

on God's judgment: (1) that salvation is actually universal and unrestricted, (2) that salvation is actually limited to a few (Dante), (3) that salvation is possibly universal (von Balthasar, Indian Buddhism), (4) that salvation is necessarily restricted (double predestination), and (5) that salvation is necessarily universal (Origenism, Karl Barth). The fourth and fifth options are excluded by the Church's magisterium, Griffiths noted, while the third seems most compatible with sound Christian theology.

He then posed these two questions to Turek regarding the third position. Is hope for universal salvation actually incumbent upon the Christian? In other words, given that universal salvation is a possible outcome of God's freedom, *must* we hope for hell to be empty or are we simply allowed to entertain the possibility? Second, he wondered about the need for greater epistemic modesty. For example, 1 Tim. 1:15 urges a note of caution: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I myself am the greatest of them."

Griffiths also introduced some speculative questions beyond those addressed in Turek's presentation: How is it that von Balthasar and the *Catechism* express such certainty regarding the damnation of Satan? What are the implications of hoping that all may be saved for the dialogue among the religions? What drives some Catholics to insist so forcibly upon the fact that hell is populated in light of the absence of a magisterial affirmation that there is even a single, specifically identified human inhabitant in it?

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#### COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

- Topic: Evangelization and Conversions Reconsidered  
in Light of the Contemporary Controversy in India
- Convener: Francis X. Clooney, S.J., Boston College
- Moderator: Nancy Hawkins, St. Bernard's Institute, Rochester
- Presenters: Judson Trapnell, College of St. Benedict/  
St. John's University, Collegeville  
Michael Amaladoss, S.J., Vidya Jyoti School  
of Theology, New Delhi  
Anantanand Rambachan, St. Olaf College

This Comparative Theology session contributed to the theme of *missio ad gentes* by examining the contemporary debate over mission, evangelization and conversion in India. In recent years Christians and Hindus have debated mission, asking whether evangelization is intrinsic to Christian identity and whether it must aim at conversions. In India's shifting social and political context, many Hindus have argued strongly against proselytization and the frequently accom-

panying derogation of Indian religions. Among Christians there has been renewed soul searching about the implications of witnessing to Christ, especially in a culture where Christians are a tiny minority. The session's three presentations—by a Western scholar of the controversy (Trapnell), an Indian Catholic (Amaladoss), and a Hindu teaching at an American college (Rambachan)—examined the issues in rich and interesting ways. (Throughout, we used the shorthand terms "Hindu" and "Hinduism.")

Trapnell proposed four of the narratives by which Hindus and Christians interpret conversions: conservative and nationalist Hindu, secularist Hindu, Evangelical Christian, and Indian Catholic. For conservative Hindu nationalists, India is Mother India, the sacred source of eternal religion. India is at least symbolically a goddess whom Indians are expected to love and protect; conversions to Christianity insult her, "de-Indianizing" segments of the population and defile the sacred land. By contrast, more secularized Hindus idealize a liberal and tolerant India which testifies to the many-sidedness of truth and plurality of valid paths. The Buddhist emperor Ashoka, the Mughal ruler Akbar, and closer to our time, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, and Gandhi, are held up as ideals.

Christian Evangelical assessments of the current controversy frequently link Hindu India with darkness, opposing it to the light of Christ coming into the world. They evoke martyred missionaries who have accepted the inevitable risks involved in evangelization; opposition is expected, and persecution is a necessary, even fruitful aspect of evangelization. Although some evangelicals speak more positively of Indian religions, on the whole the controversy over evangelization and conversion echoes a larger spiritual battle between Christ and Satan. By contrast, many Catholic theologians today are formulating an Indian liberation theology which appeals to an "India of the marginalized" and the ideal of liberation from poverty and oppression, a common project drawing together Hindus and Christians (and Muslims and others) in cooperation. In any case, there is no single Christian or Hindu attitude toward religion and conversion.

Michael Amaladoss focused on the psychological and social complexities of evangelization. Conversions are human events, conditioned by psychological, social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. To convert can be a very personal matter, but it can also be evidence of a community's desire to reposition itself in relation to traditional religious and social patterns. When religion becomes a factor in politics, and culture is linked to nationality, an increase in one religious group threatens others. Over the centuries Indians have learned to deal with conversions in practical ways. Some Hindus consider Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs not merely Indian, but also Hindu; by contrast, converts to Islam or Christianity are often seen as leaving not only Hinduism, but also breaking with Indian culture. In facing the conversion issue, then, Hindus have to decide what it means to be an Indian and a Hindu, while Christians must make similar decisions about their cultural and religious identities as Indian and Christian.

Anantanand Rambachan explained how some Hindus equate conversion with violence because of the pain it causes the family and community of the convert.

While Hindu traditions honor the freedom of individuals to select differing spiritual ways, choices were traditionally exercised among alternatives which evolved in India and shared a common worldview. There was no organized agenda to completely supplant other viewpoints; encounters were not polemical, nor was religious language militaristic. By contrast, modern Christianity arrived in India with Western colonialism, imperialism and arrogance. Christian theological and missionary intentions paralleled the British intent to dominate India, and Christians were intent on eradicating India's indigenous traditions. That contemporary Hinduism is deeply influenced by this history is inevitable and just.

But often the Hindu response to Christian evangelization lacks a spirit of self-critical appraisal, and many have failed to understand the attractiveness of Christianity. Granted that the motives for conversion are complex, it is clear that many Hindus, especially those from the so-called untouchable castes, experience the Hindu tradition as oppressive, negating their dignity. For such persons, the Christian message of the inclusive love of God and acceptance in an egalitarian community is liberative. In a social context where occupation may still be determined by caste and where the ability to change one's identity and work must await future births, the opportunity for a new identity now may be compelling. The fact of conversions must challenge Hindus to ask whether the tradition is meeting the needs of those who are born into its fold. Hindus cannot celebrate conversions by Westerners to Indian spiritual paths while failing to be understanding of Indians who find Hinduism less attractive than Christianity.

In our lively discussion we had time to explore just a few of the numerous issues raised by our speakers. By the session's end it was surely clear to all that "evangelization and conversions" is a topic ideally and almost necessarily explored in a comparative context, where the different religious and cultural perspectives, traditional and modern, are reflected on together. No single tradition can fully understand the topic on its own.

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#### TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

- Topic: Bruce Marshall's *Trinity and Truth*: Discussion and Response  
 Convener: Nancy A. Dallavalle, Fairfield University  
 Moderator: James Buckley, Loyola College in Maryland  
 Presenters: John Thiel, Fairfield University  
               Frans Jozef van Beeck, S.J., Loyola University of Chicago  
 Respondent: Bruce Marshall, St. Olaf College

John Thiel praised Bruce Marshall's book as an important conversation partner for Catholic theologians, many of whom are unused to framing the question of truth in the categories of contemporary analytical philosophy, as