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The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.

Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, No. 3

Editorial

On the fifteenth of March 2020, while travelling in a taxi, the driver enticed me into a conversation on the recently-promulgated Citizenship Amendment Act. I told him, quoting Teesta Setalvad, a committed human rights' defender, that the CAA will bring untold suffering to people across the country. It will damage, fundamentally and irreparably, the nature of the Indian republic. This is why I, along with, all citizens of conscience, demand that the government not betray the country's Constitution. I told him that I affirm the unity in diversity of our country. But the man branded people who oppose CAA as traitors. He used the word 'ghaddar' with such ease!

I turned the conversation gently towards seeking to know the taxi-driver better. He was from a humble background and struggled to make ends meet. He seemed to be a mild-mannered person. But he raised the pitch mercurially on the topic of citizenship. I was forced to think that he had been thoroughly brainwashed with prejudices against a particular community. It became obvious to me while reacting on the conversation that the bearers of right-wing political ideology have succeeded in destroying social harmony by fanning prejudices and intolerance in the hearts and minds of a large section of people who otherwise co-existed peacefully.

The violence that engulfed parts of the Indian capital Delhi in the last week of February 2020 was targeted violence against Muslims, led by mobs steeped in Hindutva ideology. Gangs armed to the teeth, started attacking anti-CAA protesters. Within days, they were burning down Muslim houses, shops and mosques. At least 53 people were killed, including a policeman. It must be noted that in the violence that spread, some Hindus, too, were attacked and their houses burnt. Our friends and dialogue partners Ms. Naaz Khair and Mr. Muhammad Ali Ansari who surveyed riot-

hit North-East Delhi found the most affected were Muslims who belong to marginalised castes like Telis, Bhishtis and Mansooris.

Further, what pains my heart and mind is the power of prejudices that provoke violence against innocent and helpless people and the way in which the law-enforcing agencies often side with the perpetrators of violence. This is not a one-off event. In a well researched essay, Asghar Ali Engineer argued that police together with law enforcement machinery, such as the local administration and judiciary, play a crucial role in communal riots. He wrote that riot victims and survivors generally complained that: (1) Police did not come to their rescue; (2) the police forces were themselves instrumental in killing; (3) they led the mob in looting and burning; (4) they arrested innocent persons and tortured them inside the lock-up and put false charges against the arrested persons, and (5) encouraged the culprits to do whatever they liked by preventing the members of one community to come out during the curfew and allowing members of another community to do so with impunity (See: Asghar Ali Engineer, “Communal Violence and Role of Police”, *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 29, No. 15 (Apr. 9, 1994), pp. 835-840).

This issue opens with a beautiful prayer that we received from Cardinal Michael L. Fitzgerald. It is a common prayer for Christians and Muslims in view of the Coronavirus pandemic. This prayer was composed by Lebanese Christians and Muslims on the occasion of celebrating the feast of Annunciation (March 25) this year. Many Lebanese Christians and Muslims have the habit of coming together to pray on this day. Following this prayer, we place greetings from all members of Islamic Studies Association for all our Muslim brothers and sisters as they are entering into the holy month of Ramadan.

Sister Anastasia Gill, a member of the Delhi State Minority Commission and also one of the Managing Committee Members of the Islamic Studies Association, along with many civil society organizations galvanized support and solace to all those who have

lost their loved ones and their homes and shops to the fury of communal fire. In her interview, entitled “Poor Desire Peace and Justice”, she shares with readers her agonies and struggles in helping the poor in their struggle for peace and justice.

In the next essay, Dr. Waris Mazhari presents to us the views of Sheikh Said Nursi’s views on dialogue with Christians. Sheikh Nursi was one of the important Islamic scholars of the 20th century and the influence of his ideas on the contemporary Muslim thought cannot be ruled out. Following this essay, we place a short piece on Women on Islamic Religious thought by the present writer, which may be of some interest to students of Christian-Muslim Relations.

Two interviews are included in this issue: one, on religion and science (Fr. Job SJ) and the other, on theology and beauty (Asma Menon). This issue also includes a review essay of the book, [*Theology Without Walls: The Transreligious Imperative*, edited by Jerry L. Martin (London: Routledge, 2020)] by Prof. Leo D. Lefebure and a piece by a young Jesuit scholar, Father Xavier, who worked on the writings of Ramon Panikkar for his doctoral research which is concerned with comparative theology.

While we are struggling against the communal virus, we are confronted with a Coronavirus disease (COVID -19) outbreak. I pray for freedom from all viruses that destroy our soul and body. I wish you peaceful summer months ahead. I wish that in the season of Easter, your hearts and minds are filled with Joy, Love, Peace and Hope.

A COMMON PRAYER

Muslims have great respect for Mary, the mother of Jesus. There is a *sûra*(chapter) of the Qur'an that bears her name, *sûra*19, *sûrat Maryam*, the *sûra* of Mary. The Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel comes to tell Mary that she will give birth to a son, is recounted in chapter 1 of the Gospel of Luke, and in *sûra*3 (*The Family of 'Imran*) and also in *sûra*19 (*Maryam*) of the Qur'an. About ten years ago in Lebanon the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March, was declared a national holiday for all the citizens of the country. Christians and Muslims have formed the habit of coming together to pray on this day. This year a group of Christians and Muslims composed a special prayer in view of the Coronavirus pandemic. Here is the text.

A COMMON PRAYER FOR CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS (Lebanon, March 2020)

O God, Our Lord, Lord of Creation and of the whole human
race,

You chose Mary, choosing her above all women,
Sending to her the Angel Gabriel to announce to her the good
news

Which we celebrate together as Christians and Muslims.

Our Lord, You are the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy, the
One who loves all human beings.

You have blessed us with life, save us from the danger of this
pandemic.

Our Lord, may the Virgin Mary be a model for us in our lives,
May her example motivate us to preserve unity amongst us when
confronted with distress and suffering.

May we trust in Providence, rather than resign ourselves to fear
and pride,

So that we, like Mary, may show solidarity and give generous
service.

Lord, You who are the All-Hearing, the Granter of Security,
Give your help to Carers, Nurses and Doctors,
Heal the sick and console the affected,
Give to those in need their daily bread and all they require.
We implore your help so that we may remain devoted to You and
faithful to one another. Amen

➔ Received from **Cardinal Michael L. Fitzgerald, M. Afr.**

RAMADAN GREETINGS

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters

We the members of Islamic Studies Association extend our greetings as you begin the holy month of Ramadan.

We have experienced that Ramadan is the happiest time and eagerly awaited by every Muslim friend whom we know. In this holy month, you commemorate the revelation of the Qur'an. Along with you we thank God for the way you honor the Holy Book by reading and contemplating its holy verses.

We are truly inspired by your commitment to fasting between dawn and sunset. We realize that this fasting is a way of submitting your will to the Will of God as it is revealed in the Qur'an. It is encouraging to see, how you thank God for God's gracious providence with your family members, when you finish your fasting for the day with the iftar. The mosques we have in our locality invite people of other faiths to join them in iftar. This gesture symbolizes your openness and friendliness towards all people of God.

Moreover, it is heartening to find the way many of you observe the last week of the month. As Muslims, you await for the final day, during the month of Ramadan. Many of you spend the entire night following the 27th day of Ramadan in the mosque reading the Qur'an or listening to its recitation and performing recommended prayers. When the last judgment arrives, you hope to be found in prayer. This religious practice of yours reminds us: "Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and stand before the Son of Man (Luke. 21:26)."

Dear brothers and sisters, in these difficult times of Covid 19 breakout that pushed peoples across the continents into 'lockdown' situations, we along with you pray for God's healing touch upon all people. We pray for God's consolation to those families that lost their loved ones during this pandemic. We pray specially for

the doctors and hospital staff and volunteers who serve the sick in these most difficult times.

We pray that every man and woman come to realize their true responsibility as human persons and learn to surrender one's will to the Will of God according to our diverse religious traditions.

We WISH YOU A BLESSED RAMADAN, to you, to your families, to those you love.

Joseph Victor Edwin SJ
Secretary
Islamic Studies Association
Delhi.

THE POOR DESIRE PEACE AND JUSTICE

Sister Anastasia Gill

When U.S. President Donald Trump made his first official visit to India in the last week of February, parts of Delhi, the national capital, were in flames. At least 50 people were killed and hundreds wounded in sectarian riots triggered by the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act the Indian parliament passed last December.

The new law, which allows people of non-Muslim faiths from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan to enter India, led to nationwide protests from all sections of society and triggered days of violence between Muslims and Hindus in New Delhi. Muslims and those opposing the new law in India saw the Hindu nationalist party's action as an effort to remove the country's secular character and replace it with a Hindu theocratic state.

One of the first Christians to reach out to the riot victims was Presentation Sister Anastasia Gill, a member of the minority commission of the Delhi government and a Managing Committee Member of the Delhi based Islamic Studies Association. Besides visiting the affected areas and hospitals where the wounded are admitted, Gill also coordinated relief and medical efforts with various voluntary and Christian groups.

Gill, popularly known as Sister Sneha (which means "love"), spoke to Ms. Jessy Joseph for Global Sisters Report about her experience with the riot victims. We reproduce the interview for our readers (Editor).

