

***A New Spirit in Christian-Muslim Relations in India: Three Jesuit Pioneers.* By Joseph Victor Edwin, S.J. Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2021. 291 pp. \$17.00 (paperback). ISBN: 978-9390569267 (paperback).**

Soon after arriving in sixteenth-century India, Jesuit representatives visited the court of the Mughal Emperor, Akbar (1542-1605), symbolically inaugurating a long history of Jesuit-Muslim relations in India. In *A New Spirit in Christian-Muslim Relations in India*, Victor Edwin, S.J. evaluates three twentieth-and-twenty-first-century examples of that history: Victor Courtois (1907–1960), Christian Troll (b. 1937), and Paul Jackson (1937–2020).

Chapter 1 introduces Christian-Muslim relations generally, emphasizing Qur’anic and early Islamic teachings about Christians/Christianity and Eastern/Western, Patristic/Medieval Christian understandings of Islam. Though much is familiar to non-beginners, Edwin’s commentary is insightful: “Muslims and Christians may live among one another, but if there is not real interaction between them, invariably the imagination takes over and makes the other an enemy” (13).

Chapter 2 presents Indian historical encounters between “the ‘*ulamā* and the [Catholic/Protestant] missionaries” (33). Alongside polemical debates existed a period echoing “the liberal spirit of Baghdad,” wherein British and Indian-Muslim scholars jointly translated Western scientific/religious texts into Urdu (41).

Chapter 3 presents the Belgian, Calcutta-based Victor Courtois, S.J., who deliberately challenged the polemical attitudes of predecessors and contemporaries (for example, Henri Lammens, S.J.) by implementing three principles: mutual understanding and appreciation, the goodness of Muslims and their culture, unity over division (62–65). He was early in treating Muslims as religious siblings and eschewing proselytization (67). Although he died before the Second Vatican Council, he anticipated its friendly turn toward Muslims and the judgments of *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* regarding common worship of the one God (92-93). Courtois did not call him a prophet, but he praised Muhammad’s many virtues (77-82) and declared the Qur’an a “living voice” for Muslims (86).

Chapter 4 is the longest and relies significantly on Edwin’s personal interviews of and correspondence with Christian Troll, S.J., now retired in his native Germany but long stationed in Delhi. Troll is expert in modern/contemporary Indian-Islamic intellectual currents—for example, Sayyid Ahhmed Khan (1817–1898), Maulana Maudūdī (1903–1979), Maulana Azad (1888–1958)—focusing on faith and politics. He discerns three types of Indian Islam: cultural, Islamist, and reinterpreted-pluralist (161), and he highlights dialogue partners rooted in Qur’anic humanism. Troll emphasizes mutual study of the Qur’an and Bible and clear discussion of theological differences, including Qur’anic rejection of Incarnation and Trinity. *Dignitatis Humanae* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* inform Troll’s grounding of Christian-Muslim dialogue in religious freedom, including allowing for Catholic mission and Muslim *da’wa* (180). Troll dedicates much of his personal ministry, in-print and online, to answering Muslims’ questions about Catholic doctrines such as Trinity, sin/redemption, and divine love (168–172).

Chapter 5 presents the Australian, Patna-based Paul Jackson, S.J., who translated the *Hundred Letters* of Sufi master Sharfuddin Maneri (1261–1381). Edwin treats Maneri’s spiritual

program and its influence upon Jackson, who claimed to hear Maneri's voice in his heart (231–243). Jackson emphasized listening-receiving over preaching-giving; he experienced renewed conversion toward God and realized “synchronized spiritualities” (247), noting: “As I look towards God I do so as a Christian, a Catholic priest, and a Jesuit. When I look towards Him through the heart and mind of Maneri, I feel very comfortable. I do not experience any discordant note within my being” (245). Jackson developed a 10-day immersion among Muslims for Catholic seminarians (255–259). In his Conclusion, Edwin highlights strengths of each Jesuit, while gently criticizing Courtois for latent Christian paternalism, Troll for avoiding discussion of caste, and Jackson for ignoring politics.

This book needed better copyediting. See, for example, “Pprimacy” (180). Key dates are largely missing. Substantive questions remain: Is Indian dialogue strictly the purview of “the *‘ulumā* and the missionaries”? What role do lay, indigenous-Indian Christians play? Were Courtois, Troll, and Jackson actively reading earlier pioneers such as Lavigerie, Foucauld, Massignon? How have Christian-Hindu and Muslim-Hindu relations affected Indian Christian-Muslim relations? Such questions notwithstanding, Edwin portrays three necessary-and-complementary approaches in Christian-Muslim relations. Courtois heals painful history and seeks creative theological openings; Troll secures difference-in-freedom and proposes common citizen-projects; Jackson discovers God through interior dialogue. Each shared results via technical research and popular Church organs: Courtois published *Notes on Islam*, Troll published *Salaam*, Jackson instituted immersion experiences. Edwin corrects the bias of equating Muslim-Christian relations with Arab(ic) contexts, introducing Western readers to the rich Indian-Muslim-Christian intellectual/dialogical tradition. He also expands the data on pre-Vatican-II theological pioneers. Little was previously written in English about Louis Massignon's (1883–1962) contemporary Courtois although their positions overlap significantly. Edwin admirably satisfies the goals of his teacher, Jackson, who hoped “to write something useful for others” and “to reach out to Muslims and do something for them” (247). *A New Spirit* is essential for those interested in Catholic-Muslim relations.

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