed.

Sugirtharajah is sensitive to how indigenous anti-imperial critique could itself be articulated as a form of domination and oppression. In his most revisionist chapter, Sugirtharajah reinterprets the works of the Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a hero to the Sinhalese nationalist movement. Sugirtharajah focuses on Dharmapala’s constant references to the Christian scriptures, an often-overlooked aspect of his work. He shows that Dharmapala adopted a “hermeneutics of equivalent reprisal” to overturn colonialism, criticize the work of Christian missionaries, and show the West that he was equally adept at playing their game (148). Sugirtharajah demonstrates that such hermeneutics came at a cost: Dharmapala ironically adopted the same power structures that the colonial powers sought to enforce. His vision for the Sri Lankan nation had no place for Tamils and Muslims. Sugirtharajah uses Dharmapala to show that “natives themselves not only are quite capable of

representing themselves but also are equally competent in producing racist, jingoistic, colonialist, nativist, and supremacist theologies” (150).

Sugirtharajah’s book is filled with examples of the ambiguities—and dangers—of interpreting the Bible. He shows, for example, how the figure of Paul has had just as ambivalent a place in Western Christianity as it had among Asian Christian circles. Some Japanese Christians in the late nineteenth century, for instance, saw Paul as a “true Samurai, the very embodiment of Bushido” (169), while contemporary Korean feminists have criticized the patriarchal and oppressive elements in Paul’s writings (171).

If there are any uncomplicated heroes in the book, it is in the marginalized voices of tribal peoples who had been oppressed in the process of post-colonial nation formation: the Indian Dalits, the Japanese Burakumins, the Korean Minjung. Indigenous peoples have drawn upon the Bible to “find liberatory resources that will both confront and challenge the oppressive forces and at the same time empower them to regain their dignity” (210). By uncovering these largely overlooked voices, Sugirtharajah seeks to highlight how these approaches to the Bible were filled with as much “intellectual dynamism and creativity” as Western theological approaches (262).

Sugirtharajah’s central aim, then, is to elevate Asian interpretations of the Bible to the same level as the strands that dominate Western scholarship, to allow for the “coexistence of multiple interpretations with equal hermeneutical standing” (263). Sugirtharajah’s sensitive close readings are a model for how to recover and do justice to these voices.

Besides highlighting these marginalized voices, Sugirtharajah also points us towards avenues of future scholarship. He suggests that historians write a social and cultural history of the Bible in Asia, as well as more archival-based explorations of how the Bible was received at the local level (260-261). These would all be welcome interventions. But one can also glimpse within Sugirtharajah’s work the possibility of placing these indigenous readings of the Bible within a more transnational, global framework. How, for example, did Western theologians and colonialists respond to the anti-imperial and anti-colonial readings of the Bible? And was there cross-pollination among indigenous readings? For instance, were there links between the Korean Minjung and the Japanese Burakumins as they shaped their indigenous theologies? Sugirtharajah gestures to some of these global circulations when he talks about Asian diasporic literature, but one wishes that he had explored these possibilities more. Without a sense of broader global contexts, it is difficult to measure the influence that these indigenous readings had beyond their respective local communities.

But these are minor quibbles. Sugirtharajah’s book deserves to be widely read by anyone interested in how the Bible shapes our thinking about the colonial encounter, as well as those interested in seeing how postcolonial hermeneutics could work in practice.

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Comparative and Transregional

Maxine Berg, Felicia Gottmann, Hanna Hodacs, and Chris Nierstrasz, eds. *Goods from the East, 1600-1800: Trading Eurasia*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 369 pp. ISBN: 9781137403933. \$105.00.

Twenty-one chapters, four editors and a motley collection of research by both established as well as early career scholars, the book *Goods from the East* exposes its reader to the rich and