You were among the first Christians to visit Delhi's riot-affected areas. What did you see there?

Violence broke out in Delhi's northeastern parts on the night of Feb. 23 after groups favoring the CAA [Citizenship Amendment Act] clashed with those opposing it. Shops, houses and vehicles,

mostly in the areas where people belonging to a minority religion live, were burnt by mobs armed with pistols, sticks, stones and other materials.

When I visited Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital in East Delhi, many families were waiting there for the bodies of their relatives killed in the riots. Bodies were held up in the hospital morgue as their post-mortem [autopsy] was delayed. People also came looking for missing relatives.

One of the persons I met in the hospital was Kasim Khan from Jaffarabad, [a suburb of New Delhi] a badly affected locality. He was returning with his uncle from night work around 5 a.m. on Feb 25 when a mob confronted them. They asked them for their names, and the mob thrashed them recognizing their religious identity. His uncle sustained serious injuries and was admitted in the intensive care unit. Khan sat outside the hospital with bandages.

Another person I met was a one-day-old girl with her relatives. Her mother died of excessive bleeding during childbirth. The woman could not be taken to a hospital as no ambulance or vehicles could enter their area. I felt a kind of numbness looking at the infant.

What prompted you to visit the riot-hit areas, especially when Christians hesitated to go there?

I believe in action, not issuing statements or conducting prayers for peace. I have been involved in social work for the past 25 years and have been in legal practice for eight years. This is my third year as the Christian member of the Delhi Minority Commission. It is my responsibility to become the voice of the minority community. I would have gone there even if I was not a commission member. Otherwise I would have felt miserable. So, visiting the riot victims and areas was a response to my restless soul.

I also had to use the powers my government post gives me. I could use them to access people in need and assess the ground

reality. If I had not met the affected families, I wouldn't have understood the gravity of the situation. The visit also prompted me to ask the hospital authorities to hurry up the post-mortem and hand over the bodies to their relatives. After visiting the hospitals and riot areas, I met with NGOs and Christian organizations in my office to plan ways to help the victims.

You issued a statement condemning the violence. Did the commission, as a body, condemn it?

Yes it did. After my visit to these places, the commission chairman issued a statement condemning the violence. We have also issued notices to the authorities for action and reports. We have also asked the police to take charge of the law-and-order situation. [The police were accused of remaining passive or supporting the rioters.] We are making the authorities responsible and accountable.

What has been the response of people, especially Christian groups, after you spoke to them?

Christian groups have come forward to help the victims after the initial hesitation. I told the Delhi archbishop that our people have to visit the areas and study what should be done for the affected. The Delhi Archdiocese has organized medical teams to visit the areas and treat the people. Christians of various denominations have joined other groups to bring food and relief materials to the affected.

Why did this violence occur?

For more than two months, hundreds of people have been on a sit-in along a stretch in Shaheen Bagh (south Delhi) to oppose the CAA. On Feb. 23, the Supreme Court urged the protesters to change the venue as they have blocked a major highway in Delhi. But that did not happen. Then some politicians allegedly made hate speeches that triggered violence in another area in the city.

Did the American president's visit help contain the riots or aggravate the situation?

I suppose we wanted to present a good picture of India to Donald Trump. The Indian government wanted to show the country as a peaceful nation. It wanted to stress the CAA as an internal matter and that we take care of all communities irrespective of their religion, particularly Muslims. I would say it has backfired. The riots have apparently damaged the image of Indian democracy, giving a horrific picture of India to the entire world.

What will be the impact of the riots in future?

People I met said they [Hindus and Muslims] have lived as family for years in their localities. They have participated in the festivals of the other and shared the joys and sorrows of each other. The riots have dampened this spirit. They say they have lost faith in the other, especially after the attackers, who they say were strangers from outside, used rooftops to fire at people. How the outsiders could get access to the terraces, they ask. They say they have been victims of some sinister games of politicians.

Many told me that they would continue to work with the other community. They have houses, shops and other places adjacent to each other. So, they cannot remain suspicious of each other. They want peace and harmony at any cost.

What are you planning for the riot victims?

What we could do is to work on people's desire to start life anew and help foster peace and harmony. We have to help people recover from the trauma. For that, peace committees have to be formed with people of all communities. We have to set up fact-finding teams to assess the type of support and services people need.

What should be done next?

We need to organize individuals, organizations and congregations to help the victims. It has to be a serious commitment. Everyone

should know how much time and energy one could spare for this mission.

The church invests so much on interreligious dialogue. Don't you think this is the time to practice dialogue?

Yes, of course. This is what I have been telling the archbishop and those involved in interreligious dialogue. I indirectly challenge these groups to be proactive in times like this. Meetings and prayers are not enough to fulfill Christ's prophetic mission. We can get hundreds of people to come for prayers. But not many would want to stick their necks out to help those in need in situations like this. Bishops and others should not stop by just issuing statements. They should condemn violence and come out to restore peace and harmony. It is risky, but Christ did not evade risks.

Coming back to the commission, what is your role in it?

The Indian government set up the National Commission for Minorities in 1992. The government has recognized six religious communities — Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains — as religious minorities. Each state can set up its own minority commission. The Delhi government set up the commission in 2000. It consists of the chairman and two members [a Christian and a Sikh]. We all have equal powers. We have the power of a first-class magistrate to summon [those accused of violating minority rights] and call for court hearings. We have a court to try cases of attacks on religious minority people. On receiving such complaints, we can summon the deputy commissioner of police and station house officer and others in charge of that place.

The commission also tries to foster peace and harmony among all people. We implement various government welfare projects for the minority groups, such as scholarships for students, loans for housing and education and other welfare programs. We inform people about such projects.

Tell us something about yourself. Why did you become a nun?

I was born in Ranbir Singh Pura in Jammu and Kashmir, close to the international border with Pakistan. We are three sisters and three brothers. I joined the Presentation Sisters [formally, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary] in 1985; influenced by an Irish nun, Loyola Beck, my high school teacher. She visited the poor in families, hospitals, orphanages and prisons. I used to accompany her from fifth grade and was touched by her love, kindness and compassion for the needy.

After first profession in 1989, I taught in the Presentation School in Old Delhi and visited slums near our school. When I told my provincial about my desire to work for the poor, she transferred me to Jahangirpuri, a slum area in the northern part of Delhi, in 1994, where our congregation had just opened a convent. After some time, I went to Mumbai [then Bombay] for a master's in social work. On returning in 2006, I was sent to Bhopal [central India], where I worked for the empowerment of women and rape victims, besides educating Dalit children. I realized the need for legal knowledge after the police cheated us by manipulating cases. After my law studies, I practiced with criminal lawyers. I am an active member of Islamic Studies Association, Delhi.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND THE 'WEST' IN THE LIGHT OF THE TEACHINGS OF BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI

Waris Mazhari

Introduction

In recent years, there has been much talk about the pressing need for dialogue between 'Islam' and 'the West'—which actually means dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslim Westerners (henceforth 'the West' for short). The need for such dialogue is urgently felt in many Muslim circles.

Some ideologues argue that the differences between 'the East' and 'the West', or, more specifically, Muslims and 'the West', are so immense and irreconcilable that it is inevitable that the two must violently confront each other. Misunderstandings continue to abound between Muslims and 'the West' that have stoked deadly conflicts in various parts of the world. Frankly, things have simply gone too far, and if nothing is done to remedy the situation and to counter the vicious circle of hate, it will have devastating consequences for the future of humankind.

Many ideologues in both 'the East' and 'the West' have been wedded to the clash of civilizations thesis. At the same time though, there are many intellectuals on both sides who are unflinchingly committed to promoting understanding and good relations between the two great civilizational entities through the dialogue. Advocates of dialogue between Islam (or, more appropriately, Muslims) and 'the West' represent different perspectives, views and ideologies. Some Muslim groups completely denounce any talk of such dialogue. In contrast, some other Muslim groups talk about dialogue in such a way as only unthinking advocates of the West would. In between these two extremes are groups and individuals who advocate a balanced, moderate, middle-path,

who call for dialogue between Muslims and ‘the West’, albeit with some conditions, recognizing it as an urgent need of the hour.

The great Turkish Islamic scholar Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1878-1960) lived at a crucial time in history, when traditional religion-based social systems in many Muslim countries were crumbling and Western cultural influence was making deep inroads among Muslims. The Ottoman Sultanate was collapsing. At this juncture, Shaikh Nursi made a critical analysis of contemporary Western civilization, examining what he regarded as its strengths and weaknesses and trying to arrive at a balanced understanding of the issue.

In his numerous writings, Shaikh Nursi expressed his views on, among other issues, relations between Muslims and others. Dialogue, brotherhood and mutual love, he stressed, were a natural need of human beings, part of the very essence of this world. He was of the view that ignoring these factors would lead to intellectual chaos and was tantamount to deviation from nature. In his *Maktubat*, he wrote that the Quran invites us to adopt an inclusivist civilizational model. He stressed that the Quran does not advocate an exclusivist approach. It does not call for Muslims to cut off from others. Rather, it encourages Muslims to make efforts for the welfare of the whole of humankind.

