



TRACI
Wishes you
A
Blessed Christmas
&
Happy New Year

CHRISTMAS VIGNETTES

For the last several weeks and months, every morning I open the newspaper to read that the economy is doing badly; that the Indian economy grew by less than 5 percent in 2019 and that perhaps worse is to come. Newspaper headlines come to life in other ways; at the market, a lot of vegetables are unaffordable although it is onions that we are reading about, the household help asks for a raise, though I haven't got one in some years and over all, the Christmas season is one that is heavy on the pocket. Now one may ask what have these things got to do with Christmas. Nothing on the surface, except that they made me sit up and think of the cost that the various characters of the Christmas had paid. Financial perhaps, but also other costs too.

As we concentrate on the biblical characters in the cast of the first Christmas drama we realize each of them had to pay a cost. Joseph and Mary had a massive cost. It cost them a great deal of anxiety and loss of reputation. Joseph had to be shocked by the news that Mary was with child. Mary would also be offended by his doubt, and heavy with exasperation in trying to rationalize the virgin birth. It cost them the security of home to get to Bethlehem, and even more so during their exile in Egypt. They were not ready for such a commotion in their lives.

We would all choose to focus on the heavenly hosts rather than the animosity of Herod. We would instead point to the manger, the Magi, and the missives from heaven rather than this unpleasant picture of the murder of the Holy Innocents. But that was a component of the cost of Christmas. Light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, and the consequence has been war between the powers of light and darkness. Herod tried to kill Christmas by killing Christ, and this terrible denunciation of God's gift has persisted all through history. Christmas has cost droves of people their lives down the centuries. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and so it is worth the cost. Even if Christmas costs you your life it is the deal of a lifetime, for to die in Christ is gain, for in Christ there is victory over death.



Dr. SHANTANU DUTTA
TRACI Chairperson

“EXPLORING THEMES OF SUFFERING AND HOPE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION”

TRACI conducted a seminar led by *Ms. Bindulata Barik* on “Exploring Themes of Suffering and Hope in the Book of Revelation” on the 12th of November 2019 at TRACI House. As many as 19 participants from different walks of life came to *listen, think, learn and reflect* in the form of 'Q & A' and *feedback questionnaire* to this *deep, timely and relevant scholarly piece* of the author from her book, '*Persecution & Hope*'.

Ms Barik neatly walked us through by her thematic divisions of the whole book. She cleared the air of many, who have *pre-conceived fears, difficult, greatly misunderstood & least read* books of the Bible for whatever reasons. She also briefly shed light on the *biblical, theological, cultural and socio-political relevance* of the '*then & there*' and the '*here & now*' of the book. Undisputedly, the Church timelessly experienced persecution, social marginalisation, religious and political hostilities on account of practicing and witnessing their faith in Jesus Christ. But, those who remained faithful to their faith through thick and thin might entail suffering & persecution while witnessing for Christ.

Ms Barik concludes that, the book of Revelation gives us a resounding hope to the witness bearer at all times in the midst of suffering & persecution. For God, our judge who is sovereign over all powers has protected them since the day they have put their faith in Christ. Let God take vengeance over the evil powers. Stand firm, since God has crowned the faithful ones with eternal life. Lastly, believers should be confident that it is the work of God and they are participants in God's Mission.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

11th January, 2020 : Workshop on "Media & Story-telling", by Mr. Vishal Arora.

Register: <https://forms.gle/CZtNVbVHdHgrkxc36>

Every 3rd Saturday : Pandita Ramabai Book Study

Every 3rd Saturday : Delhi Reflection Group

TRACI LECTURE 2019

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS : A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

India is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change according to report released by Environment think tank Germanwatch, we have newspaper reports callings out Delhi as a smoke chamber, stories of floods, records storms, drought etc. And in the midst of rising concerns, on the 29th Nov 2019, TRACI organised the lecture on 'Climate Change and its Implications: A Christian Response' in TWR, New Delhi. The third lecture in the series which began with the annual conference on 10th Sept on the theme: God, Humans and Earth: Climate Change and its implication.



Brief presentation on the present climate change scenario by Roy K Alex reacquainted the attendees with the grim reminder that the world today may already have crossed a series of climate tipping points as reported by scientific data. These reports presents an almost apocalyptic scenario that leaves one feeling almost helpless and small in the face of the enormity of the situation and the response of the world leaders in the various summits seems to be polarising the issue even further as the North- South debate on responsibility is at an impasse. The poor continue to be more vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and it highlights the inequality and brokenness of the current system.

Climate change is thus a justice issue and a theological response is the need of the hour for understanding and addressing environmental concerns. Rev. Dr. Praveen Perumala (CSI-EMS Liaison Officer, Chennai) in delivering the lecture provided us a lens to look at the issue theologically. While the Bible does not specifically make a reference to climate change and how to deal with it, beginning with Genesis, the creation story, we see a project that God says is good. In the triune God we see a relational God and creation being a reflection of this relationality and humankind being called to be stewards. However sin destroyed the beauty of creation. Thus we need to recognise the brokenness of the system and the need for restoration and according to Rev. Dr. Perumala, the only way to do this is by responding in the spirit of repentance and reconciliation.

There has to be a paradigm shift in Christian's response by recognising Christianity as a movement and the Church as a community of believers that recognises that God's kingdom is not in the afterlife but is here and now and to that extent, we are partners in the creation project. Thus examining the past in the spirit of repentance and reconciliation and responding to climate change is required of Christians. The theology of ecological justice entails that christianity is a movement in solidarity: we share solidarity with minorities, tribals and adivasis to safeguard their rights and their environment through constitutional provisions, develop a critical understanding of patriarchal structure and exploitation. Finally environment and climate change concerns also transcends state boundaries. Thus another response would be to forge solidarity with global movements that works on demystifying myths of economic growth, and technological solutions to problems that men have created in the first place.

The lecture saw a healthy participation of students, working people, ministers, academicians and hopefully the conversations would go on.



A one day consultation on Current Trends and Church Engagement was held on 21st September 2019 at TWR Hall, New Delhi. The focus was on the role of the Church "to be catalytic for the restoration of open and the free forms of expression, as it has been in numerous movements in the past". Dr. Shantanu Dutta, Chairperson of TRACI, began the consultation with a brief introduction.

Mr. Sanjiv Ailawadi presented a paper on a critical reflection on the basis of the church in India. He concluded by exhorting us to create change and to be catalysts of change. Rev. Dr. Monodeep Daniel responded to his paper by giving the present scenario of the church in our nation.

Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob presented the paper on the current scenario and its implications. She made the observation, by presenting various facts and figures of the present time, that 'by and large there is apathy and paralysis of response that should otherwise grip a responsive society'. Mr. A J Philip responded to the paper.

Rev. C B Samuel led the session on the way forward: re-imagining the Church. He exhorted all to focus on God of the Church and be radically committed to the Jesus of the Bible. Participants after meaningful discussions and deliberations, presented specific suggestions for the church to engage in bringing change in the society. Fr. Denzil of ISI concluded the programme with prayer. Mr. Raaj Mondol led the whole programme, collected the feedback and proposed the follow-up programmes to the core group. 71 people from different churches and organizations participated in the programme.



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