

## **Encyclopedia of Christianity in India**

### **Background:**

Though Christianity in India traces its origin back to one of the twelve apostles and thus can claim an equality with other sister churches in the world, until now it does not have a comprehensive self-introductory volume, furnishing accurate, reliable and concise information about its many faceted life and mission. Indian Christianity is specific, since it is the only one in the world that has existed in constant interaction with the followers of other faiths, all through its existence for the last 2000 years.

In February 1998 Jacob Kavunkal suggested to the theological Faculty of the Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth (Pontifical Athenaeum, Pune), to launch a project of an Encyclopedia of Christianity in India. The project was thought to be one of the possible programmes for the Platinum jubilee celebration of the Vidyapeeth in 2001. Accordingly in August 1999 a joint meeting of the Philosophical and Theological Faculties recommended that the Vidyapeeth go ahead with a one-volume project of about 1000 pages, offering significant historical information with theological interpretation from an Indian perspective through interdisciplinary approach with great sensitivity to all ecclesial realities in India and to the people of other faiths. The project received the approval of the JDV Senate in October and Jacob Kavunkal was appointed as the Coordinator for the project. However, we decided to hold on for some time as it was known that the Rashtra Deepika would be coming out with a volume in the context of the 2000-year celebration. It eventually happened to be a Directory with a few introductory articles.

### **Takes shape:**

Initially we had planned for an inter-ecclesial enterprise with editors drawn from different churches. This had to be abandoned since a publication from the Pontifical Faculty had to comply with certain official requirements. Thus, it was decided to have an Editorial Board consisting only of JDV Faculty members and all the theological articles to be written by Catholics while historical articles would be written by experts in the respective fields, without regard to their church affiliation. Jacob Kavunkal prepared a tentative list of topics, which he circulated among historians, theologians and church leaders for comments and complementing. By the end of 2001 he had prepared a list of over 500 topics, categorizing them in eight sections.

In March 2002 an editorial Board was appointed with Kurien Kunnumpuram as the chief editor and Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D'Lima and Anthony De Silva as members. The Board decided that the Encyclopedia would be a self-introduction of Indian Christianity to the people of India and to all those who are interested in the topic, offering significant historical information. It will adopt an interdisciplinary approach with great sensitivity to all churches and faith traditions in India. It will give a realistic picture, adequately self-critical and not triumphalistic. Proportionate importance will be given to all the churches. It will articulate the basic characteristic of the church, i.e., service.

The articles for the Encyclopedia are to be scholarly but non-technical. They will be written in simple style so that they can be easily understood by the ordinary people. The articles will

provide reliable information. References will be given to the sources from where information is drawn. A select bibliography will be appended whenever it is thought useful or necessary.

The topics, over 700, in the Encyclopedia are divided into eight sections, each under a sectional editor. The Sections are: Christian Presence in different parts of the country, History of Christianity in India, Churches and Christian Communities in India, Church Structures, Organizations and Movements, Christian Interaction with the rest of the Indian Society; Christian Life and Theology and Christian Contribution to Indian Society.

The articles will appear not in sections but in alphabetical order with cross-references. There will be three types of articles: Long (about 3500 words), Medium (about 1000 words) and short (about 200 words).

**Present situation:**

We have already contacted the prospective writers most of whom have agreed to write the articles allotted to them. The writers are given about nine months to write the article. We hope to get the articles by January-March 2005. The Editorial work, hopefully, will be completed before the end of 2005. Our aim is to send the manuscript to the press by the beginning of 2006 and thus in the course of the year the Encyclopedia should be in the hands of the readers.

**Jacob Kavunkal**