Western Civilization in Nursi’s Eyes

Shaikh Nursi was a strident critic of many aspects of ‘the West’. He saw contemporary Western civilization as propagating infidelity and anarchy, which was termed as ‘a wicked soul’ (*khābūsrūh*) by him. Addressing the proponents of contemporary Western civilization, he declared in his book *al-Lama’at*:

O the self that urges evil (*nafs-e ‘ammara*) of mankind! [...] Try to understand where you are dragging humankind to [...] Can man gain real happiness simply by acquiring material wealth [...] while his soul and intuition are not healthy?

The Shaikh argued that some streams of the contemporary Western civilization were based on wrong and corrupt foundations. This civilization claims that whatever it has achieved has been as a result of its own efforts—it has no room for God in all of this. Shaikh Nursi opined that sensual desire and envy are among the basic pillars of such streams of Western civilization. He termed this civilization as vicious or wicked (*madaniyyat-e khablisa*), predicting that it was close to committing suicide at its own hands. He compared it to a tree whose roots have been gnawed up by insects and which is close to being uprooted. He was convinced that if ‘the West’ did not mend its ways, it would prove to be a deadly poison for humankind.

Dialogue with ‘the West’

Despite this criticism of ‘the West’, Nursi did not hesitate to acknowledge its contributions to knowledge and scholarship and its other forms of service to humankind. He recognized that contemporary Western civilization had both positive and negative aspects and that it could not be totally rebutted and denounced, just as it could not be completely accepted and embraced. He was of the view that a major dimension of Western civilization was based on revolt against God. It was grounded in sheer materialism. It projected its defects as virtues, evil as goodness. In this way, it was deceiving humankind.

But, at the same time, contemporary Western civilization had a positive dimension, Nursi commented. This was the dimension on which authentic Christianity was based, and which, through its contributions to knowledge and industry, had rendered great service to humankind. Shaikh Nursi was full of praise for this facet of Western civilization, calling its great positive contributions as blessings, for which people should be grateful and which they should use for the benefit of humankind in general.

An important aspect of Shaikh Nursi’s balanced understanding of ‘the West’ is his point that religion had been a basis of Western

civilization and that it was this that had led Westerners to develop a curiosity about the cosmos and investigate nature. According to Nursi, irreligiousness, atheism, materialism and revolt against God, which have assumed the form of a new religion in themselves, are not integral to the original culture of 'the West' because, he believed, great European thinkers such as German philosopher G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716), French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726) were not advocates of irreligiousness and intellectual licentiousness. Rather, they advocated reform in and revival of religious thought. Thus, we see many European philosophers who believed in religion. In this respect, Shaikh Nursi's thought appears close to that of Muhammad Abduhu (1849-1905), the well-known Egyptian reformer.

This argument is of great importance with regard to dialogue between Muslims and 'the West'. Generally speaking, parties that focus on the political and revolutionary aspects of Islam castigate Western culture as allegedly wholly Satanic because, so they believe, it is based on irreligiousness and revolt against God. Hence, they claim, to benefit from this culture is not possible without deviating from basic Islamic principles or compromising with irreligiousness. Nursi's understanding appears to be completely contrary to this. His positive approach enabled him to see light amidst the darkness and to appreciate the value of the good things of 'the West'.

Nursi supported the Quranic idea that no civilization can continue to exist for long if it abandons the foundations of religion, because this is against nature. This explains why and how, starting from the mid-20th century onwards, there has been a huge revival of religion across the globe, a trend that gathers increasing momentum with every passing day.

Shaikh Nursi's approach was based on inclusiveness, broad-mindedness and impartiality. In a scenario where denouncing 'the West' and its cultural domination is regarded as the greatest symbol of one's piety in some Muslim circles, his approach reflects the

Quranic conception of justice. As the Quran says:

Believers, be steadfast in the cause of God and bear witness with justice. Do not let your enmity for others turn you away from justice. Deal justly; that is nearer to being God-fearing. Fear God. God is aware of all that you do.(5:8)

Nursi was of the view that what is conventionally called ‘Western civilization’ is not the product of Westerners alone. Rather, it is the result of the efforts of the whole of humankind and no community has a monopoly over it. It is the common heritage of all humanity. One should view it in this way, and there should be no hesitation in benefitting from the good things that it has to offer. Thus, he wrote in his *al-Kalimāt*.

We should not deny the fact that contemporary Western civilization has many good things. It is the result of the efforts of modern times, and that is why everyone has a right on it, because it has come into being on the basis of mutual give-and-take between different ideologies. This civilization has been engendered by different heavenly *shariahs* [...], especially the Islamic *shariah*, and natural human needs. It is [...] a product of the revolution that Islam gave birth to. That is why no single community can claim to control or monopolize it.

Need for and Significance of Dialogue with ‘the West’

Said Nursi’s balanced approach to inter-civilizational relations drove him to stress need for dialogue with ‘the West’. This, he believed, was in the general interest of people who believed in religious and ethical values and who were searching for God-realization. He was of the view that given the enormous moral crisis of our times, when goodness is being so brutally trampled upon, Muslims must seek to dialogue with Western Christians who still believed in the authentic message of Jesus. He stressed that working for promoting goodness was a common responsibility of all people.

Nursi stressed that one should not view one's enemies with hatred. Rather, they, too, should be treated as one's friends. He drew this view from the Quran, which advises us to see foes as potential friends:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend (41:34)

Nursi gave practical expression to his advocacy of dialogue. In order to promote better relations between Christians and Muslims and to address misunderstandings between the two communities, in 1953 he met with Athenagoras, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. Prior to that, in 1951, he sent some of his books to an official in the Vatican in the hope that this might help promote better relations between the Catholic Church and Muslims.

Dialogue for Nursi was to be engaged in not just for the sake of resolving conflicts between contending parties. Rather, for him it was also important so that the different communities that inhabit the planet could get to know each other and relate to each other as fellow humans—or what he referred to as 'brotherhood'. Dialogue between believers in different faiths was also necessary to combat the greatest challenges of our times—atheism and materialism. To Nursi, these were the common enemies of all communities who believe in God. Absolute denial of God, he wrote, was now at its peak. A major aim of dialogue was to counter this assault of atheism. This seems to suggest that Nursi regarded political problems that underlie some conflicts between Muslims and 'the West' to be secondary to this issue of countering the atheist assault.

Said Nursi stressed that in order for Muslims to engage in a meaningful dialogue with Christians, they must abstain from raking up conflicts with them. In his *al-Lama'at* he wrote that not only must Muslims try to promote unity among themselves but that they also must try to build good relations with followers of authentic Christianity. In order for these two to counter a common enemy—

atheism and irreligiousness—he stressed, Muslims must abstain from anything that might promote conflict with such Christians. It was an urgent need of the hour, he opined, that Muslims should not enter into conflict with deviant Muslim groups and with those Christians who believe in God and the Day of Judgment, for such conflict would lead Muslims to deviate from their real goal.

Nursi was convinced that if Christians truly realized Jesus' authentic teachings and acted on them, it would pave the way for unity and dialogue between Islam and Christianity, which would be a blessing for humankind.

Conclusion

Said Nursi was one of the great Islamic scholars of the 20th century. His ideas have had an enormous influence in contemporary Muslim thought. His unconventional theological views paved the way for a revival of Islam, especially in modern Turkey. Inclusiveness and moderation were among the finest aspects of his approach to contemporary challenges. His efforts to develop good relations between 'Islam' and 'the West' are best examples of this approach. Despite the degeneration that he perceived in 'the West', he was an ardent advocate of dialogue with it. He regarded pride as the greatest hurdle to promoting such dialogue, and appealed to 'the West' to rise above this psyche of pride. At the same time, he also appealed to Muslims to try to end all their conflicts with 'the West'.

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WOMEN IN MUSLIM RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Joseph Victor Edwin SJ

As a student of the history and theology of Christian-Muslim relations, I am aware of Muslim theologians engaging with many basic questions vis-à-vis women and their status in Islam. Moreover, Christian brothers and sisters often ask me about the place of women in Islam.

Often, Muslim religious teachers, especially in the rural places, whom we meet in mosques, tell us that women are created of and for men and claim that God made men superior to women and hence women are defective in reason and faith. These men associate femininity overwhelmingly with the concept of *fitna* (socio-moral chaos) and hence in constant need of tight control. In contrast, masculinity is constructed in relation to man's *ghira* (unreasonable levels of sexual honour and jealousy).

Women in Islam is a sensitive topic for any discussion. Any criticism of Muslims' treatment of their women is not taken kindly by many Muslims. They consider that any such criticism is a frontal attack on their religion. Muslims firmly believe that Islam has dignified women. God has assigned different roles to men and women and they have no other option but to obey God's will. The emphasis is on duties, and not on freedom. Certain socio-religious practices and laws are believed to be of divine origin and are used to keep women under the control of men. Such practices and conventions deny dignity and respect for Muslim women within their families and in the societies in which they live.

