

EDITORIAL

Journal of Dharma is completing next year – in 2000- twenty-five years of its service to world religions. All these years the Journal, true to its professed policies and proposed ideals, promoted and propagated inter-religious dialogue, universal brotherhood humanity and comparative study of religions; provided a forum for scholars from different traditions to share their views, insights and experience of religion and spirituality in relation to the other religious traditions of the world; helped seekers of truth to situate themselves in the multi-religious context of today and to appreciate the values and merits of other faiths; tried to seek and find God's revelation and presence, his power and grace in all religious traditions; encouraged the common endeavour of all religious persons to discover God's goodness manifested through different peoples in different times, in different scriptures and in the genuine religious traditions; pursued to encourage scholars to discuss and debate creatively the issues that vex humanity in its search for abiding peace and happiness; tried to tell seekers of perfection that truth, goodness and sanctity are not monopoly of one religion and that if the almighty and omniscient God in his inscrutable providence and unsurpassed love and mercy deigns to manifest himself in various ways, in different cultures, religious traditions and among different peoples, the insignificant, little and limited humans have no right to question him; endeavoured to exhort the pilgrims of faith that seeking God and his goodness also in the scriptures of other religions, traditions and spiritual paths and in the lives and teachings of great spiritual persons can be beneficial to their own spiritual growth; but at the same time insisted that all religions are not the same, and that the content of faith transmitted through scriptures, traditions and official teachings of each religion has to be different and the commitment to this faith is to be firm.

Therefore, when we are about to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Journal, we look back with satisfaction and with sense of fulfillment. We are immensely grateful to the associate editors, to the consultants, to the secretaries and other office assistants who helped us to publish this scholarly Journal all these years uninterruptedly. We look forward that this help and collaboration will also be continued in the future.

In 2000, as has already been mentioned earlier, Journal of Dharma is completing twenty-five years of service. We would like to make good use of this opportunity by organizing some meaningful and useful programmes and projects. The following programmes are planned and are being executed:

(i) **Essay Competition** for university students and students of faculties and institutes of philosophy and theology of India. The theme of the essay is "**Religion and National Integration**". The last date to submit the essay is 15 June 2000. The first, second and third prizes of this competition are Rs. 5000/--, 3000/-- and 1500/--respectively.

(ii) **Publication of Books:** We intend to publish four books on very relevant themes. They are: *Women and Worship: Perspectives from World Religions*, edited by Augustine Thottakara,cmi; *Interfaith Dialogue for a New Society*, edited by Antony Kalliath,cmi; *Studies in Little Traditions*, edited by Thomas Kadankavil,cmi; *Eco-Dynamics of Religions: Thoughts for the Third Millennium*, edited by Augustine Thottakara,cmi.

(iii) **International Seminar on Religion and Politics in Asia Today: An Appraisal in View of the Third Millennium.** The Seminar will be organized from the 30th June to 3rd July 2000. Scholars from other Asian countries will also take part in this Seminar. The Seminar papers will also be published as a book.

(iv) **Two Supplements to the Issues of Journal of Dharma in 2000.** (a) **Dharma Family of Bangalore:** will explain the objectives of different institutes of Dharmaram campus. (b) **Index of Authors and Subjects of the Twenty-five years of Journal of Dharma.**

This issue of the Journal is actually is an anthology. We selected a few relevant articles from the past years. We are also reproducing the editorial of the first issue of the Journal. This editorial spells out the need, relevance and scope of Journal of Dharma and its objectives. It is good to remind ourselves of these noble objectives so that we commit ourselves again to these goals again.

The first article is by Prof. John B. Chetimattam. He spells out, as the title suggests, philosophical and historical roots of inter-religious dialogue, and argues that man's essential nature is dialogical and that all religious traditions have to promote and propagate this basic nature of man in the community.

The second article is by Linda Keller Brown on "Mission, A Cultural confrontation: Swami Vivekananda and the American Missionary Movement". In the context of today's much publicized discussion of Christian mission in India and issue of conversion, the article has much

relevance. Bishop Nirmal Minz in his essay on tribal religion and culture discusses some of the problems of the tribals in India. He argues that the tribal culture should be protected from the onslaughts of modernity and modern methods of education. The article "Zen Clown Ikkyu: A Cross-Cultural Study of a Symbol of Disorder" compares the Zen clowns with American Indian clowns. He also sees parallels in life of Christ, where he criticises the hypocrisy of his hearers. Jacob Plamthodathil's article is titled "Soteriological Perspectives in Hindu Religion and Culture". He sees the issue in different perspectives, namely, 'Anthropocentric Perspective', 'Psychological Perspective', 'Ethical Perspective', 'Theological Perspective', 'Cosmological Perspective', 'Eschatological Perspective' and 'Liberational Perspective'.

The Editorial of the first issue of the Journal, 1975 Vol. I, No.1:

*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 DHARAMA*, 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 few signs of hope that encourage religions in their common endeavor, in spite of the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the developed and the undeveloped. 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 board 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 cooperation from well known institutions in this 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 tremendous progress in conveyance and communication, 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 neighbor. Therefore, religions of today are endeavoring 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 interests 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 dimension 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 ever-changing 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 couragesouly 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 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 cooperation. Religion, which often unwittingly becomes subservient to vested interests and presentday 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 Transtemporal, 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.*

With this inspiring editorial written by the first chief editor of Journal of Dharma Prof. Francis Vineeth Vadakethala and his associate Prof. John B. Chethimattam, I present this last issue of the second millennium.

Augustine Thottakara, cmi

Chief Editor