



TRACI
Reflections
Theological Research And
Communication Institute

THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF CHRISTMAS

Come Christmas one tends to travel back the memory lanes of celebrating Christmas at different phases of life, starting of as an excited child, to an enthusiastic youth, and even the short interlude of being a disenchanted and indifferent teen with the family hype about Christmas. During the teenage years alongside the simple story of Christmas one also had to grapple with, the feasibility of the virgin birth, supernatural appearance of the angels to the shepherd in the field or the star that the wise-men could decode with varying precision. Christmas sermons mostly lingered around *God becoming human, of Hope, Joy, Peace and Love, God sacrificing his only begotten son*, and such others amidst the festivities and traditions at church and home.

But as our Christian journey progressed most of us would have obediently attempted to make our homes, a place where God *has made His dwelling*, where the *glory of the One and Only* is visible and where *grace and truth* are the basis of the family values. Just as the simple shepherds *made known what had been told them about this Child*, as per Luke's account of the birth of Jesus I hope our children, our friends and neighbours have some time had the opportunity to hear and know the impact of the birth of Christ in our lives. While several of my non-Christian colleagues have told me that it was a tradition in their family to visit a Church to make their children aware about Christmas, I wonder how many of our colleagues have seen the Lordship of the king of Jews in our lives. Most of our narratives focus on the nativity-scene, its genesis, the prophecies, and implications but just as the wise-men following the *star in the east*, went over to worship the Lord will our celebrations and its message cause folks to come and worship the Lord?

As the Christ child advanced in stature, knowledge, and maturity, may we also grow in our relationship with God, in understanding the mysteries of the perfect One descending into the cacophony of chaos and allow it to impact our everyday reality of reaching out in compassion to a world in chaos.

Another aspect I was considering this season was the event of Jesus being presented at the Temple which added a fresh perspective to Christmas this year for me. Joseph and Mary, while holding the baby Jesus would have wondered in anticipation of the many wonderful dreams that was to unfold with time which will testify of *Immanuel* in their home, whom they named Jesus in obedience to the angelic visitation. The testimonies of Simeon and Anna, who were waiting for the Messiah would have added a deeper understanding of their child. From various accounts in the new testament, it is evident that each new event expanded the understanding of Mary and even that of his disciples. They got a better view of who Jesus is. So, what about our own understanding of Jesus? With every new experience is there a transformation in our perspectives about Jesus?

In moments of despair, I revisit the account of creation and reimagine the original creation which will soon be restored and it helps reinforce **hope**. May **peace** prevail in the face of loss such as the lasting scars and irrecoverable pain caused by COVID-19 pandemic. May the **joy** of the good news as shared by the shepherds envelope the communities we reside in as we once again witness the unparalleled example of the **love** of God for the entire creation through the birth of Jesus.

Dr Sonajharia Minz is the Vice-Chancellor of Sido Kanhu Murmu University (SKMU), Dumka. She is a Professor of School of Computer and Systems Sciences in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi (now on deputation as VC). She is also TRACI Society member.

BOOK RELEASE: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIAN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES: AN INQUIRY INTO THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

"Violence against Women in Indian Christian Families: An Inquiry into the Response of the Church" by A. Lozaanba Khumbah and Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob was released in December 2022. The book is the outcome of a research which set out to study the perception of the church on domestic violence, map its responses, identify gaps and suggest ways to move forward.



The church is unaware of how entrenched domestic violence is among Christians and has largely failed to be counter-cultural and subversive. The church has often been guilty of silencing women and reinforcing hierarchy through wrong Biblical interpretation and teaching. Systemic, deep-seated changes in the attitude and practice of the church with regard to women are required to address violence.

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

TRACI Online Course on Gender & Biblical Equality: Benefits & Impact

The closing address by Dr Jamila Koshy on 4th December 2022 concluded the 8 weeks online course. There were 35 participants which included 20 men and 15 men and 8 overseas participants from Nepal, Bangladesh and Korea. The course facilitated by a team of theologians and practitioners included Rev. Dr. Jacob Cherian, Dr. Havilah Dharmaraj, Mr. Raaj Mondol, Rev. Thomas Jacob, Mr. Sanjiv Ailawadi, Mr. Cherian Thomas, Dr. Jamila Koshy, Dr. Vandana Kant, Adv. Tehmina Arora, Mr. Sathish Joseph Simon, Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob and Mr. Issacc Thomas. The responses from the participants as highlighted below reveals the significant impact that the course has had on their understanding and perspectives.

