

Book Review

RELIGION IN A CHANGING WORLD

By Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (Allen and Unwin, 25s.)

Review by William Stoddart

Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 2, No. 2. (Spring, 1968) © World Wisdom, Inc.

www.studiesincomparativereligion.com

IN this book of collected essays Dr. Radhakrishnan appears as a European-style scholar. Under the general title "religion in a changing world" the essays cover a wide variety of themes, reflecting the interests and experience of a modern statesman, university professor and man of letters. His writing is polished and professional and his manner of seeing things is more akin to that of an academic sceptic than to that of a religious devotee.

Dr. Radhakrishnan undoubtedly touches on a large number of the spiritual problems of our times, but the remedies he suggests hardly seem proportionate to the gravity of our modern crisis. Indeed they largely participate in the very causes which are operating to bring the crisis about. Thus, amongst other things, Dr. Radhakrishnan makes a plea for a "composite world faith"; but if our dangers are as great as he suggests, could such a man-made and arbitrary "anthology" possibly arouse the necessary response in the human heart? The author surely cannot believe that some quest for a "highest common denominator" could produce a serious alternative to any of the existing world religions, each of which, as a unique and indivisible organism, claims precisely to have its origin, not in man, but in divine revelation.

Dr. Radhakrishnan is understandably perplexed by the fact that nowadays the great religions are more and more relegated to the background; but if he were not so firmly held in thrall by the nineteenth century dogma of "progress" he would find a cure for his perplexity in the passages of the Visnu-Purāna dealing with the "Dark Age" (*Kali-Yuga*). The unprecedented crises and catastrophes of modern times only begin to be comprehensible when seen in this light. Nor is Hinduism alone in providing an antidote to all facile evolutionism and progressivism. The other religions speak with a like voice. The Prophet Mohammed said: "No time cometh on you but is followed by a worse." Christ prophesied: "Scandal there must be," and added the implacable warning: "and woe to him through whom the scandal cometh!"

In an age of tireless but unblessed technology one of religion's most important roles is to remind those willing to listen of this fatally neglected truth.