Many non-Muslim readers might quickly recognise the word *talaq*. However the words *khula*, *halala*, and *mut'ah* might not be familiar to them. A quick look at these terms would be useful here. A Muslim husband can use the word *talaq* to repudiate/divorce his wife. This Arabic word *talaq* means 'send back'. It is the husband who sends back the wife. According to some Muslim scholars, if

a husband pronounces *talaq* thrice in one sitting, even if he does so in an inebriated condition, the woman stands divorced. In other words, a man has the right to divorce his wife. He is not obliged to give reasons for repudiation.

But at the same time, Muslim jurisprudence also provides the right to a Muslim woman to ask for dissolution of her marriage. This procedure is called *khula*. When a Muslim woman is divorced by her husband through the *talaq* procedure, she becomes *haram* (unlawful) to her husband. She first has to be married to someone else, divorced or widowed, and then only would she be *halal* (lawful) for the first man. This second ‘short term marriage’, is sometimes paid for with the understanding that divorce would happen soon, usually after the nuptial night. This is *halala*. *Mut’ah* is temporary marriage for a specific period of time between two consenting Muslim men and a Muslim woman. It is a custom allowed by certain Shia Muslims. There have been a number of case studies that call attention to the exploitation of Muslim women within their own families through the provisions of triple *talaq* in one sitting, *halala*, and *mut’ah*. Misuse of these provisions tramples on the dignity of many Muslim women and denies them their human rights.

Neo-traditionalist Islamic discourses presuppose radical differences in gender roles and norms that are premised on artificial binaries such as associating men with religious authority, reason-based discourse and political and public engagement, and linking women with sexuality, domesticity, emotionality and nearly exclusive preoccupation with matters pertaining to the private domain of human existence.

I am fortunate to have continual interaction with the Australia-based Professor Adis Duderija, one of the leading experts of gender-sensitive interpretations of Islam. In one of our conversations, he underlined the urgent need to develop an Islamic ethical and legal theory which is ever responsive to the contextually sensitive

realities in which Muslim women (and men) find themselves so that gender-based inequalities are not *structurally* disadvantageous to any of the sexes on the basis of a particular interpretation of Islamic teachings.

Duderija clarifies that gender-egalitarian interpretations of the Qur'an for generating gender-just and gender-symmetrical formulations of legal rights for Muslim women must come from *within* the Islamic interpretational and methodological framework. He advocates systematically deriving and justifying these rights on the basis of a particular conceptualization and interpretation of the Qur'an.

Duderija points out that some Muslim reformist scholars from the 19th and 20th centuries such as T. Haddad (d. 1935) Q. Amin (d.1908), and M. Abduh (d.1905) advocated gender equality affirmative interpretations of Islam. However, their efforts in this regard were relatively isolated and were theoretically significantly less robust than the efforts of the proponents of contemporary gender-egalitarian interpretations of Islam.

Coming to the issue of the interpretation of the Qur'an, Duderija highlights several interpretational methods. Here we briefly mention one such method: *the interpreter-centred interpretational approach*. According to Duderija, this approach is based on the idea that the meaning of a text is significantly influenced or determined by the prior self-positioning of the reader/interpreter herself/himself (in contrast to that of the text or the author). The interpreter does not simply *retrieve* the meaning of the text but plays an important part in *creating* meaning.

In this approach, the role of the interpreter in arriving at meaning of texts is central. In this regard Duderija points out how classical Muslim exegetes such as al-Zamakhshari incorporated many elements of their patriarchal beliefs and worldview into their exegesis.

He further notes that the intrinsic contextuality of some of the ethico-legal elements in the Qur'an makes for an interpretational distinction between what the Qur'an *reflected* as opposed to what the Quran *initiated*. Duderija points out that the latter is universal while some aspects of the former (such as the unilateral power vested in husbands to divorce their wives, a practice from pre-Islamic times) were part of the then prevailing customary practice which was considered reasonable and rational for the time and place when and where the Quran was revealed, as Muslims believe. The Quran merely *reflected* these and sought to *mitigate* their harmful effects.

Consequently, Duderija believes that it is indeed possible to systematically and authentically engage with much of the patriarchal residue that remains in Islamic traditions, laws and ethics and engender non-patriarchal interpretations of the same. He is convinced it is possible to make a compelling case for the development of gender-egalitarian interpretations of the Qur'an.



CHURCH LEADERS SHOULD UNDERSTAND DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY

Job Kozhamthadam SJ

Jesuit Father Job Kozhamthadam is an award-winning historian and philosopher of science, who acknowledges the role of religion in the development of modern science and technology.

The 74-year-old priest is in the breed of scholars who specialize in the history and philosophy of science. He has journeyed from a nondescript town in the southern Indian state of Kerala to being acclaimed as a pioneer in the history of science and religion in India.

Kozhamthadam retired as a professor of Science and Cosmology at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India, ten years ago. He was previously a visiting professor in the History and Philosophy of Science at Loyola University, Chicago. He completed his doctorate in the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Maryland, USA.

His first book, *The Discovery of Kepler's Laws: The Interaction of Science, Philosophy, and Religion* was named Outstanding Academic Book of the Year 1994 by Choice Magazine. His other books include *East-West Interface Of Reality: A Scientific And Intuitive Inquiry Into The Nature Of Reality* (2003), *Science, Technology And Values: Science-Religion Dialogue In A Multi-Religious World* (2003) and *Science, Mysticism And East-West Dialogue* (2016). He founded the Indian Institute of Science and Religion (IISR) in 1999. **Nikhil George Joseph**, a Jesuit theology student in Delhi, interviewed Father Kozhamthadam recently for Matters India. Excerpts:

MATTERS INDIA: Your scholarly work is dedicated to the advancement of science-religion dialogue and much has been

achieved in creating common spaces and merging points between science and religion. What are your insights of working with scientists and intellectuals as a Jesuit-priest-scientist?

Fr. Job Kozhamthadam: I see a lot of good will among the youth. They have a creative dissatisfaction and uneasiness with the status quo but at the same time a sincere search for fresh answers to age old questions. Modern science can help in answering these questions. So I want people to take modern science more seriously. This has been my experience from the scientific point of view. Coming to religion, I have a positive attitude. Religion must be fostered. Unfortunately, being around for millennia, religion has accumulated a lot of baggage. Some of them are good. Being a mixture of pure and impure things, religion needs pruning. And in this pruning process too science can help.

Pope John Paul II in one of his ground-breaking letters to Father George Coyne in 1988 has expressed this view. Many others too have said it. What is required is genuine science and genuine religion. Science which is realistic in its achievements, balanced in its claims, and religion which is faithful to its initial intuitions and insights and faithful to its fundamental teachings can do a lot of service towards removing the creative dissatisfaction and uneasiness. That is why science-religion dialogue is an attempt by us to bring together the latest findings of modern science and the deepest insights of religions to build up a better humanity, a better world and, for us Indians, a better India.

Science is often misconstrued as something diametrically opposite to the religious way. There is even the secularist tendency to tag the religious as biased, irrational and cultic.

Please suggest some innovative ways to dialogue amid growing trends to compartmentalize science and religion?

For me, the institutionalized religion has two components — One God given and the other human made. Both are important.

You can't remain only with the revelation. As the Catholic Church puts it, tradition too is important. But when I see as a scientist, both cannot be put on the same status. The God-given is for all times, the initial intuition, the kernel of a religion, irrespective of nationality, gender, culture, time, civilization – it cuts across everything, it's universal. On the other hand, the human made aspects are conditioned by human situation in which the religion finds itself and develops in its various aspects. And these things are revisable. They can evolve. Any rigid position with regard to this can create problems for religion and everybody. The conflict between science and religion must have come up because there has been a tendency by religions to overemphasize the human made aspects; particularly the authority-related and administrative aspects. The reason why religion is construed by scientists as opposing science is because they also look upon religion from the institutional point of view – the human made aspect of it. If religion were to emphasize the God-given aspects and be open about the human made aspects, there would not have been much tension between the two.

Religion and science are seekers of truth which has also been traditionally expressed by both the religious people and scientists. For instance, from the time of St. Augustine, there is a good insight into God's revelation, that is, God has given us two books, the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature. The astronomer Johannes Kepler left his desire to become a Lutheran pastor because he believed that astronomers are priests of the Almighty serving the Book of Nature. Therefore, there is no need to become a traditional priest of religion. If looked at this way, there is no need for compartmentalization. There is more of convergence than divergence.

Today theology is largely contextual and it explores ways of getting rooted in the human condition. Technological and scientific advancement transform the face of the world at a geometrical pace, perhaps even influencing the human evolution in unknown ways.

How could we do theological contextualization in this scenario?

First of all we should have a positive attitude towards science. It has to be made a reality, a part of our culture today. This positive attitude means that the Church leaders should be sufficiently informed about the developments in science and technology. They need to take pains to understand them. They should not assume, or much less, presume that they know it all. They simply do not. The clergy is very poorly informed about scientific developments despite their long years of training. Some are disappointed by the years they have spent in formation and the disproportionate knowledge they have of scientific developments. This has to be changed. To meet this formidable scientific challenge Catholics need visionary and charismatic leadership. Our present leadership often is bureaucratic and traditional. At certain levels this may be necessary, but not to meet this challenge. This situation therefore is a serious lacuna in our leadership and something has to be done to resolve it.

