Editorial

Challenges facing theological education and ministerial formation have almost always been determined by the time and location where the training took place. However, the depth and intensity of those challenges could vary from place to place and people to people. The task has not been made any easier in the present Indian context owing to the enormity of the challenges thrown up by the rapidly changing scenario. While there is an economic boom on the one hand with the resultant increase in wealth and expanding malls for the benefit of the few, there is abject poverty of the masses owing to the ecological imbalance accompanied by the loss of forests, agricultural land and the right to livelihood. Basic education and primary health care have been replaced with higher education institutions and super speciality hospitals. More and more facilities are made available to those who can afford it, but the poor are even loosing the little access they had to meet the basic necessities of life.

Despite the seriousness of the challenges that is faced by theological education and ministerial training in such a context, the changes have been rather slow on account of various factors. While some feel quite comfortable with the kind of education currently being offered, there are others who consider the present system needs a complete revamp, still others are of the opinion that the present system with adequate changes and modifications could suffix. All may be right at varying degrees. Yet it is important to recognize that a basic understanding of the content of Christian faith and a suitable pedagogy to perceive that faith experience under the present circumstances and a right perception of the socio-cultural and economic realities that make up our peculiar ministerial settings are key factors for any relevant theological education.

Some of the articles in this issue aim to address concerns that come to the fore from the current Indian setting. R. John Vijayaraj looks at the Lukan Infancy Narratives (Lk. 1:5-2:52) with focus on the human rights concerns. He argues that the salvation Luke narrates in the Infancy Narratives relates to the total experience of the human person and is not divorced from the concerns of basic human rights. V.J. John focuses on the concerns of ecology as he enquires into the relevance of the creation images in the Gospel of John as a possible means of appreciation of the inter-relation between God, humans, and nature as agents in partnership in the divine economy of salvation. Ezamo Murry's article is concerned with the role of Women in Ministry. He argues that the involvement of women in ministry is essential to "complete God's symmetry

of the whole person." Hence their involvement in ministry is a divine imperative not a mere sharing in the men's privilege. M. Peter Singh draws our attention to the fast developing Information Technology that divides the Indian masses as those with access to information and communication technology and those who do not have them. This further challenges the role of the churches as those with a prophetic vision towards building up egalitarian and just communities. Don Schweitzer stress on the importance of the Quest for the Historical Jesus from a Western Christian setting despite the many difficulties such endeavours have raised.

He considers it as theologically important for the church to seek clarity about the person of Jesus who it seeks to follow and to assess its own identity and calling to be a responsible witness in its own context. P. Victor Premsagar recaptures the efforts of an Indian Christian convert, namely Rev. Yisu Das Tiwari, from his Indian experience to understand the person of Jesus. The efforts have been clarified through the book *Theology of a Convert* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000) by his son Dr. Ravi Tiwari which Premsagar terms "A Contribution to Indian Christian Theology from the Cultural and Religious Heritage of India."

James Elisha's article "Francis Xavier and Portuguese Administration in India" argues that there was cordial relationship between Francis Xavier and the Portuguese administration in India, which Francis used advantageously for the benefit of his converts. Dyron B. Daughrity traces the history of Missions in Tirunelveli from the beginning until the creation of it as a diocese in 1896. He highlights the various important events in the Missions in Tirunelveli during the period covered with a brief assessment of his own. D. Isaac Devadoss takes up where Dyron leaves and continues with the history of this Mission until the church union in 1947 with focus on Lutheran-Anglican Dialogue. His critical remarks on the dialogue efforts are particularly helpful. Atula Imsong deals with the more recent history of Christianity in India tracing the contributions of the Indian Christians in the Indian national movement despite the fact that the Church as a whole did not actively participate. The final article, "Early Beginning of Science and Religion" by S. Robertson, dwells on factors and persons responsible for the establishment of "Science and Religion" as a department and the contributions of Max Muller, in particular. Robertson argues for the pursuance of the study of Religion with due respect to the plurality of faith traditions and with a view to inculcating religious harmony among followers of differing faith orientations.

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