

## EDITORIAL

Ever since the beginning of human history man in his search for the satisfaction of his needs has gone beyond the immediate problems and sought the ultimate meaning of life, the unsoundable mystery of his existence, trying to bridge the gulf between being and truth, existence and realization. Consciously or unconsciously, he wanted to relate his timely existence to something that is unconditional. This search for the Unconditional was in fact the essence of his religion. In defining the unconditional, however, man differed considerably. The Unconditional was considered by some as the **pleroma** of all existence whereas others thought it as absolute **sunyata** or void. Thus the religious man, though ever in search for reality, light and immortality, was nevertheless not the same everywhere. The very approach to reality characterized the angle of his vision and changed his grasp of it. Since reality itself is incomprehensible, every authentic approach, however defective it be, helps only unveil certain new aspects of it. Religions are, therefore, complementary and not contradictory. Dialogue is essential for them, for their own mutual growth and maturity.

Since the here-and-now always in some way implies the beyond, the practical the ideal, the finite the infinite, man in search of immutable Truth always manifests a tendency towards the Transtemporal. Even the primitive cave-man found himself as a transtemporal animal as he worshipped his fetish objects to which he attached Truth and Reality. In the course of time man sought the realization of his transtemporal dimension through **mukti** (liberation), **soteria** (salvation) **Tao** (the Way) and **nirvana** (cessation of all becoming). The quest for the Transtemporal is the expression of man's inner desire for the unity of Being and Truth, of Reality and Consciousness.

This transtemporal dimension, however, is realized in the temporal. Religion is the combination and concretization of the temporal and the transtemporal. The Transtemporal stands for and moves towards unity and synthesis of all Truth whereas the temporal works out the differences. Religions in this world, fragmentarily realized as they are, march along the golden path of such a concordant discord where agreements are warmly welcomed and disagreements certainly respected.

It is with this spirit and enthusiasm that Dharmaram College presents its first number of JOURNAL OF DHARMA, the realization of a plan it had from the very beginning of its foundation

in 1957. These years of preparation and waiting have been very useful in clarifying the scope and role of the review and in securing a competent body of scholars for realizing its long range objectives.

It is expected that **Journal of Dharma** will fill the gap of a felt need in the contemporary society of mankind. Today a good number of our fellowmen find religious traditions disillusioning and irrelevant to their life and context. Moreover, there is a growing consciousness that we are living under a common threat of physical, moral and even spiritual cataclysm. In this situation world religions that deal with the deepest concern of man have a great responsibility to present a justification for the hope they preach to humanity. Perhaps the religions of the world are fast moving to a crucial moment in their convergent history, when their differences will take only the second place in the dominant awareness of their common tasks. Besides, in a world of despair we have a few signs of hope that encourage religions in their common endeavour. In spite of the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the developed and the underdeveloped, there is also an increasing realization that no nation, group or religion, can make it alone. Dialogue is a necessity for the modern man and interreligious dialogue touches people in their deepest core.

In this common situation of recognized need for dialogue among world religions, **Journal of Dharma** undertakes the task of reflecting on **dharma**, the religious condition of man, in an interreligious and international perspective. We have on our boards of Editors and Consultants and among contributors eminent theologians, philosophers and scholars belonging to different faiths and traditions, and are blessed with the promise of active co-operation from well known institutions in the field: the Dept. of Philosophy of the Banaras Hindu University, India; the Dept. of Asian Studies and Non Western Civilization, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, U.S.A.; Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Lancaster, England and Sri Aurobindo Research Academy, Pondicherry.

#### Shared Exploration of Truth

The untold dimensions of Truth have always been explored anew by each religion. This has brought growth and maturity to it. But today, due to the tremendous progress in conveyance and communications, the world has become a large village where the

encounter of the men of other faiths has become an everyday phenomenon. The great merger of men of different faiths into a single community of the world-village has created its own problems as well. Anyone who is dedicated to solve these problems has to take into consideration the religious outlook of his neighbour. Therefore, religions of today are endeavouring an interfaith dialogue to examine in depth the basic religious problems of man from the perspectives, methods and approaches of their different traditions. Here the principal effort is not to discover the common denominator of agreement and to cut an irenic line of approach between different religions. Rather, greater concern should be shown in bringing out and acknowledging the unique contributions of each tradition concerning problems and issues that affect all men. Hence **Journal of Dharma** proposes as its main scope the shared exploration of truth in ways that are open to the religions of our time, and hopes to encourage serious research in matters of interreligious interest and importance as well as serving as a forum of exchange of ideas and experiences regarding approaches and methods to the same issues.