We also need to take the Vatican II seriously. It offered many insights into our dealings with science and technology. The vision it could give for the Church regarding science and Catholicism is greatly charismatic and futuristic. It has often been sadly neglected by the Church leadership. The Vatican II and the General Congregation 31 of the Jesuits (GC 31) have to be seriously studied and their insights have to be taken responsibly if we wish to constructively respond to the scientific challenge.

Acknowledging science-religion dialogue to be a crucial mission of the Church today and particularly of the Jesuits what are some issues we encounter today and how are we to respond to them?

I had written an article some years ago about scientific developments and how to respond to them. Some of the challenges coming are that science has developed so much that it can determine not only what we have and wish to have, but what we

are and wish to become. The role of science earlier was only to provide some gadgets or technology, but today it has become highly capable and influential, and it has moved deep into our lives. It plays a significant role in setting and shaping our value system, worldview, and expectation levels. This would mean that we should look at science differently now.

Secondly, many things done by religion earlier have been found to be within the purview of science. For instance, earlier people thought that life span, skin complexion, intelligence, and other matters depended on God, but today science is in a position to deal with these things, and it says it has answers for them. We don't have to go to God for this. Religion has to face this change in the role of religion creatively and constructively. The challenge now is to redefine the role of religion in the context of the developments in science and technology.

At such a juncture, religion should not impede scientific development. Some say science leads us to atheism, secularism, and so it has to be stopped. But there is no way of stopping scientific development, whether religion approves it or not. So, the role of religion is to move with the flow of the times, and guide this flow in the right direction. It will be its primary role. Be with the flow but don't allow it to go in its own course, but guide it in the right direction by the time-tested values of religion.

Coming to the specific issues, today's understanding of the human soul in the light of neurological developments needs revision. The traditional idea came from Plato which were modified and Christianized by Saints Augustine and Aquinas. But that was when neuroscience was non-existent. In the light of today's tremendous developments we need to have a modified understanding of what the soul is and the soul-body relationship. Of course, such serious matters should be done under the guidance and approval of the appropriate authorities in the Church. As Pope John Paul II in 1988 wrote to Father George Coyne SJ, this requires theologians

to be in touch with scientists and sufficiently informed about the developments.

Another example is the Aristotelian cosmology with its emphasis on celestial/terrestrial distinction, and its religious counterpart spiritual/material distinction. For Aristotle and his medieval followers there was a great gap between the celestial and the terrestrial and in the religious sphere between the spiritual and the material. Today in cosmology this gap is becoming thinner and thinner in the light of scientific developments. It seems to me that contemporary theologians with sufficient knowledge of scientific developments should seriously reflect whether this finding of cosmology call for a new look at spiritual/material distinction. The Book of Genesis at least 6 times says concerning the material universe: “And God found it good.” Modern science and scientists would want to give the material universe and related matters a more positive merit and value than traditional Christianity has been giving.

The matter of worldview is another important point. Catholicism in some ways is still wedded to traditional, Thomistic worldview which is static and non-evolutionary. In some aspects the Church is still stuck in the static worldview. Today evolution has become a scientific fact, certain unexplained and controversial aspects. My understanding of dynamic does not deny continuity – there are certain core values and beliefs that do not change, but there are also elements that change. Evolution is not the same as revolution. Revolution means that the old ways have gone away and the new have been put in. On the other hand, evolution implies that there is certain kernel that is continuous and unchanging, but the expressions of that kernel changes. So the fundamentals of Catholicism will not change. But as Pope John XXIII, while inaugurating the Vatican II, said, the fundamental faith and teaching will remain the same, but the way it is understood, presented and communicated, needs to be changed. This approach will render the fundamental faith more meaningful and relevant to humans who are part of the evolutionary process. This point too needs to be taken up by

competent, scientifically informed theologians and other thinkers, under the guidance of appropriate authorities.

Does quantum mechanics, with the emergence of concepts like quantum superposition, and entanglement, offer ways to accommodate a certain unknown into itself?

Quantum mechanics and theory of Relativity are revolutionary theories. They have helped science-religion dialogue immensely. They made the dialogue not only possible, but necessary and fruitful. These theories and some other more recent ones have forced scientists, especially the atheistic-minded scientists, to desist from any absolutization of science or scientism. Einstein's idea of interconvertability of matter and energy has been a tremendous development. It showed us that energy is in a way matter and vice versa. That's why it is said that with these theories the gap between spiritual and material realms has become narrower.

David Bohm, another important contributor to quantum theory, says that our reality is more than what Einstein has discovered. From energy and matter duality it should be expanded further, and consciousness or spirituality also has to be brought in. Therefore he says that reality is tripartite – matter (mass), energy and consciousness or spirituality. He could not develop this idea much because of certain circumstances, but this is something worth developing. Consciousness has to be taken seriously with the developments in artificial intelligence. Many things that were attributed to the spirit or soul in us may come under aspects that can be tackled by science and it is happening already. Sophia, the humanoid, produced by the Hong Company is a great example for that. It may be noted that this robotic Sophia has been given citizenship by Saudi Arabia. Bohm had said that he had developed theories where this dimension of spirituality had been analysed. It seems to me that the human soul could be subjected to a study in light of all these developments, particularly in Artificial Intelligence and Neurology, giving us better understanding of it although I am inclined to think that this spiritual dimension will

never be fully understood by science. There is always a distinction between matter and spirit, but in the past we made too much out of it, but it needs to be revisited.

There are certain individual or collective experiences that are often explained as something metaphysical or mystical in religious parlance. In the scientific arena there exists a quest for the knowledge of the ultimate ‘why’ of existence which could also have been an impetus to seek for the theory of everything. What could be some of the similarities and differences in the way of science and religion that seeks to find the cause and core of all seeking?

Earlier science was thought to deal with the how questions and religion and philosophy with the why or the big questions. But today there is more of a convergence of search than divergence. Now, mysticism is not foreign to science. Many scientists were and are mystics. Mysticism is an area of the human mind to enter into a world where discursive reasoning and empirical science cannot enter. Today science is giving us more and more evidence that the world we live in is much more than what the senses can perceive. Some examples are gravitational wave, God particle and most importantly dark energy and dark matter. They tell us that the physical world is no more limited to the empirical expertise. Mysticism should therefore be looked at as an effort of the human mind to enter the trans-rational and trans-empirical. From this point of view Einstein and Newton were all mystics.

In the past people thought that if something could not be understood by the present human rational method, it must be hollow or an illusion. This idea has been challenged by science. Consequently, the view that whatever is mystical is unreal and illusory is. Most scientists were in the mystical world in their most creative moments. Think of Einstein, he could never have reasoned in the traditional scientific way into relativity because it is highly counter-intuitive, because our reasoning is based on premises, and premises are based on experiences but our experiences never tell

us that time is relative or space is relative or the inter-convertibility of matter and energy. He could have done it only via some supra-sensory moment. Several other scientists like Arthur Eddington were also mystics in some ways. In the light of these considerations the pejorative tag that is put on mysticism will have to be revised. I would also give credibility to some religious mystics as well. Fritjof Capra talked about intuitions of eastern mystics. According to him, as given in his international bestseller *The Tao of Physics*, what the mystics foresaw thousands of years ago, the scientists are confirming today. The mind is capable of penetrating much deeper than empirical science.

It is also known that the medieval Christian-Islam theologies had their basis in Aristotelian Philosophy. Now, however, such a relationship seems to be often forgotten. Do you see ways today where science could act as a common ground for promoting inter-religious dialogue in India?

It is true that Islam and Christianity share a lot in common, not only culturally, philosophically, religiously but even to some extent theologically. In the Middle Ages Islam contributed immensely to the growth of the intellectual tradition as it preserved the Aristotelian heritage. My experience with them is limited and also my knowledge. So I do not wish to make any statements about this. Personally I think that Islam needs to reflect much more on modern science as some of their statements concerning the relationship between Islam and modern science are rather too general to be taken seriously by the scholars. In one of my published papers I argue that “science-religion dialogue can be a catalyst for effective inter-religious dialogue.” I say this because science is accepted and respected by both the religions. Also science does not get involved in too many controversies, and even if some arise there are ways to settle them because of the empirical backing in science. In science we can always find a common ground. It is not an agent but a catalyst. It can facilitate dialogue between different religions.

Coming to the Society of Jesus, why do fewer Jesuits now join scientific research and science-religion dialogue? How could we respond to the crisis?

There are many reasons for this cooling down of interest in scientific research and dialogue among the Jesuits. One of the saddest aspects of today's Jesuit society is the lack of awareness of the tremendous scientific heritage the Society has. Society was recognized by secular scholars as 'the scientific order' of the Catholic Church. This is absolutely true. Starting from the time of St. Ignatius, science was taken seriously by the Jesuit Order. St. Ignatius was not a scientist, but had a scientific temper and mindset. His "Contemplation to Attain Love (Contemplatio ad amorem) is a beautiful example of genuine scientific spirit. This has been very strongly present for the first three centuries of the Jesuit tradition. But slowly it began sagging. It's still there now, but not given any prominence. I feel sad that GC 36 made no mention of the importance of science and technology in today's world. It shows a sad ignorance or at least overlooking of the formidable scientific challenge the world is facing. The Jesuit society should have taken it earnestly. In my view, in the Catholic Church today our Jesuit Society is most prepared to meet this challenge. I also feel sad that the UAP (Universal Apostolic Preferences) also find no place for it.

