



TRACI Reflections

Theological Research And
Communication Institute



Everyone Needs Hope

Veio Pou

It isn't unusual anymore to wake up to 'bad' news update from all forms of media outlets that feed us. Death, tragedy, disaster, misfortune, violence, discrimination, etc. are always the trending ones and often sensationalized. Enlightening news has become a rare commodity. And for a year that's hard by coronavirus pandemic, we are ending the year on a somber note. At a time like this we can't help but wonder 'what has our world come to?'

Even as I write this the farmers agitation is worsening and gaining a nationwide momentum. We are possibly staring at a catastrophe. There is so much chaos and hopelessness in our country at the moment. And the existential problem of pain and suffering has once again surfaced to dominate discourses. For ages humanity has sought an answer to end them without much success. But the Bible gives the reason for our problem – that is, we are entangled in sin and there is no way to free ourselves from it. Now, what the world needs is 'hope'. Fully knowing our helplessness, God became man in the form of Jesus to redeem us. But he had to pay a heavy price for it by dying on the cross for our sins. The good news for us, however, is that "...whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3: 16). So, Jesus is the answer to the world's problem. That's the story of Christmas!

Yet, to observe that we are still facing similar problems, more than 2000 years after Jesus walked on earth, one is compelled to ask, 'what has become of us?' I think a fundamental issue is the failure of his followers in responding to his mission. When Jesus began his ministry, one of the first things he did was to visit his hometown Nazareth, teaching in synagogues. In one of these moments, he unrolled the scroll of Scripture and read from Isaiah 61: 1-2, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". Just after reading this he added, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (See Luke 4: 14-30). While Jesus asserted with authority to prove that he was the Messiah as prophesized in the Old Testament (OT) he also opened the door for his followers to peep into where they are called to. The call is the same for us today.

If we look closely, one important connecting thread for "the poor", "the prisoners", "the blind" and "the oppressed" is that they all need HOPE. They all hoped to see a better day, and sooner. While Jesus was on earth this was one of his major concerns. The 'good news' that he preached was the message of hope for the poor, the needy and the oppressed. One of the many problems that humanity continues to struggle with is the stark reality of poverty. And when he said, "The poor you will always have with you..." (Matt 26: 11; Mark 14: 7; John 12: 8) Jesus was referring to a condition that human beings will continue to face. He often told his listeners not to be obsessed with earthly wealth but share it with the poor, like his address to the rich young man (Matt 19: 21; Mark 10: 21; Luke 18: 22). I think we need to take this concern of Jesus to our hearts if we truly claim to be his disciples.

The other section of people who much needed the message of hope is the oppressed. We need not go any further to see who belongs to these category. The Gospel of Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus that included five women – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary. This is extraordinary because women are usually not listed in patriarchal genealogies. In fact, they lived a life of anonymity and not counted in. A closer look at these characters reveal that they are truly the oppressed, the marginalized, the stigmatized and the prisoners within the society with no freedom. Tamar was violated and unjustly treated; Rahab was ostracized and despised; Ruth was the social outcaste and obscured; Bathsheba was traumatized and humiliated; Mary certainly would have lived a life of disgrace and dishonor. It is also interesting that the four OT women were all Gentiles which showed how God's grace was to be extended beyond the Jewish people. The fact that they were all widows also showed how vulnerable they were as individuals. But the beauty of Christmas message is that Jesus came for broken people like them.

TRACI KERALA CHAPTER

The TRACI Kerala Chapter was officially inaugurated on 22nd August with the Word and World Webinar. Rev. Dr. Idicheria Ninan offered the dedication prayer and Dr. Jacob Samuel gave the inaugural speech. Mr. Mathew Varghese, Director TRACI was the webinar resource person.

The Kerala Chapter will prioritize on the following areas:

- The chapter has its unique relevance to explore the specific issues pertinent to the context, by scanning the environment of Kerala, for reflection and response.
- To encourage and provide space for our members and those associating through our TRACI forums.
- To identify young scholars and writers and to develop them as leaders in our context.

