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SALVATION AND HUMANISATION

Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in Contemporary India

M. M. THOMAS

DR M. M. THOMAS is Director, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore. He describes the scope and purpose of this booklet in the following words:

'The relation between SALVATION AND HUMANISATION is the crucial issue of debate in the theology of Christian mission in our time. . . . I have sought in these essays to bring out some of the specific features of this debate as it has developed in modern Indian Christianity, renascent Hindu religion and Indian secularism. I have also tried to formulate a few of the theological questions that the debate throws up, which call for the continued attention of the Church.'

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PREFACE

The relation between Salvation and Humanisation is the crucial issue of debate in the theology of Christian mission in our time. In different forms the issue is being debated in all religions and secular ideologies. The universality of this debate is in fact one of the most significant realities of the spiritual situation of the contemporary world. Without coming to grips with it, no theology of Christian mission can hope to become really relevant.

I have sought in these essays to bring out some of the specific features of this debate as it has developed in modern Indian Christianity, renascent Hindu religion and Indian secularism. I have also tried to formulate a few of the theological questions that the debate throws up, which call for the continued attention of the Church.

The first two chapters reproduce the Carey Memorial Lectures I gave in January 1970 at Charles Ranson Hall, Bangalore, on the occasion of the meetings of the Senate and Convocation of the University of Serampore. It was indeed a great honour to be invited to deliver these lectures and I am deeply grateful. The third chapter was added later in order to give more completeness to the ideas I was concerned with in the Carey Lectures.

Evidently I have not done more than raise some questions. But the formulation of the right questions on mission is itself a task demanding continuing dialogue among many, including professional and lay theologians, and I submit these thoughts as a humble contribution towards this dialogue.

Bangalore
15th Sept. 1970

M. M. THOMAS

CONTENTS

I

SALVATION AND HUMANISATION

William Carey's book *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* was published in 1792. It has been the charter of the modern missionary movement which has changed the course of the life of the Church and of the world in a manner Carey did not even dream of. The movement of Christian Missions in the plural as Carey knew it—a movement from Christian to non-Christian lands—has perhaps come to an end, partly as a result of the very success of the movement in building churches throughout the world, and partly because in the modern world the task of mission is set in the context of all the six continents. Also, in the new theological climate in which the renascence of ancient religions and cultures has led us to distinguish Christ from Christianity on the one hand and from Western culture on the other, we are not likely to describe non-Christian religions, cultures or individuals as 'heathen'. In India we know how violently Rajah Rammohan Roy reacted to his being termed a heathen by Joshua Marshman of Serampore in the theological controversy in which they were engaged.[1]

It is laid on us in our changed circumstances today to make our own enquiry into the nature of the Christian missionary obligation and into the meaning of conversion which Christian mission seeks as the goal of mission, i.e. to rethink the nature, means and end of the Christian Mission. This is the scope of what has been called the

Theology of Mission. It is an enquiry which goes on throughout the churches of the world in their different settings.

It was not easy to think of a title for these lectures. I chose the rather clumsy sub-title *Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in contemporary India* because I wanted to indicate by the cautious wording that any attempt at formulating a theology of mission is beyond my capacity, that I can only hope to raise 'some issues' which confront one who is concerned primarily with the study of the world of renascent religion and rapidly changing society in India today. I am looking only at one or two tangents of the theology of mission.

God sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved (Jn. 3:17). That in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth God has acted to save the world is the core of the Christian gospel. Mission therefore could be defined as the communication of this message of salvation through Jesus Christ to the end that men may respond in faith and be saved. Mission is essentially evangelistic mission or mission of salvation. I think we shall only confuse the discussion of the theology of mission, if we give any other definition of mission which takes away this cutting edge.

