

EDITORIAL . . .

Every religion worth its name emerging from a foundational experience of man embodies a certain message which implies some ultimate concern for man. The foundational character of such an experience, be it the mystic intuition of a R̥ṣi from a cave of the Himalayas on the Reality of the Absolute, or the encounter of Moses with Yahweh on Mount Sinai, or the confrontation of Sri Buddha with *duhkha* (suffering) in the "Valley of Tears", or rather, the transformation of Jesus on Mount Tabor, or even the Pentecostal experience of his disciples in the Cinacle, or else the flash light that felled Saul from the horse-back on the road to Damascus, or the yogic vision of Arjuna about the Cosmic Form of Sri Krishna in the *Dharma-kshētra* of *Kuru-kshētra*, all of them entail the urgency of a mission and a transmission : mission, because, the experience enshrines a message to be passed on to others who did not have the opportunity to have a taste of the pristine experience; transmission, because the message requires an appropriate process of transference for effective communication.

To have a message to pass on is the mission of every religion born out of the womb of human experience, and the process of its communication is the transmission. The former is the existential exigency of any religion which does not want to deny its own experiential sources and the validity thereof, while the latter is the psychological drive which moves the *élan vital* of religious experience to flow spontaneously into the dry lands of one's own existence in view of watering and nourishing it that it may change itself into green pastures where meaningfulness may blossom on the "tree of life".

Each religion, insofar as it is an answer to one or the other of the burning problems of human life, has a duty to proclaim its claims and a right to express its experience to people who are in search for answers to their existential problems. Since the problems are many, as many as the people themselves, there might be many ways to solve the fundamental problems of life. Moreover, since the temperaments of people vary from culture to culture, no single articulation of an answer might turn out to be the panacea for all existential illnesses of all people. This is another clue towards the understanding of the factuality of pluralism in religious experience as well as in the mission

and transmission thereof. For the same reason nobody can claim monopoly of mission and transmission since nobody has an exclusive right over determining the laws of cultural change on the face of this planet, the rules of which are perhaps from outside the planet itself. The only meaningful prayer one can make here is: "may truth come from any corner of this universe".

Mission takes the form of a commission when it is a duty placed on somebody by somebody else superior to him. This takes, then, the form of a task and thence obtains for itself an ought-dimension not only because of the power and urgency of the message itself, but also because of the superiority of the "Commissioner" himself. This places an imperative both on the part of the addressor and the addressee: on the former an imperative to proclaim and on the latter the imperative to listen for his own safety sake, if safety of life is a value he prefers to all others that endanger his survival, not withstanding his right to choose what he likes. Freedom of conscience is the key to the sanctuaries of religions. Nobody has a right to break open the windows of the inner sanctuary of another's ultimate concerns, religious or no-religious. This is the boundary-line of the mission which no "Commissioner" can transgress however powerful he might be, except the One who has the sole right to open all sanctuaries without anybody's previous permission. Conversion to the better and fuller expression of truth is a matter of personal choice depending on a higher perception and realization of that One Truth by the individual himself and it cannot be achieved humanly by any form of coercion, force or threat.

Further, the transmission of a message has to take into account the psychology of cultures. Since culture forms the fabric of the social life of people it also contributes to the identity of the ethos of the people which comprises the values of religious and moral practices transmitted from time immemorial. This patrimony of the ethos of the people has its own psychological forces at work resisting external interventions and reserving for itself the right of choosing the time appropriate for accepting and assimilating any other extraneous message that is addressed to it by somebody belonging to another culture. The urgency for preserving the identity of one culture derives its right and force from the very existential law of self-preservation superseding everything else in the context of the primacy of life.

This seems to be the basic principle of the psychology of culture to be accepted and respected by any Missionary while he is on his expedition for transmission of the Message he is witnessing to, however superior that might be. The laws of cross-cultural fertilization takes place on the three phases of selection-elimination-assimilation process. Transmission of a message into a new cultural milieu has to accommodate itself to the dynamics of this process of human growth in cultural interaction. Mission, then, has to "recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral as well as the socio-cultural values found among people of all cultures". *Nostra Aetate*, 2).

Taking note of these fundamental dimensions of the process of growth of religions, *Journal of Dharma* devotes this issue for highlighting some of the problems and proposing a few solutions and possible alternatives to the requirements of Mission and Transmission of a religious message. Dr. Ouseparampil goes into the cave of the meditating R̥ṣi and conducts an interview with him about the "Vision, Mission and Transmission"—process of the intuitive experience of the R̥ṣi, a fascinating Commentary indeed! Dr. Pushparajan walks in close company with the great Master Jesus and testifies with his own deeper convictions about the Mission of Christ, what had been the real Commission of Christ concerning the Transmission of his Message, a rethinking into the very ideology and practice of Christian Mission as to what it ought to be according to the mind of Christ.

Prof. Lawrence Frizzell highlights some of the salient features of the same Commission of Christ as understood and interpreted by the Catholic Community of the Church of Christ following the guidelines of its latest General Council held in Vatican from 1962 to 1965, called the "Second Vatican Council-theology" on the Missions; he draws authentic inspiration for his interpretation of this theology from the Gospel of John the Evangelist, the longlived disciple of Jesus Christ, the one who witnessed the Missionary life-style of the early Christian Community more than any one else. Swami Vikrant, then, turns the spotlight of the history of the Mission and Transmission to the Indian scene. He is critical about the attitudes and the methods followed by the Western Missionaries who landed here under the patronage, power and protection of the colonial forces of the West since the sixteenth

century; he is also concerned with the ways and means to be taken for rectifying the pitfalls of the foreign Missionaries.

Dr. Linda Keller Brown goes for a facts-finding search into the Missionary expedition of Swami Vivekananda to the West in the awakening of the American Missionary Movement and she describes in a dialectical style how it turned out to be a cultural confrontation in which mutual isolationism precluded a real encounter between the Hindu and Christian traditions. A felt need in this confrontational context gave inspiration to me to articulate in more specific terms what I was thinking on Mission as an incarnational process of inculturation, in which the Message, the Word has to be *listened to*, no matter where it comes from or whither it goes, *understood* and *experienced*, a synthetic operation to correspond exactly to what the Upanishadic Seers were doing in their Mission and Transmission in this country, namely, *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* of the Message of Revelation. This will pave the way for a common pilgrimage while doing a common transmission of the Word which enlightens everybody that comes into this world and returns from this transitory station to the sanctuary of the Eternal.

George Koovackal offers us a Survey section in which he presents his research report on the Missionary Expansion of Islam in the sub-continent of India in a style that is lucid, non-technical and interesting. We hope our readers and fellow scholars will join us to continue the lines of reflections and researches on these and other allied issues also in the future.

Thomas Manikkam
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