Gerard O'Connell and Jacques Dupuis

Do Not Stifle the Spirit: Conversations with Jacques Dupuis. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017. Pp. 301. Pb, \$30.

Jacques Dupuis, S.J. (1923–2004) was a Belgian Jesuit who followed a long line of distinguished members of the Society of Jesus working in the Indian mission. After his ordination in India in 1954, having entered the novitiate aged eighteen, Dupuis began a long immersion in South Asian religions and Catholic theology of religions. He spent a brief spell in Rome, completing his doctorate before returning to India. In 1971 he became theological adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. From Delhi, at the Jesuit house, he edited the important Indian Jesuit journal, *Vidyajyoti*, for seven years. Along with Josef Neuner, S.J., he also produced *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* which was continually updated. Dupuis never stopped writing. His orientation in theology of religions was not unlike the mid-period Karl Rahner, steeped in Thomistic theology, yet deeply open to the world, seeking this openness through a traditional grounding in the Catholic faith. Some radical young Indian theologians privately viewed him as the best and last of the colonial theological enterprise, still working with Western categories and not fundamentally shifting his methodology in relation to the Indian context. Dupuis saw dangers in that path, but knowing his own strengths and limitations, continued to pursue his own way that fundamentally developed Rahner's anonymous Christian to its orthodox limits—that at least was his perception. In 1984 he was transferred to Rome and taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He also became consultor to the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. His most important publication that advanced the discipline of theology of religions was *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997). A year later, his Jesuit superiors were informed that an inquiry was being undertaken by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) regarding the orthodoxy of the book. The rest is history, and a very sad one at that. Dupuis was given leave from teaching and underwent severe mental stress through the process. A man who had the highest regard for Catholic orthodox doctrine was now being investigated (though never charged) by its doctrinal authority as failing in it. In 2002, when asked how he taught Christ would judge his work, Dupuis replied: "I can only hope that his evaluation of it will be more positive than has been that of some censors and, alas, of the Church's central doctrinal authority" (xviii).

I give this brief history as one of the chief merits of O'Connell's book, in that it contains, for the first time, Dupuis's reflections about his entire life and ministry. Chapter One, which covers this early period, is fascinating and full of rich

detail. Dupuis is never “personal,” if that means intimate and vulnerable regarding relationships and the people he knew. He was not that kind of person. His intellectual passions and concerns shine through. His account is hugely informative about his life and influences and his recall of detail is astounding. We do not find any significant new revelations regarding the trial that have not already been well documented in Bill Burrow’s *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012) and the lengthy chapter in Gerald O’Collins, S.J., *On the Left Bank of the Tiber* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2013). O’Collins had a particularly privileged role as Dupuis’s chosen advocate in the trial. But we have not had Dupuis talking about the process in this way. The two chapters covering this period and its aftermath entirely justify the book. These three chapters of the interview took place between 2002 until his death in 2014. On the evening of December 27, after Dupuis had read the entire manuscript and made corrections and comments and even chosen the title, he fell over in the refectory at the Gregorian. He hit his head against a wooden table. He was rushed to hospital but died of a brain haemorrhage the next day. The plan had been to publish three other pieces alongside the existing chapters, but by 2017 they had already seen the light of day, so we only have one piece exploring Dupuis’s own theological reflections on the field forming the final chapter.

There is one minor shortcoming of the book. I should first declare my own connection to the narrative. I knew Jacques over many years and greatly admired his work. In early 1998 I wrote a lengthy review of his book. I knew nothing about the CDF investigation. When I arrived in Rome in spring of 1999 to teach for a semester at the Gregorian I was shocked. Jacques was a shadow of his old self because of the strain of the investigation. He was also very upset at my review. As it so happens, I had questioned the book on four of the themes that the CDF had focused on. His book was theologically problematic, but in a way that any stimulating, ground-breaking work in the field might be. Herein lies the shortcoming: O’Connell never really pushes Dupuis in the interviews on key theological questions raised by his work. There are two sides to the Dupuis story: there is the personal side, which is tragic. He was broken by the investigation. The other side is about the development of theology of religions as a field raised by the CDF. Putting aside the process of the investigation, one also needs to ask whether the interventions by the CDF in this field were helpful. There were many interventions. I believe that history will look back and judge “yes,” but only if the history is detached from the personal narratives which understandably make any “yes” difficult to utter. O’Collins’s (rather than O’Connell’s) narrative is more helpful in this regard. It should be remembered that publicly the CDF never formally condemned the book and concluded that there were “ambiguities.” The theology of religions, Dupuis’s passion and love,

might have been better served had the interviews been conducted by someone who was not quite as sympathetic and supportive as O'Connell. However, it is possible that we would have no book if that was the case and that would be regrettable.

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