

Religion—A Special Section

Our third annual religion issue could not have come at a better time. There are scads of good books this fall on religious subjects or with important religious themes in them, such as the autobiography of former disco star Gloria Gaynor and Nigel Pennick's history of an emblem, *The Celtic Cross*. In fact, 17 more nonfiction titles are reviewed this year than were reviewed in the 1996 religion issue. They range from controversy (Bruce Bawer's *Stealing Jesus*) to history (Richard P. McBrien's *Lives of the Popes*) to practical wisdom (see Donna Seaman's feature review of four books on Eastern spiritual teachings) to missionary memoirs (Martin Kawano's *The Cloud and the Light*), and they embrace all the world's major faiths. —Ray Olson

Barlow, Connie. *Green Space, Green Time: The Way of Science*. Oct. 1997. 316p. index. illus. Springer-Verlag/Copernicus, \$25 (0-387-94794-9). DDC: 291.1.

Religion and science are two different methods by which we can come to understand ourselves, the universe, and how we all fit into the scheme of things. Barlow and many of her colleagues in the physical and life sciences believe that to solve the complex ecological problems our planet faces today, we must reinvigorate our idea of the history of life on earth with the myth, metaphor, and meaning of religious experience. This is what biologist Edmund O. Wilson has called the "evolutionary epic"—a grand narrative of biodiversity that not only tells us of the life and death of species in primordial seas but instills in us a sense of our place in this cosmic saga. Barlow wisely refrains from setting out these concepts in either a stuffy essay or a touchy-feely Gaia fest. Instead, she skillfully re-creates her conversations with the scientists in the forefront of this movement. This is cutting-edge science on the broadest scale. —George Eberhart

Buhner, Stephen Harrod. *One Spirit Many Peoples: A Manifesto for Earth Spirituality*. Oct. 1997. 288p. index. Roberts Rinehart, \$24.95 (1-57098-120-5). DDC: 299.7.

Buhner's book is bound—indeed, intended—to stir up controversy. He wades deep into the intensifying dispute over study and practice of Native American rituals and spiritual traditions by non-Natives. Some partisans have urged bookstores and libraries to banish offending books, some have published blacklists of not-Native-enough authors, and then, to complicate matters, some of the most vocal of such would-be censors have themselves been placed on new blacklists. Buhner's prose is occasionally strained as he strives to express the intensity of the experiences that led him to seek to identify himself spiritually as a child of North America, an identity that

for him must include respectfully using Native American rites and symbols. He doesn't, however, argue merely from his own case. In the book's unquestionably most controversial pages, he constructs parallels between Hitler's approach to racial purity and that of Native American activists. This is neither an easy nor a pleasant book—Buhner has himself been blacklisted, and his anger shows—but it is definitely compelling and provocative. —Patricia Monaghan

The Complete Jesus. Ed. by Ricky Alan Mayotte. Oct. 1997. 289p. Steerforth, \$25 (1-883642-45-0). DDC: 232.9.

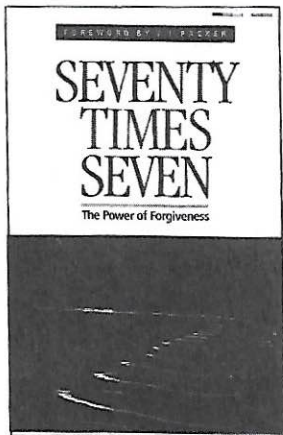
Compiler Mayotte's collection of Jesus' sayings is unique in that it has extracted from every known Christian source, Gnostic as well as canonical. Unfortunately, Mayotte has overlooked sacred works of other traditions, such as the Koran. Nevertheless, his achievement must be reckoned an important resource for students, in and out of school, of Jesus' philosophy and theology, and that regardless of the apocryphal status of some of these sayings. Mayotte presents the sayings in formal or topical chapters ("Commandments," "Parables," "Jesus Laughing," "Apocalyptic and Revelation," etc.), and the appendixes serve as concordances of the sayings' origins in the Gospels and other texts. A handy addition to any religion collection. —Jeff Ahrens

Craig, Mary. *Kundun: A Biography of the Family of the Dalai Lama*. Oct. 1997. 416p. illus. Counterpoint; dist. by Publishers Group West, \$26 (1-887178-64-3). DDC: 294.3.

Kundun means presence, as in the presence of the Buddha, and is used in reference to the Dalai Lama. It is also the title of a new film by Martin Scorsese, one of several movies about Tibet due out this season. Readers seeking background information will treasure Craig's richly descriptive and psychologically astute group portrait of Tibet's displaced first family, who lived ordinary peasant lives until it was revealed that the toddler Lhamo Dhondup—an unusually advanced, stubborn, independent, and mischievous little boy—was the fourteenth incarnation of the Dalai Lama. As Craig traces the family's exultant and bewildering journey from obscurity to royalty, she details every facet of Tibetan life, from the texture and timbre of daily existence to the political turmoil, violence, and exile of Kundun and his family precipitated by the Chinese invasion. The young Dalai Lama is at the heart of her narrative, but Craig focuses most on the much lesser-known stories of his saintly mother (three of her sons have been recognized as incarnations); his father, who was overwhelmed by their sudden wealth and fame, and most likely murdered; and Kundun's sisters and brothers, who coped with the demanding and tragic circumstances of their lives in radically different and often surprising ways. Craig's revelation of the very human side of this complex spiritual and political saga deepens our understanding of Tibet's history and current tragedy, and makes us even more in awe of the Dalai Lama's wisdom and leadership. —Donna Seaman

YAC: Good supplementary material for the study of Tibet's history and religion. LM.

★ **Arnold, Johann Christoph.** *Seventy Times Seven: The Power of Forgiveness*. Nov. 1997. 170p. illus. Plough, paper, \$13 (0-87486-092-X). DDC: 234.



When Peter asked whether forgiving one wrongdoing seven times was enough, Jesus said, "Not seven times, but seventy times seven." Such is the importance of forgiveness, which Arnold maintains is essential to everyday Christianity. As a senior elder of the Christian commune the Bruderhof, he knows whereof he speaks. The stories he relays of deeply wronged men and women—Holocaust survivors; parents of murdered children; victims of parental abuse, racial bigotry, and terrorism—who have forgiven those responsible for their pain demonstrate, so powerfully that tears often impede reading, that forgiving permits one to enjoy a fuller life thereafter. Arnold also adduces ordinary married and family life as commonplace arenas in which forgiveness can invoke a transforming and sustaining grace, and he discusses the cruciality of forgiveness in church discipline. In a most impressive book, many may be most impressed by two details: the suggestion that true forgiveness is as much a matter of asking forgiveness as of forgiving others, and the exception-taking response that Arnold

appends, which is by his friend Mumia Abu-Jamal, the African American writer confined on Pennsylvania's death row, many say unjustly. —Ray Olson