The crucial question raised in the theology of mission in the world-wide discussion of it today is that of the relation between the gospel of salvation and the struggles of men everywhere for their humanity, constituting as this does the contemporary context of the world in which the gospel has to be communicated. The question, in other words, is that of the relation between Mission and Humanisation. This is the theme on which I shall concentrate in my talks. It has become a central question

of debate among missiologists, especially after the Uppsala Assembly emphasised the obligation laid upon the Church to identify herself with the world and participate in its struggles 'for human rights, social justice and world community.' The Assembly affirmed that the setting of such participation was an essential condition for the Church's renewal in mission. The Uppsala Report on 'Renewal in Mission' says, 'We belong to a humanity that cries passionately and articulately for a full human life. Yet the very humanity of man and his societies is threatened by a greater variety of destructive forces than ever. And the acutest moral problems all hinge upon the question: What is man? . . . . There is a burning relevance today in describing the mission of God, in which we participate as the gift of a new creation which is a radical renewal of the old and the invitation to men to grow up into their full humanity in the New Man, Jesus Christ.'[2]

This gives tremendous missionary significance to the search of contemporary man for manhood, to the manner in which he meets the forces of dehumanisation emerging in the search, and the very question of man it raises; and it seeks to describe the mission of salvation itself in terms of this context as the invitation to men to put on the New Humanity offered to all men by God in the New Man, 'Jesus Christ incarnate, crucified and risen'. The Report relates the forces of inhumanity present in the old order and the forces of dehumanisation emerging in the struggles for the new to the alienation of man from God—in which situation, however, there is the 'often unrecognised' cry for the triune God. The alienation was overcome through the death of Christ on the Cross and is realised through forgiveness mediated through Christ.

In the words of the Report, 'The way is opened for the restoration of all men to their sonship. In the resurrection of Jesus a new creation was born, and the final goal of history was assured and Christ as head of that new humanity will sum up all things.'[3]

Thus Jesus Christ and the New Humanity offered in Him are presented as the spiritual foundation, the source of judgment, renewal and ultimate fulfilment of the struggles of mankind today for its humanity. And the implication of this theological approach would be that the Mission of the Church must be fulfilled in integral relation to, even within the setting of a dialogue with, the revolutionary ferment in contemporary religious and secular movements which express men's search for the spiritual foundations for a fuller and richer human life. It is within the context of such a dialogue that the proclamation of Christ becomes meaningful. The Report continues, 'The one complements the other in a total witness. But sometimes Christians are not able to engage either in open dialogue or proclamation. Witness is then a silent one of living the Christian life and suffering for Christ.'[4] Dialogue, proclamation and silent presence could all be mission.

I have dwelt at some length on the Uppsala Report on Mission because it has raised a heated world-wide debate on the theology of mission in our time. Even at Uppsala this particular theological approach was challenged, especially by a Scandinavian group of theologians. There is no denying that it has led to a certain restlessness among many concerned with the Church's primary task of mission. Dr. Norman Goodall, in his Editorial to the official Uppsala Report, has given a fair idea of this feeling of restlessness, along with his own comments from the point of view of

an elder missionary statesman. Goodall quotes approvingly Dr. Hamerskojld's dictum: 'In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action'. He asks whether Uppsala, in emphasising the identification of the Church with the world of action, has also recognised the dimensions of holiness through it—that is, 'all those other dimensions in relation to which it has traditionally been natural to use such terms as transcendence, revelation and the like'—and to speak of 'a name that is above every name'. While dealing with the sharp debate which took place in the Section on Mission at Uppsala, Goodall raises the question, which probably he himself would raise, namely 'whether some notes essential to the faith have become muted in the course of the Assembly.' He continues:

> (Christ as) the Man for others was recognised and a Church for others sought to respond to His summons. Was he recognised as more than a *man* for others, more than a New Man? And did the other for whom the Church exists really include the Other by whom it exists and to whom belongs a Name which it is of life and death importance that all men everywhere should know and acknowledge.[5]

The question is whether God the Transcendent Other, and the decisive imperative of proclaiming Christ to the millions who do not know Him have been muted in the Christology and the theology of mission which dominated Uppsala.

