

Andreas Bsteh (Ed.)

*Christian Faith
in Dialogue with
Hindu Religious Traditions*

Lectures – Questions – Interventions

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Preface

The presentation of major subjects of Hindu religious traditions and their discussion in the interest of promoting Hindu-Christian dialogue in the first volume, is in the second followed by an exposition of central topics of Christian theology and philosophy that deal with basic issues relevant for the encounter of Christianity and Hinduism. The papers presented by scholars in the fields of philosophy of religion, Old and New Testament exegetics, systematic theology and history of dogma, canon law, and liturgics were then discussed at length by the other scholarly participants, theologians, philosophers, and Indologists. It was a privilege for our Institute for Theology of Religions to see that the major number of participants in the Symposium had also joined the preceding seminar which is published in volume 1. So a maximum inner continuity was achieved in the discussion of those important topics which were broached here in favour of deepening mutual understanding between Christian and Hindu believers.

The general tendency in the exchange of views and sincere reflections appeared to be not in the line of abstaining, minimalizing or harmonizing intrareligious and interreligious differences, tensions and aporias, but to realize and elucidate them in the horizon of transcendence, of that reality which ultimately surpasses all human capacities. The statement of Jan C. Heesterman in his first paper on "The Vedic Sacrifice" with regard to the nature of Hinduism, that it remains "inaccessible to our categorizations" and "needs constant re-thinking," was it not basically true with regard to all our dealing with religious truth during both symposia, in the realm of Hindu and Christian traditions? "Uncomfortable, if not disquieting, as this may be, it should not surprise us. The religious has always been a matter of 're-thinking,' since religion is, by definition, refractory, contradictory, a stumbling block, a scandal to humans; it cannot be belittled." (volume 1, p. 11)

This general tendency became obvious not least in our option to base all our Christian initiatives in the field of dialogue with other religious traditions on the ground of the original testimony of our faith, transmitted in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and kept alive in the manifold traditions of the Church by virtue of the Spirit of truth who will guide the disciples of Jesus into all the truth, on the one hand, and on the firm

fundament of the authentic texts of the main inner-religious currents that emerged from the original impulses which gave rise to the great religions of mankind, on the other.

The ensemble of papers, presented in this book and followed by all the sincere discussions in the study groups and plenary discussions, need not be interpreted; they wish to speak for themselves. To support the inner connection of the various subjects which were dealt with in the single presentations in both Symposia and the subsequent discussion, the reader is invited to make use of the different indexes added to both volumes, in particular of the "Index of Subjects" in volume 2 whose primary aim is exactly this interlocking of the various motifs and lines of thought in both volumes centred on issues that were taken up in varying contexts.

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