January 1989

News

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1023
The fourth phase, I submit, challenges
the fixed identity of both parties. The
feudation of the previous phases pro-
duces its effects. The fourth phase is a
genuine Dialogue among people who
happen to be Hindus and Christians. It is
the religious Dialogue among Hindus and
Christians.

The fourth phase starts a dialogue in
which neither a politically dominating
Hinduism nor an established and powerful
Christianity have the upper hand or offer
the frame in which the dialogue takes
place. Nor is the dialogue purely dia-
lectical or simply doctrinal. The dialogue
has gone deeper, on the one hand, and
more external, on the other. Deeper, for
we discuss personal issues and beliefs with
immense consequences for our lives.
More external, in that we do not coinvolve
large communities or speak from the
definite angle of a church or sampradaya.
Both sides seem to be confronted with a
similar technocratic civilization, even in the
remote corners of the country-side.

It would amount to take a superficial
stance and possibly to a betrayal of one's
deepest convictions were we to deal with
modern problems of technocracy, peace,
justice, hunger, or simply business, and
work, making abstraction of religious
beliefs or relegating them to the private
sphere. But the Hindu and Christian
contexts are different. The contexts are
religious and personal, but at the same
time they are political, economic, secular,
and they inform ordinary life. Do we need
a Khomeini to remind us brutally that one
side alone does not set the rules of the
game? The fourth phase of the dialogue is
a burning issue. The quick rise of an
Indian middle class apparently successful
in the rules of a competitive society in a
technocratic set up is not an alien problem
of the Hindu Christian Dialogue. It be-
comes a necessary dialogue—perhaps for
survival.

It is, first of all a dialogue. It is a dia-
logue between experts or common people,
merchants or industrialists, intellectuals or
artists which happen to more or less love
their traditions, but who are not tied to
them to such an extent so as to defend any
fixed orthodoxy. The archetypes may play
a more important role than the explicit
ideas. To be sure, any authentic dialogue
is a search for truth, and incurs thus the
"risk" of finding itself also "outside" the
fold. But in this emerging fourth phase
there are no non-negotiable topics, no
"classified" materials or hidden agendas,
not because previously people were not
certain, but because the very notion of
orthodoxy has become flexible, dynamic,
and not merely intellectual.

It would be a set back in the dialogue if
this fourth phase were to fall into the
temptation of superficiality.

The fourth phase is a new step. It is
creative not only in interpreting the
"other". It is also innovative in under-
standing "oneself".

I could put it in terms of depth
psychology. A Christian, after twenty years
of studying Hinduism, a Hindu, after a
similar period of struggling with Christians,
should they not assume that in an
imperceptible way the studied subject
matter has made inroads in the psyche of
the Christian or the Hindu—just as one
spontaneously imitates the gestures and
idioms of the persons one lives with?
Should we not suspect also that you may
draw one day in love with the person with
whom you are constantly dealing?
Cultural symbiosis is also a phenomenon
happening among religious traditions.

*Excerpts from Preface to forthcoming
Harold Coward. Maryknoll: Orbis Books,
1989 (Fall).

NEWS

New Publication

Hindu-Christian Dialogue, edited by
Harold Coward will be published by Orbis
Books in the Fall of 1989, in its "Faith
Meets Faith" Series. The ISBN number is
0-88344-633-2, $13.95 (paper); 0-88344-
634-0, $26.95 (cloth). The book is a State
of the Art review of Hindu-Christian
Dialogue from its beginnings to the present.
Chapters are written by Anand
Amaladass, Ronald Neufeldt, Roland
Miller, Richard Young, John Webster,
Eric Sharpe, Richard Taylor, David Goa,
Steven Gelberg, A. Frank Thompson, Paul
Younger, Murray Rogers, Anantanand
Rambachan, Robert Baird, Harold
Coward, S. Wesley Ariarajah, and Klaus
Klostermaler, with a Preface by Raimundo
Panikkar.

"Christ and Krishna" Reissued

The book Christ and Krishna by Swami
Bhaktipada, first published in 1985, has
been reissuessed with an Introduction by the
Christian theologian Harvey Cox of Har-
vard University. Cox recounts his visit to
Vrindaban and his Christian response to
finding himself among the narrow streets
filled with pilgrims singing and dancing
their praises to Krishna. Cox comments,
"I had felt close to God throughout all of
this, without for a moment sensing any
distance from the Lord Jesus or from the
God I know and love in Him." (p. iv) This
experience prompts Cox to ask the
question, "Christ and Krishna. Krishna and
Christ. What do these figures—perhaps
the two most widely known and admired
personalities in world history—have to do
with each other?" (p. iv) Cox suggests that
this question is a modern day counterpart
of the much earlier question
"What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"
Theological responses to the Athens-
Jerusalem question, suggests Cox, provide
a precedent for conciliatory thinking on the
contemporary question "What has Nazareth
to do with Vrindaban?" The latter
question, however, Cox finds to be
more complex.

