



## Review Article Encounter, Experience, Enable: Towards an All- Inclusive World-Church

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“It is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of **encounter** and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.” – Pope Francis

“God’s working in them tends to produce signs and rites, sacred expressions which in turn bring others to a communitarian **experience** of journeying towards God.” -Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 254

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“Let us ask the Father of mercies to **enable** us to live fully the faith graciously ... and to bear witness to it freely, joyfully and courageously.  
-Pope Francis

How do we visualize the Church of the future? How can the Church become more vitalized and vibrant? How will the world Church of the future look like? These are some of the questions posed in this book on the world Church, a theme very close to Prof Lothar Lies, SJ, University of Innsbruck, Austria.

The answer we believe has to do with genuine encounter and authentic experience with truly enables us. The encounter of the other as other with diverse religious, ethnic, political sociological and other identities is the stepping stone to encounter the Wholly Other, God. Such an encounter of people and God help us experience the breadth and depth of human relationship leading to an all-inclusive and enriching experience of God. This encounter-experience enables us as individuals and community to embrace the other who are constitutive of ourselves. The Church of the future could be visualised thus as one that encounters the world intimately, experiences the other warmly and in the process enables each other. That is a vision close to Pope Francis too.

This volume is a volume written by scholars who have close ties with the University of Innsbruck and Jnana Deepa, Institute of Philosophy, Pune, India. It also attempts to remember Fr Lothar Lies and pay homage to the incredible contribution he has accomplished for the universal and local Churches in India and Austria. This volume explores Christian living as expiring and encounter the person of Christ and our fellow human beings as well as the whole of nature. The emphasis on encounter (*Begegnung*) with the others and the “Wholly Other” (“*ganz Andere.*”), it is hoped, will unfold deeper dimensions of our Christian spirituality.

Such an encounter is enabling and presupposed collaboration, networking, acceptance and understanding. The writers of this volume, inspired by Prof Lothar Lies, believes that such an ongoing dialogue, based on genuine encounter and mutually enriching experiences

among religious traditions is the need of the hour for the Church and for the world.

### **The Outline of the Book**

The first part of the book looks at encountering the other as experiencing the other and oneself. So, the first article in this section by Dr Paul Raj Mariapushpam, Jnana Deepa, Pune, explores Paul's encounter with Christ and the Damascus experience and looks at its significance for contemporary men and women. This is followed by the article of Dr Alangaram Arockiam, Loyola College, Chennai, that explores encounter between God and human beings through the category of covenant and looks at the Eucharist as a covenant experience. Rev Joseph Cardozo, Jnana Deepa, Pune, studies encountering and experiencing from the perspective of Christ's standards, according to St. Ignatius of Loyola.

This is followed by Dr Richard Lopes, Jnana Deepa, Pune, who visualized the Church of the future and an enabling Church. The next article by Dr Herman Tirkey, Jnana Deepa, Pune, situates the encounter of the Gospel in the multicultural context of India.

The second section deals with the Church's mission in the plural-cultural context of both India and Europe. Dr Boris Repschinski, Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck, introduces this section by understanding pluralism as the foundational principle of the New Testament. Dr Andreas Vonach, also of Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck, studies the four existential questions connected to pluralism from Christian perspectives. In this context of plurality, Dr Joseph Lobo, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, looks at the theological foundations of cross-credal encounter. This is followed by Dr Thomas Karimundackal who takes up the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman as an illustration of cross-cultural encounter.

Such an encounter also enables and empowers all the partners involved. So the third section deals with the prophetic and

liberative aspects of genuine encounter. Dr VM Joseph, Jnana Deepa, Pune, looks on the mission of the Indian Church towards the tribal community providing them with dignity and liberation. Dr Jose Thayil explores the ecological concerns of today and relates them to our deep experience of nature. Rev Santhanam Clement Jesudoss studies the practical and epistemic authority as encountering. The next article by Dr Leonard Fernando, St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, deals with the person of Origen as a man of encounter and his significance for today. In the final article in this section Pudota Rayappa John, Vidyajyoti College of Theology, New Delhi, looks at the sacraments as means of encountering Christ and fellow human beings.

The final section deal with the need of dialogue for the world church and reflects on dialogue as a way of life for the Church. Dr Chacko Nadakkeveliyil, Chacko Nadakkeveliyil, Thrissur, looks at the world as a gratuitous gift of God and explores the universe as the ultimate free lunch, based on Stephen Hawking. Clement Valluvassery, Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Alwaye, then focusses on the need for dialogue for a meaningful and harmonious future both for the world and the church. Dr Kuruvilla Pandikattu, Jnana Deepa, draws inspiration from Bede Griffiths, who fostered active dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism. Rev Anthony Raj investigates experiencing as understanding, inspired by his encounter with Dr Lothar Lies and by the Ignatian spirituality. Finally, Rev Seraphim Stanley Tirkey pleads for an authentic dialogue between Church and cultures going beyond relativism and ethnocentrism. As a concrete experience, Re Bhausaheb Sansare, Papal Seminary, Pune, analyses the work of the German-speaking missionaries in the District of Nagar, Maharashtra, India.

This volume is also the product of the ongoing dialogue and collaboration between the Theology Faculty of the University of Innsbruck and Jnana Deepa, Institute of Philosophy and Theology. Even before entering into a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the two faculties in 1997, there have been quite a lot of interaction and exchange between the two institutes.

Persons like Julian Fernandes, the former Provincial of India, theologians of Jnana Deepa like Francis D'Sa, Kurien Kunnumparam, Rui de Menezes, Sebastian Painadath and John Vattanky were closely connected to Innsbruck. Two German speaking professors, Felix Clausen after whom the Jnana Deepa (PG Block) Hall is named and Aloysius Schlegel, after whom Jnana Deepa Library is named, have contributed much to the growth and development of the lively exchange between these two institutes.

After the official Memorandum was signed there have been quite many exchanges between the two institutes at the level of the faculty and research students. Prof Andreas Vonach, Boris Repschinski and Noel Sheth were part of the exchange at the level of the faculty. About 100 students have gone from Pune to study in Innsbruck and about 40 from Innsbruck to Pune.

This book in honour of Prof Lothar Lies, SJ, is a contribution to the world Church where, ENCOUNTERING the Other, EXPERIENCING God's Love and ENABLING each other are significant in building a community of Christ's followers.

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