

Gaetano Sabetta, *Metodica dell'incontro tra religioni. Cristianesimo, induismo buddismo*, UUP, Città del Vaticano 2014, pp. 407.

The Faculty of Missiology of the Urbaniana University with its *Collana "Missiologia"* continues to publish interesting books about aspects of the complex and fascinating reality of the missions. This book, the latest of the series, basically deals with the development of a theological method of inter-religious encounter with special emphasis on the dialogue between Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. The main argument of the book, whose author has a long inter-religious experience in India, can be stated as follows: the *inter-religious dialogical theology* is not a new space that can be added to the already existing spaces of biblical, systematic, dogmatic, fundamental theology, but it is a different way of living in every space (p. 7).

Taking his cue from the insights of three important theologians – Jacques Dupuis, Michael Amaladoss and Claude Geffrè – the author develops his arguments in three chapters leading to the final conclusion in which he enucleates eight indispensable elements to develop a new methodology for doing theology, taking into serious account the inter-religious and intercultural context in which Christianity is living in the West as well as in the East.

The first chapter (p. 15-95), *Post-modernity and Religious Pluralisms*, analyses post-modernity as a cultural matrix for the emergence of western pluralism in general, and of western religious pluralism in particular. The author's intercultural outlook remains the main thrust of his thinking, helping the reader to understand, in the second part of the chapter, the different cultural-religious-philosophical trajectory taken by eastern pluralism. His aim and conclusions are clear: it is no more possible to extinguish theological discourse on religious pluralism by referring to a generic and vague pluralism, but it is necessary to talk of *pluralisms* as the result of different cultural and religious contexts, so that diverse approaches and theological answers become necessary to avoid confusion and superficiality. Dialogue between these two different approaches can be the best way to elaborate a mature and balanced theological response to the challenge posed by the plurality of religions.

The intercultural and inter-religious path has been further explored in the second chapter (p. 99-193) where the author, analysing the western and eastern contexts, first deals extensively with the evolution of David Tracy's understanding of *Public Theology* as a quest for a plausible Christian discourse in a world of pluralities and then develops Felix Wilfred's understanding of *Asian Public Theology*. In the case of the

latter, the author finds that the accent is placed more on the “public” than on “theology”, on issues and questions that affect the people and societies of Asia. It amounts to a theology not strictly confined within the bounds of the Christian community or, worse, committed to imposing a Christian theology on others but rather to a theology inherently inter-religious in nature.

Finally, the third chapter, *Towards a Methodology of Encounter among Religions*, brings to fruition the seeds planted in the previous chapters. He does this first by a clear and comprehensive presentation and critique of the spectrum of positions known as “Theology of Religious Pluralism” (p. 197-248), second, by exploring the dogmatic, genetic and contextual methodology for doing theology (p. 248-276) and, third, by developing a new method to think theologically in a multi-religious milieu, starting from the views of Paul Tillich and Raimond Panikkar (p. 276-324) and reaching out to those of James L. Fredericks and Francis X. Clooney’s *Comparative Theology* (p. 324-361): this is a dialogical, inter-religious, comparative and confessional theology elaborated *in* dialogue with the other and not *before* meeting the other and is a well-balanced and more meaningful way of elaborating a theological position in a world where plurality is the cipher. Very well thought-out and developed, this volume, even if some conflicting aspects related to religious pluralism are left out of the picture, should be seen as a valuable contribution towards the development of an inter-religious and dialogical theology. Meant to be a manual and a source-book both for students and Christians who are not yet fully involved in inter-religious dialogue and want to dispel their doubts and easily explore the field for the first time, this book is also for students and Christians who are already involved in inter-religious dialogue and want to deepen their understanding of the issues involved in the areas of inter-religious dialogue and theologies of religious pluralism and their interconnections. This explains the thematic bibliography, the long glossary and the list of authors provided at the end of the book.

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