- "The course blew away cobwebs and helped me confidently counter spiritual abuse in Christian homes. Many thoughts that I hadwere affirmed by the teachers with scriptural backing". **(Janet Prem, Bangalore)**
- "This course has helped me to be better prepared to navigate difficult passages, be more understanding of people's backgrounds, and have a huge mind shift in the positive direction with regard to gender dysphoria. It has reinforced my convictions and stand on Gender Equality. I am better equipped to offer answers to questions". **(Joy Christina Rajaratnam, Chennai)**
- "Almost all the sessions in this course have made a significant impact on my life. This course was very helpful to have a better perspective on gender issues and thus challenged my attitudes and convictions for a transformed lifestyle". **(Tirth Milan Adhikari, Nepal)**
- "I had a shallow and a rigid understanding on Gender and my attitude was dominated by traditional headship views. Now I have developed a broader perspective and right biblical view on gender equality and various gender issues". **(Santhosh Rozario, Bangladesh)**
- "My understanding of gender concerns and gender diversity have been enlarged in this course. The overall impact of this course in my life is: To strengthen families & to encourage and equip women for leadership". **(Gauri Kumari V, Tenali)**
- "My perspectives on gender has changed and I have learned new insights and understanding on biblical texts and their context from this course". **(Esther Gurung, Nepal)**
- "This course has changed my mindset and helped me to understand gender and its biblical perspective: How Jesus was a passionate advocate for women's equality, God's amazing pure love for humanity equally without any discrimination and how we can also be passionate advocates for gender equality in our church, workplace and society". **(Smurna Akhi, Bangladesh)**
- "The course on Gender and Biblical Equality has helped me greatly to have the right attitudes and convictions for renewed relationships in family, church and society. It has also really reshaped my Biblical understanding and relevant contextualization of Scripture". **(Pardhasaradhi Swamy, Hyderabad)**

TRACI's online courses seek to stimulate thinking and reflection on issues of significance for faith and society and to encourage dialogue so as to sharpen minds for effective engagement and involvement in the society.

The next online course is on 'Integral Mission' (second batch). TRACI's Integral Mission course contributes to the church by supplementing the essential focus so that the calling of the kingdom of God should deepen their faith and result in redemptive influence and engagement.

TRACI Online Course on Integral Mission- 2023

Important Dates and Information:

Course Duration: 22nd January to 01 April, 2023

For more details (brochure & registration etc.) kindly contact:

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TRACI MONTHLY REFLECTIONS

(Nov-Dec 2022)

Redemptive Conversations of Jesus

Drawing from John 12:1-11, Mr. Mathew Varughese, former Director of TRACI, led the November Reflection on the "Redemptive Conversations of Jesus." Exploring the context of Jesus' conversations and work, Mr. Varughese highlighted the intentionality of Jesus' engagements with people who sought liberation and healing. In silence as much as in din, Jesus not only gave new meanings to realities but also empowered the ones who sought his presence. And it is with that same intent and courage, merging realities and feelings, should we direct our thoughts and actions and fight losing ourselves to the routine. The conversation brought forth the clarion call for Christians to engage with people and realities in their context and point them towards the cross as a sign of redemption.

PEACE ON EARTH

Dr. Ravi David in the December Reflection brought the Christmas message of Peace on Earth against the background of pain, injustice, exploitation, conflict and erosion that has left our world in **pieces**. With our God who is the Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father, Almighty God, Counsellor and Emmanuel we can find our anchor for **peace** in this chaotic world in God's **presence**, **promise**, **purposes** and the community of God's **people**. Our invitation as **TRACI** community is to Trust, Rest, display Attentiveness in listening to God, have Courage and Inner Peace as we navigate our life's journey. Dr. David used different acronyms to bring home a very powerful and enriching message calling us to look beyond ourselves to touch the lives of some who are struggling this Christmas season.



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Indian Overseas Bank, GK-II

New Delhi – 11004



FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION ACCOUNT

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Bank: State Bank of India,

Branch: 00691

A/c. No. : 40081602741 (FCRA Savings Account)

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