

EDITORIAL

The scholarly studies and genuine search in the religious scriptures, traditions and the present practices to make the religions of the West and the East meet were for sometime centred around Comparative Study of Religions. At a later period the concern was for 'encounter' and 'dialogue.' Now we hear scholars and theologians speaking about developing a theology which would take into consideration the reality of the Plurality of Religions. In India this movement began with the effort of the theologians to develop an incultured or Indian Christian theology. The limitation in this attempt was immediately felt, that it would be a theology exclusively for Christians who are trying to accommodate their faith in the context of the plurality of religions. This would naturally lead one to the question whether there is any possibility of developing a theology, either valid for all existing religions equally or one which will take into consideration all existing-religions from the point of view of one particular religion. The fact is that the nascent discipline, The Theology of Religions, has not yet clearly defined to itself the scope of its investigation.

All these movements mentioned above are still alive in India. Recently Bishop Jonas Thaliath Memorial Foundation (JTMF) at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram organized a seminar on the theme: Towards an Indigenous Theology on Sacrifice. The foundation was established to honour and to perpetuate the memory of the late Bishop Jonas Thaliath who was one of the leading pioneers and the mastermind behind Dharmaram College, which, sponsor the Centre for the Study of World Religions and *Journal of Dharma*. JTMF has been constituted for the purpose of promoting research in theological reflections in the Indian context. In keeping with this goal, the seminar took up a single issue, namely, sacrifice for its study and reflection. First two articles respectively by Louis Malieckal and Jose Thachil are papers presented in the seminar. Malieckal's article "develops in parallel fashion two basic concepts of two major world religious traditions of the world, the Hindu thought in its Vedic source and Christianity at the crucial moment when it was emerging out of its Palastinian context and entering into a serious dialogue with the mystical tradition of Plotinus..." The second article also deals with sacrifice, but its central concern is to show, besides religion, "sacrifice is the deepest and the most common expression of man's relation to the Infinite."

The thirteenth annual meeting of the Indian Theological Association held at St. Paul's Seminary, Trichy, at the end of December 1989, took the theme of religious pluralism for a second time for its deeper study. V.F. Vineeth's paper, "Dialogue and Theology of Religious Pluralism," is one of the four papers presented in the seminar. Pluralism is ultimately acceptance of the other – individual, people, nation in their otherness. The openness to receive the other in his/her specificity and originality, diversity and pluralism is an imperative arising from Christ's commandment of love. Basically a Christian has to accept pluralism within his own communion of faith before he could accept religious pluralism at large. Today the Church in Asian and African countries faces the same problem which Paul VI raised at Kampala, Uganda on July 31, 1969. "Must the Church be European, *Latin, Oriental* or should it be African"? Pope answers his question in the affirmative and states that pluralism within the Church is legitimate and even desirable. V.F. Vineeth's article envisages a further step in which non-Christian religions have also their own legitimacy.

The article of Debra J. Jensen and David Tuesday Adamo deal with soteriological dialogue of Christianity with Hinduism and Pure Land Sect Buddhism. These articles by their nature, as the first two articles on sacrifice, come in the field of the Comparative Study of Religion. Mookenthottam's article, however, gives a historical survey of the second phase, namely, the attempt at developing an Indian Christian Theology. The article reveals the awareness, as well as the willingness of the Christian theologians to go beyond the confines of Christianity to the world of plurality of religions.

Theology of religions is only a toddler, which needs much more care and protection from the theologians and the scholars in the religious studies. But when one finds ways and means and intellectual support to make oneself at home in a religiously plural world, one would understand better his world and his life as a precious gift from God.

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