EDITORIAL

Spirituality is basic to every religion.   Religious discourses and literature about spirituality invariably take up the issue of the contrast between the way of life and death, between the way of the spirit and that of the world, between the narrow and the broad way, between light and darkness. The great divide between the humanists and the theists is based on how each of them belongs to the one or the other of this contrasting reality.   For each camp the other is holding, in Sartrean terms "a bad faith," a faith characterized by intellectual dishonesty, the rejection of thoughts from consciousness, and the refusal to face disagreeable facts. For each the other is "the bad conscience of their age," which calls for a self examination from both sides.   "In bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth."[1] Neither the religious, nor the secular would consciously choose to stay in 'bad faith,' whatever it may cost them. The antagonism between them now has reached a feverish pitch that the one heaps ridicule on the other.   Nietzsche holds up to ridicule the accepted ideals of the Judeo-Christian religion and Greek rationalism, discribing them as reversals of the true values.

There are opposing claims among the religionists themselves concerning truth and values.   From a sociological point of view there is a plurality of religions in our contemporary living with their own beliefs, values and code of conduct. The questions such as how far are they true, are they all equally and simultaneously true are very seldom raised consciously as fruitful themes in the comparative study of religions.   We have learned to accept the co-existence of the plurality of religions with their own codes of conduct, way of life to reach the ultimate spiritual goal, which alone justifies their existence.   This is to admit that each religion, contemporary or ancient, advances a made of spirituality, self-sufficient in its own estimation.

Besides the plurality of religions in the way of the spirit, there are innumerable sub-divisions and schools within each religious tradition to discipline the body and guide the soul in the path of perfection to achieve union with or atleast proximity to the divine. This may be based on the lives of some charismatic saints who were able to inspire and activate a good number of their followers.   Thus we have in Hinduism the spiritualities of the Vaishnavaites, the Saivaites and the Saktas under their own respective

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1.   Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956).

gurus. Similarly we have Sufi mysticism in Islam, and the Franciscan, Saletian, Ignation, Theresian and so on in the Catholic Christian tradition. Periodization of spirituality is also not uncommon. On the basis of nations, language and culture also spiritualities are distinguished.

This is an age when we give importance to the "context" in which a message or religious belief is to be lived. Contexts are ever changing, as life evolves ever dynamically. Hence there is no question of making an overall and comprehensive study of all forms, or even all major forms of spirituality. The articles in the present number of the **Journal of Dharma** highlights certain borderline issues in the area of spirituality.

The hard core of spirituality is the concretization of a divine ideal at a time and a place in the everyday life of a believer. In Christian theology it is a reenactment of the Incarnation of the Word of God, which took place in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and which being extended to every Christian through the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of Christ. In Hinduism also there is the belief in the manifestation of the divine in concrete forms, not of course, in a unique, once and for all, human form. If incarnation offers a model for man to pattern his spirituality, it could become a vital issue for interreligious study of spiritualities. The opening article of this number analyzes some aspects of this issue.

This leads to the question of a broader issue, namely the mutual influence and reciprocal communication of spiritualities. A priliminary acquaintance with the prestine sources of religious belief, and the consequent style of spiritual discipline ensuing therefrom cannot in any way enrich an outsider of that faith, if it has not been translated into the idom and the sensitivity of the participant in the dialogue. It is in this context of the need for intercontinental and intercultural communication that religious thinkers began to speak of inculturation, indigenization and contextualization. Presupposing or setting a side the theoretical framework of this process, an attempt is being made in the first article to shed some light on the possibility of evolving an indigenous Christian theology and spirituality for a Christian in India. I shall add a few more theoretical reflections on the sharing of spiritualities.

Can spiritualities be effectively communicated, or interpersonally shared? This question has certain presuppositions, namely that there is an unmistakable truth or message to be shared and that there exists a willingness from the part of one who shares, to do it in such way

that the hearer could understand and accept it against his own religio-cultural background. Most of the modern comparative study of spiritualities, we must admit, are mere declarations of their own present state of affairs rather than real communication. Our studies in spiritualities should lead us to the covetous end of real communication.

In the theological discussions the term indigenization is used in the sense of announcing a message or truth in terms of an existing traditional culture. Contextualization,[2] while not ignoring this, takes into account the process of secularism, technology and the struggle for human justice found in the contemporary developing . societies. Contextualizing the faith has been actually a part of all missionary religions. This makes us alert to the fact that we are in the company of the saints of the past when we turn to the future and call for contextualization. The ways one shared the message or truth, which one believed to have had universal validity, have varied. This is under-standable and inevitable because of the rapid development in humanistic sciences and philosophy. This aspect of communication can be designated as its contextuality. A sympathetic student of inter-religious spirituality must be ever conscious of the danger of making this contextuality itself into a contextualism, which is an error of absolutizing the tools of contextual analysis. It implies that only those in a specific context can speak about it meaningfully. This is a mistaken concept. The idea of 'context' is itself getting blured. We cannot easily answer the question, how big is the context geographically, politically, culturally, and how long does it last.

One has to be aware that one's faith and spirituality itself is under the limitation of contextuality. But this should not lead one to the other extreme position of denying that the faith or the spirituality one possesses is anything different from or more than the context from which it derives. An identification of .contextuality as the only tool for apprehending and sharing religious faith to the extent of denying all intercontextual and transcontextual possibilities would destroy all meaning of spirituality over and above the way of the world.

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2. For some of the ideas expressed here I am indebted to: Max L. Stackhouse, "Contextualization, Contextuality, and contextualism," in *One Faith, Many Cultures*, Ray O. Costa (ed.), (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988,) pp. 1–13.