The second reason for this apathy is due to the overemphasis on social activism. When Father Pedro Arrupe stressed social involvement by Jesuits it was never in his mind that this should be 'the' charism of the society. GC 32 Decree 4 has been overplayed much. The Society's creativity and initial spirit were dampened considerably not because of the social apostolate, but due to the overemphasis on that. Too many talented people went into it and that has stifled the scientific aspect. Many congregations have taken the social apostolate seriously. I know of it from my over 40 years of full involvement in JDV (Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth), Pune, where quite many congregations and dioceses are represented. But there

are very few people who engage in scientific research. Jesuits are one of the best candidates for that. Our contribution should be in all fields, “where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach.” Let social commitment remain where it is, but let more people take up scientific research as well.

ART GIVES AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE REALITY IN A DIFFERENT WAY

Asma Menon

Asma Menon holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the Government College of Arts and Crafts Chennai. She has been in mainstream art for over two decades and is a well-recognized name in painting and printmaking. Asma has held over 10 solo shows and has participated in more than 40 group shows, both national and international. Her works have been auctioned on many occasions. Her creative repertoire includes commissions for painting / murals / sculpture; illustrations for children's books; workshops for children; and 'relax with art' corporate training programmes. She writes on art and designs brochures for artists and press releases for galleries. Here, she speaks to Scholastic **Devadoss SJ** for Salaam.

Dev: Could you please tell us something about yourself?

Asma: Though my origins are from Gujarat, I was born and brought up in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. I belong to a small sect of Muslims called Ismailis. Our spiritual leader is the Aga Khan. From childhood onwards I had great interest in art. With the help of my parents, I could do my studies in Art. Presently, I am a fulltime artist.

What does art mean to you?

For me, art is my life. I cannot imagine myself without being a creative person. People are attracted towards art because it expresses people's feelings. Art gives an opportunity to see reality in a different way. It expresses different emotions.

What role does the artist have in society?

An artist has a great role to play in society. Art can change the life of a person. The very function of the art is to communicate

something. It has the power to get under the skin. One cannot be indifferent to art. It evokes a reaction, be it positive or negative.

What motivates you to do paintings on inter-religious issues?

My biggest motivation is the country from where I come. India is a country of pluralism. Though I come from a Muslim, Ismaili background, my upbringing was very multifaith, being among people from many other religions and cultures. They were part and partial of my growth during my childhood. And this faith in humankind as one is the way I operate. Thus, my paintings on the inter-religious dimension are result of my eclectic upbringing.

How do you seek out opportunities to do paintings on inter-religious issues? Do people support and encourage you in this?

I do ‘works’ on different religions. And whenever I do such paintings, people around me always support me. In fact, they encourage me. Moreover, they see these works as art, rather than naming them as linked to a particular religion.

This sort of art can bring people come together. It can help in building up a community where all are equal and are given due respect and dignity. God is one. If my work helps people gain spiritually, I am very happy and content.

Being a woman, how do you look at Mary, the mother of Jesus? Does she inspire you ?

I have great regard for Mother Mary. As a young woman, she had tremendous courage and willpower to go through the plan of God. Being a woman, I know how difficult this must have been. Mother Mary showed tremendous strength. Mother Mary is a great example for all women to face life’s challenges courageously.

In the present times, perhaps what humanity lacks the most is mercy and compassion. What do you have to say about this?

It is most unfortunate, but people have forgotten to be humane.

Kindness is a very important quality of a human being. I believe strongly that charity ought to begin at home. Charity means being merciful and compassionate towards our relatives and workers at home and to our neighbours. It needs to be emphasized in our society. What we can all do is to pray for this. And addition to praying, we also practising these virtues in our own life.

Jesus is considered to be one of the greatest prophets in Islam, and in Christianity, he is considered to be the embodiment of mercy and love of the Father in Heaven. What are your views on this?

Prophet Muhammad had great respect for Jesus. Jesus spoke about love, a concept which challenged many. He was the right person to come at the right time. I appreciate his courage and conviction. He stood by what he said. Jesus really suffered a lot when he was on Earth. He suffered for the love for humankind. His preaching was very radical, which disturbed the authorities of those times. His radicalism showed how we can be really human.

How do you think Islamic faith convictions correlate with Christian faith affirmations?

Christians and Muslims are People of the Book. That is the strength of us. Jews started it; Christians continued it, and Muslims concluded it. I personally experience much freedom at home to dwell on any religion. I see all in one, and I am very happy about it. Peace and harmony are what religions supposed to bring, as God is peace and love. But what we see today is just the opposite. Power plays a dividing factor among people of different religions.

Do you believe that you can help promote peace and harmony in the world by art?

Every human person has the potential to establish peace and harmony in the world in his or her way. I too have the capacity to do the same. I should do my part, and that is the beginning of my journey towards uniting the world.

What is your dream project?

My dream project is to paint in a public place based on a visual language of interfaith dialogue and interact with the public and discuss the work as it is unfolding. *Insha Allah* (If God wills).

THEOLOGY, WALLS, AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: A REVIEW ESSAY

Leo D. Lefebure

Theology Without Walls: The Transreligious Imperative.
Edited by Jerry L. Martin. London: Routledge, 2020. Pp. xvii
+ 250. US\$155.00.

Walls play many different roles in our lives: some walls mark boundaries; some defend borders from invaders or unwanted immigrants; some enclose prisoners lest they escape; some protect hillside land from erosion and agricultural crops from animals; and some walls support the roofs of buildings to make shelter and habitation possible. Given the variety of walls, the destruction of a wall can mean various things in different contexts: it can be part of a program of liberation or an expression of conquest. Ronald Reagan famously stated, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall”; and many Germans later rejoiced at the destruction of the Berlin Wall. The Letter to the Ephesians compares the hostility between Jews and Gentiles to a dividing wall that Jesus Christ has broken down (2:14), and Pope Francis has called for the removal of walls of separation: “How can we make it so that the welcoming of the other person and of those who are different from us because they belong to a different religious and cultural tradition prevails in our communities? How can religions be paths of brotherhood instead of walls of separation?” (See: Pope Francis, “Address at the Meeting on the Theme ‘Theology after *Veritatis Gaudium* in the Context of the Mediterranean,” Naples, June 21, 2019). On the other hand, destroying a wall can be an act and symbol of domination: in the ancient world a conquering empire would destroy the walls of a defeated city to humiliate it and render it defenseless. The title of this volume uses the impersonal, military-political image of walls as a metaphor for defensive protective barriers that need to be taken down. Asian and Asian American women have more commonly followed Rita Nakashima Brock in using the biological

metaphor of interstitial integrity, based on organs that overlap. Most of the authors in this volume view the destruction of walls as liberating; however, chaos theory advises us that any organism that does not have boundaries of some sort will not have a lasting identity but will flow into its environment.

Given the various forms of walls and of religious traditions, it is not surprising that the research program of Theology Without Walls (TWW) as a transreligious imperative takes many diverse forms. The volume, *Theology Without Walls: The Transreligious Imperative*, edited by Jerry L. Martin, brings together a wide variety of authors who approach transreligious theological reflection from different angles. Many authors who do not identify with any religious tradition assume that they have the right to appropriate aspects of all the world's religious traditions and use them for their own ends. Paul Knitter self-identifies as both Buddhist and Christian. Peter Feldmeier, S. Mark Heim, and Francis X. Clooney are rooted in the Christian tradition and open to learning from other traditions. Jeffery D. Long enters the conversation as a Hindu in the lineage of Ramakrishna.

Interreligious borrowing is as old as recorded religious history. Ancient Israelites borrowed religious images and practices from their neighbors. In many contexts in Asia, there is a long history of interreligious practice, as in the traditional Chinese practice of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and folk religions. In the first centuries of the Common Era there were significant numbers of Jewish Christians or Christian Jews. Many Hindus view Shakyamuni Buddha as a Hindu, but most Buddhists do not share this perspective.

Interreligious borrowing can be very creative, but borrowers have not always respected the integrity of the tradition being utilized. In traditional societies around the world, religious worldviews made strict demands upon practitioners, often with threats of dire consequences in the afterlife if religious and ethical norms were violated. Many persons in the United States

and Europe feel entitled to experiment by drawing aspects of various religious traditions into their own personal synthesis. In *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah and his colleagues interviewed an American woman named Sheila who described her practice of borrowing, appropriating, and forming her own personal tradition, which she called “Sheilism.” Many critics questioned the legitimacy of Sheila’s practice; but in *Theology Without Walls*, Christopher Denny defends Sheila and accepts the metaphor of religious appropriation as putting items into a shopping cart: “the spiritualities we carry forth in our lives are there because we placed them in our carts. . . . In that sense, we are all Sheilas.” Denny rejoices in the freedom of choice of each individual to invent a new, personal-style religion according to one’s preferences.