Rev. Reji George Varughese (Faculty at KUT Seminary) is the chairperson of the chapter.

TRACI AGM

TRACI AGM met on the 22nd of November. It was heartening to see a good conversation on the agenda with very good participation of the society members. TRACI Reports and Finance audited reports were accepted along with the budget for the year 2020-21. Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob takes over as Board Treasurer from Dr. Jeremiah Duomai. TRACI records gratefulness to outgoing board member, Ms. Maria Jim for her valuable services. We also welcome the new board members, Dr Jamila Koshy and Dr Jacob Cherian.

CONTACT US

- 📍 TRACI HOUSE, E-537, GK-II, New Delhi - 48
- ☎ 011 - 2921 4126
- ✉ tracinewdelhi@gmail.com
- 🌐 www.traci.in
- 📘 [Facebook.com/traci.in](https://www.facebook.com/traci.in)

TRACI MISSION : "Facilitating integrated response and transformative engagements through theological reflections on contemporary and relevant issues, by communities of followers of Jesus Christ".

I think, one of the challenges confronting the church today is that we have not effectively used the pulpit to talk about these issues. Sometimes we live as though these things don't really concern the church. But we are facing these issues on a daily basis. And so, we end up living an oblivious and dangerous life – "we divorce Christian faith from Christian life," as John Stott would say. Unless we make the issues of the society the issues of the church, we are at the risk of pushing the church out of relevance in today's world. I hope this Christmas will help us rethink and reconnect with the Nazareth Manifesto.

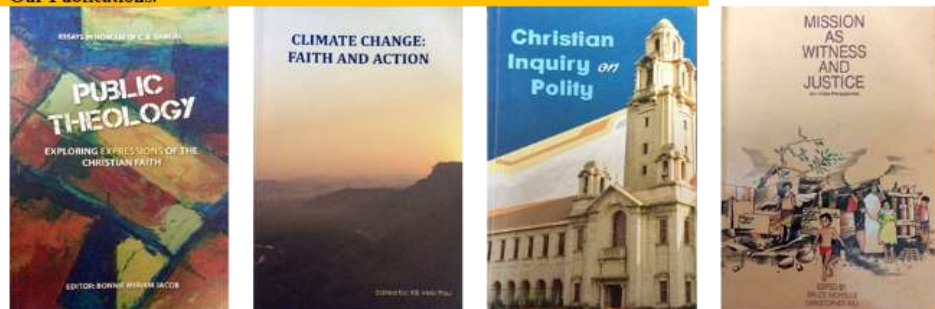
Veio Pou is Asst. Professor in the Dept. of English, University of Delhi. He is a member of the TRACI board, and likes to engage with contemporary issues that relate to society, culture and faith. He is the author of Literary Cultures of India's Northeast: Naga Writings in English. He recently authored Waiting for the Dust to Settle, his first novel.



LOOK FORWARD

- TRACI is organizing the Annual Conference on the theme **Covid-19 Pandemic: Causes, Complexities and Consequences**. Date: 12-13 February, 2021
Given a momentous disarray to our individual and collective life, it is worth documenting and examining the causes of the pandemic, its effect, the responses to the virus and the ramifications of the responses. Inquiries into these issues keeping in mind the perspective provided above and an analysis that is shaped by Christian faith will enrich our understanding of social, economic and political structure and lead us towards ensuring a society that is more stable and just. To that end Theological Research and Communication Institute (TRACI) invites scholars and activists across different academic disciplines to write papers with an inter-disciplinary approach.
- In the Press: TRACI will soon release the new volume of the **Christian Mind Series** that will be a collection of six essays written by leading academics, Church leaders, and Social activist. These essays are based on: Expressions of Faith, Reflections on Covid 19 and Policy Analysis. Order your copy soon.

