

CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE MIDST OF VIOLENCE

Arles, Siga & Thomas, Joy. Christian Mission in the Midst of Violence, Bangalore: CFCC, 2013.

Pages – 232

Price – Rs.300/- US\$20

Reviewed by Domenic Marbaniang

Christian mission is always mission in context, to a context, towards a context. The towardness of mission stirs context to a particular shape which in turn forces mission to take shape - the dynamic interactions continue. One of the contexts in which mission occurs is the context of violence. Certainly, one cannot do mission in such a context without properly analysing the situation and also finding means to accomplish mission in such a context. To understand the same, the 2013 FOIM (Fellowship of Indian Missiologists) Conference was hosted at Punalur, Kerala. 12 papers from this conference were compiled and published in Christian Mission in the Midst of Violence under the editorship of Dr. Joy Thomas SVD, director of Ishvani Kendra of Pune and Secretary of FOIM and Dr. Siga Arles, director of the Centre for Contemporary Christianity of Bangalore.

The themes dealt with are the theology of violence, the challenge of violence for Christian ministry, the biblical concept of reconciliation, the contextual religious concept of non-violence as a response, the historical use of Ahimsa by Gandhi as a weapon against violence, an inspection of the ideas of violence in Hinduism and Islam, a more concrete case analysis of Kandhamal, eco-violence, and the importance of unity and network among religions. The themes do look serious and focused and committed to address, understand, and the resolve the question of Christian mission in the midst of violence.

Some notable insights offered are: the cross as the theological yet paradoxical answer where the violence of death is transformed into the bliss of eternal life and the enmity of man is used to reconcile man to God (Antony Kalliath), the historical significance of the practical use of the non-violence (Ahimsa) principle as a response (Joy Thomas, Joseph Mattam, Paul Vellarackal, G. Lazar), the impossibility of church as an organization to solve the problem (since power politics are natural) and the need for charity to begin at home (Ernest Talibuddin), failures to act responsibly involve an abuse of power (Asangla Lemtur), the Church can have a role in reducing tensions and creating an atmosphere of peace and harmony (V.S. Nair, Clare Purakary), the persecuted church identifies with the persecuted Christ (Julian Saldanha), the Church must responsibly also address the issue of eco-violence (J. Patmury), and dialogue and networking as valuable tools towards interreligious peace (Teresa Joseph).

All the papers focus on practical engagement and reflect immediate responses to the problem of violence especially in the historical context of India. The book relates to every Indian Christian as such and deserves attention. It would also have been better to have had at least one paper that would have addressed the issues perplexing some of the North-Eastern states where

Christianity is a majority. But, overall, the book is relevant to both Mission and Religious Studies in India. I recommend it to the serious and practical Christian.