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Introduction

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The Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin is a scholarly journal published jointly at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria, Canada, and at the Institute of Philosophy and Culture, Madras, India. The annual issues will present articles, book reviews, viewpoint essays and news items on Hinduism and Christianity and their interrelationship based upon historical materials and contemporary experience.

Materials selected for publication will be balanced between historical research and contemporary practice and, where possible, should employ analytical and theoretical analysis set within the context of our shared human experience. The aim of the journal is to create a worldwide forum for the presentation of Hindu-Christian scholarly studies, book reviews and news of past and upcoming events. Contributors are invited for the next issue and should be addressed to either to the Editor or Co-Editor. Articles of about 3000-3500 words are preferred. It would be appreciated if the paper copy could be accompanied by a diskette. All articles are subject to review before acceptance and may receive editorial modifications in the course of publication.

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INTRODUCTION

SOME THREE HUNDRED years ago the poet Robert Burns wrote, "O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us! It wad frae mony a blunder free us, and foolish notion...". In this special issue, the truth of Burns' observation is reflected in the articles offered on Hindu-Christian experience in the context of pluralism.

Francis Clooney describes living in the Srivaisnava community of Madras as an experience of living in a world formed by sacred text – in this case the Tiruvaymoli. For him this brought alive patterns of his own Christian tradition that he had not previously seen. It also led him to reflect on the necessary luxury of doing Hindu-Christian studies.

Margaret Chatterjee asks if pluralism necessarily leads to relativism, and replies that the diversity of pluralism ends in relativity rather than relativism – and in the goal of understanding rather than mere toleration. The Hindu response to religious plurality is examined in the thought of Rammohun Roy, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan.

John Carman reflects on the same theme from his perspective as a professor at Harvard emphasizing the boon of understanding that Hindu-Christian studies brings to pluralism. Diana Eck writes on her encounter of God in the midst of the Hindu-Christian experience that has composed her life, and the journey from her home in Bozeman, Montana, to the banks of the Ganges in Banaras. This article is an excerpt from her new book which is reviewed in this issue.

Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, long-time scholar at the Christian Institute for the

Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, offers a particular reflection on the Dalits of India and their life experience in the midst of a variety of religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and other political and religious reform movements. The Dalit critique of interreligious dialogue is analysed.

Finally, Purushottama Bilimoria, a Hindu living in Australia, offers a critical review of Hindu-Christian dialogue in that country and the special place Australia has accorded Bede Griffiths. David Scott, from his long-time vantage point at the Bangalore United Theological College, offers his viewpoint on "Religious Fundamentalism and Pluralism in India" and concludes that in contemporary India a genuine pluralism seems unlikely.

This is a rich and timely issue of the *Bulletin*. It coincides with the formal foundation of a Hindu-Christian Studies Society which will become the parent body of this journal. Details on the founding meeting (at the American Academy of Religion, Chicago, 19 Nov. 1994), which will also feature a panel presentation on Diana Eck's book, *Encountering God*, may be found in the *Reports* section.

Finally let me thank the United Church of Canada and the Sekretariat für Internationale Solidarität of the Missionsprokur der Oberdeutschen Jesuitenprovinz of Nürnberg, Germany, for financial contributions which made possible the publication and mailing of this issue.

Harold Coward, Editor
University of Victoria