Our Publications:



Published this year, Public Theology is a festschrift for Rev. C B Samuel. The essays in this volume attempt to take conversations of Public Theology out of the confines of the academic and theological institutions and explore it as it is lived out in the public sphere. This volume is edited by Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob. (416 pages, Rs.600/-)

Also published this year, and edited by Dr. Veio Pou, Climate Change is a collection of essays from nine scholars in varied disciplines bringing their perspectives on this topic. Papers were presented at the TRACI Conference "God's Humans and Earth: Climate Change and its Implications." (116 pages, Rs.150/-)

Published in 2017 and edited by Dr. Jeremiah Duomai, Christian Inquiry on Polity is a collection of essays from ten scholars in varied disciplines. Their papers were presented at the TRACI Conference "Re-imagining the Idea of India." A necessary read, its relevant to our times. (160 pages, Rs.200/-)

Published in the year 1991, this book is relevant as ever. Edited by Dr's. Bruce Nicholls and Christopher Raj, it's a volume of 24 essays in three sections. They focus on the need and urgency of 'mission' to transform the sinful human being spiritually, understand the gamut of evangelism and finally deals with justice in the biblical and Indian Context (246 pages, Rs.200/-)

TRACI NEEDS

- During this pandemic God has wonderfully provided all our needs. Our main income used to be the contributions received from the use of the guest rooms. But there is a sudden drop because of COVID 19. However, we have been able to pay all the bills so far.
- As we are coming to the end of the year and with just four months ahead to close the financial year, we still need Rs.10 lakh to meet the expenses and another Rs.5 lakh to complete some projects we had envisaged in our plan for the year.
- We request all of you to earnestly pray for these financial needs that God will help us meet the requirements before the end of the financial year. It is also our sincere desire and appeal that all TRACI well wishers and friends will help us in this endeavor of raising the needed funds so that TRACI's efforts to serve the community of God's people will progress unhindered because of your valuable support and partnership in furthering the Kingdom concerns.

TRACI REFLECTIONS

We are glad for the very good response to TRACI Reflections. These reflections are also available on TRACI YOUTUBE CHANNEL: https://www.youtube.com/feed/my_videos
In the month of October and November our Reflection topics were:

I. In Dark Times: The Hope That Helps. Dr Jamila Koshy

Human life can be difficult, and the world around dark and hopeless. Yet, those in Christ have a wonderful hope – the hope of forgiveness, loving reconciliation to God and a new creation renewed in Christ. For the world, similarly, Christians can hope for God's intervention and for His kingdom and kingdom values to spread, as His people pray and work towards it. Though we cannot understand all that happens or explain the pain and suffering, we can cling to the hope that God hears and will answer our prayers for others and the world. That hope for personal and larger help from God can help us as we battle hard times, mental illness and pandemics.

II. Understanding Social Devaluation and Wounding Through Caste and Gender. Raaj Mondol

Utilising the process of social devaluation and wounding which takes place among people with disability, Raaj Mondol attempts to understand how the process of devaluation and wounding affect the other devalued people in our society. This conversation is thereby fore an effort to also address the issue of caste and gender injustice. Though we are quite familiar with the reality of caste and gender based discrimination in our society and their resultant effects on the people, using a theoretical approach of devaluation will help us to understand the systematic design of devaluing some people groups and to reflect upon the nature of wounds which they inflict. It is hoped that such knowledge will prevent us from our complicity in such processes and to bring changes at our personal and community level.

TRACI REFLECTION IN DECEMBER:

THE MESSIAH, HIS KINGDOM & LIVING IN CURRENT TIMES.

Speaker: Rev. C B Samuel.
Date: 19th December 2020,
Time: 6-7.30pm.

INDIAN ACCOUNT

Account Name: TRACI
A/c No. 072501000006876
IFSC: IOBA0000725
Indian Overseas Bank, GK-II
New Delhi - 110048



FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION ACCOUNT

Account Name: "Theological Research And Communication Institute"
Bank: South Indian Bank,
Branch: C R Park, New Delhi – 110019
A/c. No. : 0358053000010136
IFSC Code : SIBL0000358
SWIFT Code of SIB : SOININ55