#### Intercultural Understanding

As the transtemporal realized in the temporal, religion is always time-bound and culture-bound. Intercultural understanding becomes a necessity of man, especially of a man interested in religious dialogue. Religion is one of the deepest dimensions of culture, and a person cannot enter into a truly religious dialogue without an inner commitment to his own faith, religious or otherwise, and to its cultural expressions. Dialogue, though ever anxious to keep what is authentic in every culture, will not leave the same completely unaffected, but will tend to clarify its obscurities, deepen its convictions and open out new possibilities for the future. Hence **Journal of Dharma** aims to foster intercultural understanding from an inner realization of religions and its appropriate expression, and to emphasize the need for mutual appreciation and dialogue between different religious traditions and faiths.

#### Toward a Living Theology

To attain the full scope of this interreligious dialogue, there must be an inner dialogue in each religion, by which it will with a constant reference to its own inner logic, examine each religious

problem anew in the everchanging actual situations, using also all the help provided by other religious traditions. A true interpreter of religion has to place the accent on applying his faith to the changing situations of history and to the actual needs of the people. Hence a living theology should not rest satisfied with commenting upon the formulations and definitions of the past, but must courageously face in the light of faith the new situations and problems that arise in the living community of today. Fidelity to the past history demands at the same time attention to the present and concern for the future. Hence **Journal of Dharma** hopes to treat the problem of man's ultimate concern from a living experience of the Spirit active in the world and world religions. We will welcome theological articles dealing with the issues within each particular religious tradition. Special studies referring to particular Scriptures and development of fundamental religious concepts in their context must have a special place in this perspective.

Today we are living in a world of secularism and communism, two great forces that are often described as anti-religious, because of their stress on the temporal over against the transtemporal, or as "quasi-religions," because they work as the substitutes for religion. But it is our firm belief that the quest for the transtemporal is present in these movements as well, perhaps in disguise as in the form of some values, such as love for the equality of all mankind or respect for human freedom etc. Hence in this world of emerging "secular cities" and "liberation theologies", the religions of our day have to face a double challenge: to bring the Sacred to the secular, to respond to the call for Justice anywhere in the world, nationally or internationally. Therefore, **Journal of Dharma** readily welcomes theological movements meant to sharpen the sense of national and international justice and co-operation. Religion, which often unwittingly becomes subservient to vested interests and present day masters, is also the real source of inspiration and sustained support for prophetic men who want to reform society and remedy injustices. So also it is the great ambition of this **Journal of Dharma** to disseminate the seeds of the Sacred in every bit of our secular existence and to re-integrate the entire material Universe in the Spirit of Truth and Holiness.

#### The Religion of Tomorrow

The religious consciousness of man is always being reformed by his awareness of Truth. Since Truth is inexhaustible, this

creative transformation of human consciousness is ever growing. Religions of tomorrow depend heavily on this new awareness of Truth they are about to acquire. The synthesis of Being and Truth, the secular and the Sacred, the temporal and the Trans-temporal, for which man strove from the very beginning, is still at work, but now in more cosmic a dimension. At this confluence of the religious consciousness of mankind, **Journal of Dharma** finally wants to help shape the religious outlook of men and women of tomorrow in order that all may live a more authentic, open and dialogal religion, seeking and realizing Truth in all its manifestations.

#### About this Issue

The first issue of the **Journal of Dharma** is devoted principally to an examination of the concept of interreligious dialogue, one of the principal aims of this journal. This topic is approached from different but complementary points of view. Dr. J.B. Chethimattam deals with the concept of dialogue in an introductory article from the phenomenological point of view. Though dialogue is urged on us today by the present sociological situation, it marks a basic dimension of man himself. Theologically, interreligious dialogue is not a luxury nor a compromise, but demanded by the ineffable character of the divine Word communicated to man in limited and dated human language, and required by the activity of the Logos in all religions and especially in the humanity of Jesus Christ, in whom everything authentically human has been accepted by God into the one economy of human salvation.