It may be mentioned here that the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion, which took place after the Uppsala Assembly, in its 'affirmations' followed the Uppsala approach of considering the Renewal of Church and Mission within the two poles of the struggles

to humanise the world and the offer of new humanity in Christ. It clarified that this did not imply a denial of the dimension of transcendence. Lambeth states that Mission involves both identification with Christ and identification with one's neighbour in Christ. Speaking of Christ, the Lambeth Statement says: 'His humanity is perfect because He is one with the transcendent God. Without this dimension of transcendence man does not have room to be truly human.'[6] Thus, according to Lambeth, the newness of the New Man Jesus Christ and the renewal of the human in Him cannot but have a transcendent dimension.

The most trenchant criticism of the Uppsala approach to the relation between the mission of salvation and the humanisation of the world has come from Peter Beyerhaus of the Department of Missiology of Tubengen. He sees in it a 'radical shift of the centre from God to man, and accordingly the replacement of Theology by Anthropology'. To him this does not appear to be an accident but as 'a conscious turning away from God as the absolute and ultimate frame of reference to every Christian thinking and service'. He says: 'I am haunted by the question whether such an explicit shift of emphasis from God to man is possible without this whole enterprise finally developing anti-Christian symptoms and more and more turning openly against God.' Three well-known German professors have praised Beyerhaus' 'boldness' in criticising 'the ecumenical movement with its universalism, seeing God's mission within the historical development, turning world history into a history of salvation, and drift away into social activity, from the evangelical foundation on the Bible and orientation to soteriology'[7]. Indeed, the relation between Divine Mission and historical

development, between Theology and Anthropology and between Salvation History and World History are the crucial theological issues in the debate.

In relation to the thesis of Dr. Beyerhaus one must say three things. *First* regarding the relation between theology and anthropology. I think the ultimate framework of reference for Christian thought is neither God nor man in the abstract, neither the metaphysics of God nor the science of man taken in isolation, but Jesus Christ who is God-Man or rather God-for-Man, or, to use Karl Barth's expression, the Humanity of God. Therefore properly speaking, Christian missionary thinking cannot be either theology or anthropology except as either of them is related to Christology. On the same reasoning, if it is Christ-centred, anthropology could become truly Christian in its framework. The distinction in humanism is between closed self-sufficiency and openness to the judgment and redemption of Christ in its spiritual inwardness. *Secondly*, regarding the relation between salvation history and world history, it seems to me that the kind of missionary thinking which Beyerhaus represents confines the work of Christian Mission to the preaching of the gospel and perhaps also to the growth of the Church in response to it. The rest of human history is given up as lost or, if Christ is acknowledged as working in it, the work is seen as being totally hidden, with no glimpse available to man of the pattern of His creating, judging and saving work. For this reason the Christian historical responsibility begins and ends in promoting the mission of preaching and Church growth. This approach has contributed to the Christian indifference to secular politics which led to the rise of Hitler and Stalin in the West; and certainly many Western theologians who have

gone through the experience of war and the Barmen declaration of confession have come to see the theological relevance of discerning Christ's work in secular history, and the missionary significance of responding to Him in it. Some Missiologists change least, of course! *Thirdly* Beyerhaus' approach raises the question as to whether sin and salvation have any meaning at all to our corporate existence as men in relations, expressing the quality of our relationships to nature in science and technology, and of our relationships to men in the corporate structures of family, caste, class, nation and international life. Certainly sin has its corporate expression in the dehumanising spiritual forces of corporate life, the demons of principalities and powers; and the victory of Christ should mean victory over them and salvation in Christ must find its manifestation in power over these forces as power for the humanisation of our structures of collective existence. Of course these evil forces are never totally done away with from history, because with every new stage in enhanced creativity, there is a new fall. And therefore there cannot be any historical triumphalism which eliminates the need of suffering, defeat and death in Christian witness. Salvation remains eschatological, but the historical responsibility within the eschatological framework cannot but include the task of humanisation of the world in secular history. The mission of salvation and the task of humanisation are integrally related to each other, even if they cannot be considered identical. The ultimate destiny of man in the Resurrection beyond sin, guilt and death must have its realisation, however partial it may be, in terms of his historical destiny—even as no humanism which does not take into serious account the reality of sin as self-righteousness, guilt and fear of death,