Many persons in Europe and North America who do this type of spiritual shopping feel little commitment to any tradition. Jeanine Diller compares religious affiliation to being a sports fan, as she claims that “identifying oneself with a religion is as easy as becoming a fan of a sports team. Nobody except me decides that I am an University of Michigan football fan, and I can choose to live out my fanhood with as much or as little devotion as I please” (173). Diller has little sense of a religious tradition making strong demands upon a person’s identity or of any role for religious leaders to decide on a person’s entrance into the tradition. As a philosopher, Diller plays with the question of how to proceed if there are three Ultimate Realities (theistic, acosmic, and cosmic, 179-80). One wonders what the word “ultimate” means in this instance. But the inevitable Trinitarian-sounding question emerges: are the three so-called Ultimate Realities at the end of the day manifestations of One Ultimate Reality (183)?

Linda Mercadante studies persons who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious” (SBNR), proposing that they “are not really an integrated identifiable group. Instead, they are more of a ‘demographic’ or ‘gerrymandered set’” (190). She notes that what they have in common is largely their rejection of religion and

religious institutions; many shape a “hybrid or syncretic assembly of spiritual practices and beliefs” (190). Mercadante finds some common threads that reflect continuing religious influence on SBNRs, including notions of transcendence/immanence, as well as perspectives on human nature, community, and the afterlife. She notes a paradox that many stress individual thoughts and choices, but they also seek a sense of community at least from time to time. Many seek a spiritual experience that yields an awareness of “cosmic consciousness” as “the location of internal divinity” (195). She suggests that theologians could “help SBNRs excavate their buried beliefs,” but she also acknowledges the formidable obstacles to creating an SBNR theology in “the focus on self-authority, individualism, and distrust of institutions” (198).

Welsey Wildman proposes a transreligious naturalist approach that rejects all claims of supernatural revelation. He explores the biological basis for human love and desire, arguing that all norms are simply human constructions. In a related essay, Wildman joins with Jerry Martin in offering a case study of transreligious theology that surveys the options of viewing ultimate reality (agential being, ground of being, or subordinate god). Wildman and Martin defer to the alleged expertise of “the most sophisticated philosophical understandings in the various traditions as offering a kind of religious ‘expertise’” (126). This alleged expertise yields a quest for pluralism but little sense of any religious community in which transreligious theology would be grounded.

One danger in the appropriation of religious traditions is the hegemony of a particular agenda dictating the terms of the relationship. Followers of religious traditions who are vulnerable and historically marginalized, such as Native Americans and Jews, may see the appropriation of their tradition by others as a violation and humiliation. Christians have a long history of taking over Jewish texts, beliefs, and practices, transforming their significance, and then telling Jews that they never understood their tradition from the beginning. The history of Christian

interpretation of the First Testament of the Bible is for the most part a history of appropriating in an atmosphere of hostility [See: Leo D. Lefebure, *True and Holy: Christian Scripture and Other Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 50-98].

Some Jews have expressed concerns over Christians celebrating Seder Services. Some European Americans have celebrated American Indian practices and rituals, but American Indians are often wary of others appropriating their traditions and putting them to very different uses in other contexts with other agendas. Ritual practice is a particularly sensitive area because it expresses the central identity of a community; many communities restrict full participation in their rituals to those who are fully initiated.

In *Theology Without Walls*, J.R. Hustwit acknowledges the danger of malappropriation and comments: “Appropriation itself is inescapable and only a vice if we fail to validate the meaning we have guessed against the structure of the text” (160). Hustwit prizes an outsider’s perspective on what constitutes the structure of a text; he does not discuss the historic violations of the integrity of the persons in religious communities subjected to appropriation, such as Native Americans. Kurt Anders Richardson points out that most practitioners of TWW “are Western, mostly ‘Christian’ in terms of theological traditions and their institutions of learning, quite ‘Western’ in terms of sociopolitical models of human and communal ethics—insofar as the latter reflect theological reasoning” (37). He proposes TWW as a form of open-field theology in the sense of offering a level playing field to rival approaches, resisting any domination by religious or political authorities.

One of the major questions for the open-ended practitioners of TWW is what type of dwelling place is under construction and who will dwell there: Will it have walls of its own? What type of community would be shaped by TWW? Jonathan Weidenbaum approaches these questions from the individual-oriented heritage of William James as a “Pluralistic Mystic” (98), but he concludes by acknowledging the insistence of Josiah Royce that authentic

Christian experience “*must be social*” (105). Paul Hedges suggests that the traditional experience of East Asia of strategic religious participation in a shared religious landscape provides a venerable precedent for contemporary Westerners.

Paul Knitter provides an example of identifying with both Buddhist and Christian traditions, stressing the apophatic element in each. Knitter proposes functional analogies between these traditions with the result that “Jesus saves in essentially the same way that the transcendent Buddhasaves,” by revealing ultimate reality (67). Knitter assimilates the two traditions so strongly that the profound differences between the traditions lose their importance.

Rory McEntee, whose spiritual journey was guided by the late Trappist Thomas Keating, recounts the monastic encounters at the Trappist Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, where Catholic and Buddhist monks meditated together in silence and then shared their spiritual journeys as individuals without pretending to speak for their traditions. One outcome was a statement of eight points of agreement about ultimate reality and the human condition. McEntee respects the traditions to which the Buddhist and Catholic monastics belongs, but he confesses that his only tradition is interspiritual, arising in the interchange of the monastics (96).

There are moments of intense irony along the way. John Thatamanil teaches at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, one of the most distinguished Protestant schools of theology in the United States. The Protestant Reformation is usually understood to have been launched by Martin Luther’s critique of works righteousness in Roman Catholicism, and most Protestants throughout history have followed Luther in rejecting the notion that humans can achieve salvation through their religious practices. Thatamanil proposes an interreligious form of achieving knowledge of God through meditation practice: “First-order religious knowing, the kind that Evagrius commends, is acquired only by means of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and meditation.

Without proper compartment, there is no true *knowledge of the real*” (58, emphasis in the original). Thatamanil commends the binocular vision of practitioners who gain interreligious wisdom through practicing more than one therapeutic regimen. Thatamanil also proposes that “ultimate reality is a multiplicity and not just an undifferentiated simplicity” (60), a thesis long accepted by Christians but contrary to Islamic faith.

Other authors in this volume seek to remain rooted in the traditional path of a particular religious community, while being open to learning from other religious paths. Catholic theologian Peter Feldmeier praises openness to goodness in other traditions, citing the 1974 affirmation of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference that the religions of Asia reveal that God’s Spirit is active in all peoples and cultures (110). He notes the methodological challenges faced by both inclusivists and pluralists, and he poses the question of whether the scope of TWW may be too wide (114-15). He also notes the challenge from the late George Lindbeck of whether we can translate between religions at all without profoundly changing their meaning. Feldmeier insists that boundaries or fences can be permeable, but they remain necessary for a community’s identity. He cautions that it is not clear that TWW has a community to address.

S. Mark Heim proposes the image of a home with large windows, exemplified by Gothic cathedrals which consist more of windows than walls (210). Heim questions the possibility in principle of Jerry Martin’s call for theologians to discuss all religious experience from whatever source equally. Heim warns that an undecided sampling of the entire range of religious experience is unmanageable in practice and unlikely to be fruitful. He questions how TWW will proceed in making selections, evaluations, and judgments of so wide a range of material. He compares the quest of TWW for something new in religious history to the claims of the Sikh and Ba’hai traditions that seek to integrate all other traditions into their own horizon, and he notes the Christian origins of many of the practitioners of TWW. Heim forthrightly asserts: “No

theology lacks walls, as no complex organism lacks a body plan and no cells lack membranes” (206-07).

In a similar vein Francis X. Clooney presents his understanding of comparative theology as requiring a firm structure rooted in the Catholic tradition. Clooney reviews aspect of the Catholic tradition, with particular attention to Jesuits who were active in Asia and who were open to learning from Asian religious traditions. Clooney rejects the quest for “unlimited verbal and mental fluidity” and defends the importance of doctrines in interreligious studies and warns that without doctrines we may lack direction and aim (220). He proposes that religions should not be seen as properties with fences but rather as homes with walls that make possible windows and doors (223).

Jeffery D. Long proposes that Ramakrishna anticipated TWW through his journey through multiple religious traditions and his presentation of both the Buddha and Jesus Christ as avatars. For Ramakrishna and his followers, the Hindu belief in one Supreme Reality manifesting itself in multiple avatars resolves the challenge of religious diversity.

The volume closes with an intriguing essay by Hyo-Dong Lee, who was raised in a diffuse religious landscape in South Korea, influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Seondo (Korean Daoism), and who was later baptized as an evangelical Protestant Christian. Writing his dissertation on Hegel and the *Daodejing*, Hyo-Dong Lee drew on the Neo-Confucian metaphysics of Zhu Xi to propose *qi* (psychophysical energy) and *li* (pattern) as dynamic structures of all reality. What emerges is not the ambitious project of Jerry Martin to draw upon all religious traditions, but a more focused reflection drawing on certain aspects of East Asian and Christian reflection.