Prof. N.K. Devaraja of the Banaras Hindu University deals with the problem of the meeting of religions from a practical angle and finds certain serious difficulties arising out of a rigid understanding of the teaching of the religious Scriptures, which are considered infallible and the behavioural patterns based on them. These difficulties may be solved only if an attempt is made to see the historical, culture-relative and complementary character of different Scriptures, to learn and admire the ideal religious personages belonging to different traditions, and to appreciate the basic religious values common to all men.

Prof. P.B. Vidyarthi of the Ranchi University discusses the same problem from the view point of human civilization. For an impartial observer studying human history, various religions

have down the centuries interacted among themselves and freely borrowed or adapted elements from each other. In the light of this study he argues that the reasonable relationship between religions is not an uncompromising antagonism, nor an isolation of one's own faith as the ultimate truth and final fulfilment of all other religions, but a sharing of goals. Only the absence of a truly religious outlook divides one religion from another.

Prof. John Macquarrie of Oxford University discusses the common task of all religions in this era of technology and secularism. Technology, he says, as it is prone to acquisitiveness and aggressiveness, cannot claim a better quality of life, because quality of life does not depend on material productivity and consumption, but spiritual creativity. However, even before religions have realized the ideal of universal brotherhood for which they stand, technology and secularism have brought about a semblance of unity of mankind, at least by way of predisposing the contemporary mind against religion. The steady drift of present day humanity into secularism is a real danger against which religions have to make concerted effort to open and commend to contemporary mankind the idea of the holy.

Prof. Masson of the Gregorian University, Rome, on the other hand, approached the problem of religious dialogue as a committed Christian. According to him, dialogue is only a form of Christian existence, which is authentic human existence unto others, with others, opening and offering oneself generously to others. Dialogue is a symbiosis, life-assimilation in the concrete; this also means praying with others. He substantiates this point with a wealth of material drawn from his wide experience about the life of the Church today.

As a conclusion to this whole discussion, Prof. Thomas Berry of Fordham University outlines a programme of concrete action for dialogue. He remarks that exterior convergence in travel and communication has not led to religious or cultural enrichment. Even the discovery of ancient religious texts rich in meaning has not led to a comprehensive humanistic interpretation. What is needed is true humanistic insight and imagination, visionary perceptions, artistic awareness and cultural creativity, a recovery through hermeneutics of an earlier, childlike, interior experience of a harmonious and luminous Universe. Here linguistic studies and hermeneutics must interpret religious traditions to each other, so that each tradition will see its identity in the anthropological perspective of the common religious history of humanity. In this light religious symbolism, revelation and the religious tradition as a whole will assume new meaning.

To conclude this general discussion on the meeting of religions (**dharmā**), we are glad to present in the survey section three special studies on the concept of **dharmā**: Dr. T.M. Manickam in his paper on "Manu's Vision of Hindu Dharma" analyses the concept of **dharmā** as presented in the **Manusmṛti**. Essentially and radically, **dharmā** is the law of Being in any being. But in its individual and social realization, **dharmā** becomes the moral ideal of man, the correct rule of his conduct, his sense of duty etc. Dharma is thus considered as a positive virtue and offers man liberation and spiritual bliss. Dr. Manickam also presents a thematic reconstruction of the entire **Manusmṛti** from the point of view of **dharmā**.

Prof. Kuppaswami, on the other hand, reexamines the concept of dharma from a contemporary standpoint, traces it back to the vedic **ṛta** and delineates the path of its evolution through changing history as custom, ritual, law and conscience. He maintains that the concept of **dharmā**, though it demands ordering life according to certain values, is nevertheless subject to change and adaptation.

Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao of Bangalore University presents the concept of Tibetan CHOs as a unique **dharmā** arising from the combination of **Bon** and Buddhism. **Bon**, the native religion of Tibet, was originally conceived in the natural context of snow-clad mountains. Under the influence of Buddhism, it developed into Chos, a religion of Tantric, mystic and cultic traditions.

These studies, we sincerely hope, will contribute added depth and dimension to contemporary interreligious dialogue.

A final section consisting of reviews of recent books and a brief chronicle of the activities of our Centre for the Study of World Religions will conclude this issue.

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