in the light of the Cross of Christ, can grapple responsibly with the forces of dehumanisation emerging in ever-new forms and achieve even tolerable conditions for human living in history. Commenting on the present concern of ecumenism with humanisation, Bishop Newbigin has said that 'the human community this side of death cannot be the object of ultimate loyalty' and that such loyalty would turn as into instruments of dehumanisation. He further says that 'human community cannot be understood in fully personal terms from a point of view which has no perspective beyond the death of the individual person.'[8] This is well stated. Even the most perfect society bounded by sin and death cannot be the ultimate Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of resurrection-life, whether for individual or community, does not start only after death; it begins and is partially realised here and now, within the dimension of a history facing death and disintegration. And the question is: What does it mean to historical man? Further, as Newbigin's own statement does, the idolatry of the death-bound human community could be condemned because it is dehumanising, and a perspective confined to earthly destiny could be rejected because it is not conducive to a personal understanding of human community on the earth, i.e. from a concern for true humanisation itself. One may start with the ultimate, the Divinum, and come to man's historical destiny. But there is no reason why the historical destiny of the human being, i.e. anthropology, could not be the point of entry for the understanding of man's ultimate destiny in the purpose of God, i.e. his eternal salvation. And there is every reason to believe that in general this latter is the best point of entry today. The question is not where you enter, but whether you reach a point where you are

aware of the inter-relatedness of the historical and the eternal—of the reality of the historical and the human in the eternal, and the presence of the eternal in the historical and the human. This means our mission is to make clear that salvation is the spiritual inwardness of true humanisation, and that humanisation is inherent in the message of salvation in Christ. The idea of Divine Mission in Historical Development is not so untheological as Beyerhaus makes out.

Bonhoeffer still remains a dependable guide at this point. He wrote after the failure of the July 20 plot against Hitler:

> During the last year or so I have come to know and understand more and more the professed this-worldliness of Christianity. The Christian is not a homo-religious but simply a man, as Jesus was a man—I don't mean the shallow and banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the busy, the comfortable or the lascivious, but the profound this-worldliness characterised by discipline and constant knowledge of death and resurrection. . . .[9]

In the same way we could say that missionary participation in the humanisation of the world should be characterised by constant awareness of the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the continuing attempt to communicate it in dialogue, presence or proclamation. Its purpose is to make Christ known as the source and foundation of true humanisation. The glorified humanity of the Risen Christ is to be realised not after death but within the historical process, not by isolated individuals but by men in the corporateness of their relations in society and to the cosmos. This is sufficient theological justification for considering participation in the

humanisation of the world as essential to mission. Jacques Rossel points out how the great Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* has condemned outright 'those Christians who have no time for worldly realities and dismiss them as beyond hope on the ground that their hope as Christians is in the last things.'[10] He affirms that 'if Christ is the goal and end of time, this means that time with all its contents is at least partly determined by the fact that it moves towards this as its end and goal'. He quotes Barth's statement, 'Just because the Christian hopes for the ultimate and definitive, he also hopes for the temporal and provisional.'[11]

After this rather long introduction let me now come back to India. Speaking of William Carey, Rev. C. E. Abraham in his Carey Lecture has pointed out how 'he lived in the light of the maxim that nothing human was foreign to him and further that there was nothing human which could not be lighted up by the love of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ'[12]. In fact, even before Carey came to India, he belonged to a radical group in Leicester which took its stand against slavery and boycotted sugar produced by slave-labour in the West Indies. In India he sought to rouse public opinion against several evils like infanticide and sati, and towards the amelioration of the condition of leprosy patients, outcastes and untouchables. And the Agri-Horticultural Society he founded was governed by his practical interest in improving India's agricultural economy and supply of food for the people. The Serampore missionaries brought vernacular education to the villages around Serampore. And indeed all acknowledge Carey's contribution to the Bengal Renaissance which was the beginning of the awakening of the people of India to a new sense of human dignity

and cultural creativity. In all these efforts, says Abraham, 'he did not feel that he was departing from the ideal of preaching the gospel of salvation to the people of India.'[13] Humanisation was integral to Mission as Carey understood it.

