

“NO GOD, NO RELIGION”
Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ

I am a subscriber-reader of a rationalist magazine “Vivekpanthi”. Some articles in the magazine are thought-provoking while some others are controversial and even objectionable.

A letter of Mr. Jawahar Mehta in the May 2008 issue of Vivekpanthi entitled “No God, No Religion” is not only controversial but the letter is also prejudicial. The author of the letter himself must have felt that his ideas expressed in the letter are something like throwing a stone at a honey-comb! So he has asked for the response of the readers and has given his full postal address with the letter. I reproduce here my whole reply as part of my article.

First of all, let me introduce myself to you. I am a rationalist-writer and a firm believer in God. I thank you for taking the trouble to express your belief and faith. Now I know a little about what do the rationalist people like you believe in God and religion. So I can say sincerely with you that there is “No God, No religion”! Please do not misunderstand me. I only deny the God and the religion of your concept. But my faith inspired rational concept of God is different. I deny only the God and religion of your concept. As I see, the God and religion of your concept is only a fragment of your imagination. But the God and religion of my understanding go beyond my imagination. Such a God is the centre of my rationally inspired faith.

The God of your imagination “makes the humankind”, as you say, “fearful, whimsical, sacrificial and impotent”. The rationalists like you uphold reason. You accept the witness of your faculties. Now during your life you have encountered hundreds and thousands of people who believe in God and in one or other religion. Keeping all those people in mind, can you truthfully and rationally say that they are all “fearful, whimsical, sacrificial and impotent men and women” because of their faith in God and religion? In Latin there is a saying, “contra factum non vale argumentum” that is to say, no argument is valid which is against factual truth. What you say does not hold good against the fact or reality. Isn’t it true?

Ordinarily a rationalist usually writes anything making use of his/her full rational intellect. But in your case, in many of your statements I feel that you have given expression to your personal beliefs and prejudices. You write that, “Most religions have opposed the truth, which are proved by science. The Christian Religion is a telling example. Till now the Christians believed that the earth is the creation of man. As the Bible says, the earth was created in one week. And the sun and other heavenly bodies are revolving around the earth.”

I do not know much about all religions. But I do know a little bit about Christianity. So I wish to disapprove your statement on the basis of rational argument. All Christians believe in God as creator and source of life. So your statement is to totally false that, “till now Christians were believing the earth is the creation of men”.

Your statements about the Bible also indicates your ignorance and prejudice. It is true that the Bible says: the earth and the whole universe are created in seven days. But those who know a little about Bible, do not hold that the seven days of the creation story are like the twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. The seven-days of the biblical story could be seven ages or

seven millennium of today's reckoning. So we can make big mistakes if we take the biblical stories literarily. The creation story of the Bible proclaims to us one thing for certain that God is the creator of all things seen and unseen.

The Christians say and believe that the Bible is the word of God. It simply means that God is dialoguing and communicating with the humankind through the inspired words of the Bible. But we should also take into consideration that the language of the Bible is human language and it embodies the human culture. As human language and human culture – they are all limited; they are finite. The One without any limit or without any boundary is called God, Bhagwan or Allah.

The human intellect is ever conquering new frontiers. But human intellect has not reached such a point from where it can say that there is nothing beyond this point. The person who accepts his/her limitations knows that there is a power beyond him/her. There is an Existence, a Being about whom he/she does not know fully. The believers call that Being: God, Bhagwan, Allah, etc.

Going even beyond that, the Christians believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So in the centre of Christian religion there are not some principles or beliefs but a person. And that person is Jesus Christ. His message is that, God the Father loves you and me with unconditional love. He cares for you and me. (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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