Cox is particularly attracted by the
fact that in a world filled with hatred and
division, Krishna's message is for love
and reconciliation. This resonates strongly
with the central Christian teaching "God is
Love." He suggests that the messages of
the Bhagavad-Gita and Jesus' Sermon on the
Mount transcend religious boundaries.
His experience of God in Jesus Christ, says
Cox, was "enriched by the Divine Spirit I
felt in Vrindaban, and I am surer than I
am of most things that that Spirit is the
same One who came to dwell among us in
a stable and died on a cross to conquer
death." (p. viii)

(Christ and Krishna) by Swami Bhaktipada,
2nd Edition. New Vrindaban, Mounds-
ISBN 0-933215-03-3)

Rethinking Christianity in the Indian Context

The Christian Study Centre for Culture
and Social Change of the Kerala
University, Trivandrum, organised a one-
day seminar on "Rethinking Christianity
in the Context of Indian Philosophy and
Religions", on 17, March 1989. There
were about a hundred participants from
various walks of life. The keynote paper
was presented by Prof. Dr. John Arapura
of the Department of Religious Studies
at McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada.

As Dr. Arapura explained the theme, it
is not a call for indegenisation, but it is an
attempt of self-understanding on the part
of Christianity in its existence in the unique
world of Indian Philosophy and Religions.
Such self-understanding must lead to a
revolution in Christianity's mode of being
and self-expression in India, with un-
doubted effect upon Christianity globally.
Hence rethinking Christianity in the Indian context is much more than rethinking Indian Christianity.

Dr. M.M. Thomas is the honorary Director of this centre. The seminars organised by this centre are well attended and appreciated.

Living Together—Bombay (October 23-26, 1988)
An Inter-Faith Live-Together was organised by the Dialogue-Ecumenism Commission of the CBCI, Peoples for Peace Foundation and WCRP, Bombay for four days in Bombay. 195 people from all parts of India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka representing the major religions of India (Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Zoroastrians) took part. Living Together for Greater Harmony was the theme.

Living Together, sharing in prayer, workshop and informal chats the group experienced the bonds of friendship and love breaking the barriers of beliefs, customs and rituals. The group resolved to project these attitudes into its respective home towns in order to evoke an atmosphere of friendship and harmony in the whole country.

Similar Inter-Faith Live-Together is planned at various regional centres like Coimbatore (21-23, April ’89), and Trivandrum (28-30, April) and so on.

Living Together—Coimbatore (April 21-23, 1989)
Taking inspiration from the four day Live-Together for Greater Harmony held at Bombay last October, thirty participants from Tamilnadu decided to hold a similar live-together in Coimbatore, the Inter-Faith Dialogue Centre-Divyodaya.

Some of the salient features of this event are: This was a collaborative venture by Ramalingar Narpani Manram, Tamilnadu Sarvodhaya Sangham, TNBC and CBCI Commission for Dialogue. Interfaith dialogue was linked with the social awakening with the particular reference to the need of Women’s liberation in the context of the contemporary Indian Society. A peace march was conducted with a view to create a broader social consciousness among different religious communities. In this march eighteen organisations took part—such as the Women’s Forum, Youth Forum, Tribal Welfare Organisation along with the Live-together organising groups. During the live-together the participants, as a group, visited a village nearby. This exposure programme brought the participants closer in mind and heart to the village situation. This was the result of the deep communion the group felt during this live-together.

Mary and Murray Rogers Move to Canada
Mary and Murray left One Bamboo Hermitage in Hong Kong in mid-February en route to Canada. Their pilgrimage which began in Jyotiniketan, India is about to begin its third incarnation on a farm near Napanee, Ontario, Canada. There they will be starting a small centre for human and spiritual training. Their new address is:
River View Farm
Rural Route 6
Napanee, Ontario
Canada K7R 3L1

Future Issues
The next issue of the Bulletin will be published in June 1990. Articles, book reviews, publication information, news items, etc. should be submitted to the Editors no later than January 1990. Names of individuals and institutions to be added to our mailing list should also be sent to the Editors.