While there are many questions about the viability of the project of TWW as proposed by Martin, this volume contributes to the discussion by juxtaposing differing voices on what of the most important issues of our time.

COMPARATIVE TREND IN INTERRELIGIOUS APPROACH

Xavier Tharamel, SJ

Introduction

Francis X. Clooney, SJ, professor at Harvard University, is the chief proponent of the comparative theology in view of building up the interreligious relations.¹Clooney's comparative approach can be characterized by two aspects. Firstly, his insistence on the close study of the text of another tradition outside the scholar's own tradition by paying close attention to its linguistic and cultural contexts. Clooney thinks that it is imperative to bring serious, deep knowledge of another theological system into his or her own theological realm. Thus, the second aspect is to realize that the comparative theology has profound implications for the theologians' own religious tradition. In Clooney's case, as a Jesuit priest who has training in classical Hinduism, this means to do comparative theological work, Indological work and write about it in a way that allows theologians to reflect on its meaning for his/her tradition.

Facets of Comparative Model

Above all, the comparative approach evolves dialectically. The starting point of comparison is with the serious study of another religion, mainly by means of reading classic texts, sometimes by means of personal dialogue with the practitioners of the other religious paths, and also by combining both methods.²The dialogue with an another tradition could lead to transformation

1 See Catherine Cornille, (ed.) *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*(Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 2002), p. 44.

2 See Francis X. Clooney, SJ, *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press. 1993), Pp.153-6, 163-4.

within the home tradition in which its classic texts, art, rituals, ascetic practices are reinterpreted in the background of the study of the other tradition. The critical parallels established in the work of comparison can be positive or negative. It means that sometimes the correlation will be a recognition of relationship and sometimes of divergence. Both similarity and difference are of theological significance to the comparative theologian. Secondly, comparative theology underscores the fact that thinking interreligiously is an intrinsic aspect of the theological enterprise itself.³ Clooney thinks that “comparison and the appropriation of the new and different now take place within Christian theology, while it is being formulated, not as an appendage or corollary to an already fully formed theology.”⁴ Doing theology comparatively means developing a correlation of doctrines and paths to further the relations among different religions.⁵ It is not only a revisionist approach but also a constructive project in which theologians interpret the meaning and truth of one tradition by making critical correlations with the classics of another religious tradition.⁶

Third, the problems of interpretation presented by comparison cannot be confined to the soteriological questions that tend to dominate theologies of religions. The comparative theology deals with every aspect of the doctrine and practice of one’s tradition. It involves the intellectually rigorous interpretation

3 See James L. Fredericks, ‘Interreligious Friendship: A New Theological Virtue’, in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (35:2, Spring 1998), Pp.159-74

4 Francis X. Clooney, SJ, ‘The Study of Non-Christian Religions in the Post-Vatican II Church’, in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (28:3, 1991), p. 488.

5 See also Francis X. Clooney, SJ, “Neither Here Nor There: Crossing Boundaries, Becoming Insiders, Remaining Catholic”, in Jose Cabezon and Sheila Devaney (eds), *Identity and Politics of Identity in Scholarship in the Study of Religion* (New York. Routledge. 2004), Pp.99-111

6 See Francis X. Clooney, SJ, *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps to Break Down the Boundaries Between Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Pp. 10-11.

of the classic texts, doctrines and practices of one tradition in its entirety.⁷Indeed, the comparative theology does not dismiss a healthy apologetics. At the same time, an appropriate apologetics does not decree "...certain theological affirmations immune from the need to be revised by means of comparison with the affirmations of another tradition."⁸ Fourth, the comparative approach depends on limited experiments in comparison instead of theories about religious experience or religion in general that seek to provide a foundation for comparison. In other words, a comparative approach takes effort to understand a different text through learning about things and ideas that were previously 'other'.⁹Clooney thinks that the reciprocal character of comparative theology suggests a hermeneutical project more than being a constructive venture. A comparative theologian could construct correlations by affirming loyalty to one's own tradition. Clooney would call it as 'vulnerability' to the truth of another religious tradition.¹⁰

Comparative Hermeneutics

The significant point is to have a comparative hermeneutics in order to understand the religious other that does not invalidate the other. Clooney thinks that the work of comparative theology usually leads to a heightened "...appreciation of the ambiguity and polyvocality of the home tradition."¹¹ Thus, a comparative hermeneutics is significant in this approach. Most importantly, while doing comparative theology, one requires to resist the

7 See Francis Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* (London: T and T Clark International, 2010), Pp. xi-xii.

8 Francis Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, p. xii.

9 See Clooney. 'The Study of Non-Christian Religions', Pp. 489-90.

10 See Francis X. Clooney. *Theology After Vedanta* (Alban•, NY: SUNPress, 1993), Pp. 4-6. James L. Fredericks, *Faith among Faiths* (Mahwah. NJ: Paulist Press. 1999), Pp.169-71.

11 Francis Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, p. xiii.

temptation to escape the tension of rootedness in one's own tradition and vulnerability to other tradition as well. It is significant to point out that Clooney's approach emphasizes the commitment to the home tradition in order to make the work of comparison theological. The question of how comparative theology is related to comparative religion and religious studies is juxtaposed with the loss of the appeal of the other can lead to the question of the relationship of comparative theology to the theology of religions. Clooney's comparative approach should be distinguished from theology of religions. The theology of religions would mean an attempt to understand the theological meaning of the multiplicity of religions in keeping with the doctrinal requirements of one's tradition.

Theology of Religions vs Comparative Theology

The fundamental question of theologies of religions is soteriological which asks; can the one who does not follow a particular path be 'saved'?¹² As a rule, theologies of religions are not based on detailed studies of the specific teachings of the other religious traditions. They depend instead on meta-religious theories of religion or concern themselves with the doctrinal requirements of one's own tradition.¹³ Thus, the question is raised whether the comparative approach of Clooney should be considered as an alternative to the theology of religions. For the most Christian theologies of religions, the comparative procedures have commonly been considered secondary in the construction of comprehensive theological interpretations of other religions.¹⁴ The comparative approach seeks a comprehensive theological understanding of religious diversity and insist on a detailed study of other religions.

12 See Paul F. Knitter. *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). p.3.

13 See *Ibid.*, Pp. 5-8.

14 See Francis Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, p. xii.

Clooney presumes that the candidates for a Christian theology of religions is not adequate to the hermeneutical requirements of doing theology comparatively.¹⁵ By interpreting the religious classics of other traditions within the preview of the doctrinal demands of Christian faith could lead to systemic distortions in the reception of the other. Thus, any preoccupation with a theology of religions would not help Christians in their need to respond to the pluralism of religions. It is true in the case with fidelity to their own tradition as well as with creativity in embracing the other. It is indicated that among various candidates of the theology of religions, the inclusivist or fulfilment model is the most adequate to the demands of Christian faith.

In the past, Christian theologies of religions have not been adequately thoughtful of the domination of their discourse. When theologies of religions function as a model for doing theology comparatively, the comparative theologian is placed in an inappropriate position of knowing more about other believers than they know about oneself. Clooney suggests that the comparative theology, more than theologies of religion, is able to be attentive to the crises of grand narratives brought about by the growing proximity of all the grand narratives to one another. Religious or philosophical theories about the ultimate unity of all religions setting aside, this postmodern condition is where we all find ourselves in beginning to think theologically about ourselves and our world.¹⁶ When these two are brought together, the in-depth study of another religious tradition and reflecting upon it for insights or perspectives on one's own theological tradition would concurrently take place.¹⁷

15 See *Ibid.*, xiii.

16 See Fredericks, 'A Universal Religious Experience?' in *Harizens Journal of the College Theology Society* (22:1, Spring 1995), Pp.67-87.

17 See Francis Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, p. xv.

Conclusion

The paper has been considering the comparative model in the pluralistic engagement. Clooney's comparative approach emphasizes on a close study of the text of another tradition outside the scholar's own tradition. He invites scholars to engage in a close study of a second tradition outside one's own and read its texts and commentaries by paying close attention to its linguistic and cultural frameworks. It is also imperative that the scholar brings serious knowledge of another theological system into his or her own theological space. This has a profound implication for one's own religious tradition. As a Catholic theologian with training in classical Hinduism, Clooney takes up comparative theological works, Indological work and write about it in a way that facilitates Catholic theologians to reflect on its meaning for the Catholic theology.¹⁸ Finally, the comparative approach recognizes differences without absolutizing any religion. Thus, Clooney brings in a fresh approach in dialogue commitment and indicates that the heart of each religion is a Scripture which embodies the core experience of that particular religion. The crystallisation point in comparative approach is that the relationship between God and the humans and upholding the uniqueness of every religion.¹⁹ It is assumed that this endeavor of comparative approach is to have constructive impact on Christian theology in future.²⁰

18 Painadath, "My Pilgrimage on the Landscape of Religions" in *Spirituality Through Interreligious Experience*, p. 299.

19 See Painadath, "My Pilgrimage on the Landscape of Religions" in *Spirituality Through Interreligious Experience*, p. 299.

20 David Tracy. 'Comparative Theology' in *The Encyclopaedia of Religions*, Lindsay Jones (ed.), Vol.13 (2nd ed.) (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), p. 9127.