It is true that the missionary enterprise in the early period was largely manned in India by those we would call conservative evangelicals, whose theology of mission would hardly give any importance to social activities. But in spite of this, they became the bearers of social and cultural humanisation as their very approach to the outcastes with the gospel changed the spiritual foundations of the inbuilt structures of the caste-system. Salvation in Christ became the source of a new human fellowship at least at religious worship and the sacrament of the Holy Communion; and it struck a blow to the spiritual rigidities of an unequal social structure. Moltmann has remarked that the idea of the human arose not as a sociological but as a theological category, out of the conviction and experience of a oneness in Christ, of spiritual *koinonia*, transcending if not abrogating the natural and historical divisions among men.[14] This is clearly true in the history of the Christian missions and churches in our country. And when the idea of religious fellowship in Christ, of the Christian congregation, led to the idea of a secular fellowship in the total village or the total college community, humanisation was already at work. It soon had its impact on the larger Indian society.

No doubt, this process had to surmount a great many obstacles. Two of them were theological. First was a certain kind of pietistic individualism which saw salvation in terms only of dogmatic belief and inner experience without affecting human relations. There is a rather

interesting letter from a group of upper caste converts to Christianity in Tanjore to Macaulay, then Law Member of the government, complaining against the missionaries. It runs as follows:

> These missionaries, my Lord, loving only filthy lucre, bid us to eat Lord's Supper with Pariahs, as lives ugly, handling dead men, drinking arrack and toddy, sweeping the streets, mean fellows altogether, base persons; contrary to that which St. Paul saith, I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.[15]

The other obstacle was that while in practice the fellowship of the Christian congregation in the village or the school produced by its impact a larger secular fellowship, comprising men of all religions in the community, Christian theology itself could never comprehend the idea of a Christ-centred secular fellowship outside the Church. Therefore, the Christian fellowship got itself isolated from the larger community into Mission compounds and denominations, and began to rust and inbreed, turning into an exclusive Christian caste or closed communal group instead of being an open, outgoing, fellowship in the larger society. In fact, Bishop Pickett in his *Christ's Way to India's Heart* quotes Dr. Ambedkar as saying that the converts to Christianity from the scheduled castes were 'selfish and self-centred', indifferent to their former caste associates and interested only in getting ahead. Pickett himself speaks of several instances where Christian converts looked at the Mission and the Church as an economic and social vested interest which should not be jeopardized by concern for outside people.[16] It is only in the tension between the fellowship of the Church and its task of creating fellowship in the larger

society that the former can remain a Christ-centred fellowship without turning into a self-centred, closed communal group. But the theology of the day was not adequate enough to see this relation.

In spite of it, however and in spite of the obvious obstacles, the outcastes, the poor and the orphans saw Christian faith as the source of a new humanising influence and the foundation of a human community. Where conversion was genuine, whether of individuals or of groups, the converts saw Salvation in Christ not only in terms of individual salvation or heaven after death, but also as the spiritual source of a new community on earth in which their human dignity and status were recognised. It was the promise of humanisation inherent in the gospel of salvation that led to the influx of the oppressed into the Church.

It was the same promise in Christ's Salvation of a richer and fuller human life for all men in society and of a new community of freedom and love that attracted some of the intellectuals of the privileged classes of India and brought them to acknowledge Christ as their Lord and God. The young C. F. Andrews, when he joined St. Stephen's College, Delhi, as a missionary interviewed many 'leading Indian converts' and enquired of them 'the special causes which had led them to become Christians'. Here is what Andrews found:

> One after another omitted that cause which I should have imagined to be primary—namely the longing for personal salvation. Some told me that it was the moral perfection of Christ's character, especially as seen in the Sermon on the Mount—the attraction of the *Christian moral standard.* Many replied that it was the freedom of the Christian life compared with the

bondage of caste—the attraction of the *Christian brotherhood.* Others stated that it was the thought of Christ uniting all the divided races and peoples of India into one—the ideal of the *Christian Church.* But I found no case in which the individual's own need was the sole or even primary factor.[17]

He adds:

I do not imply by this that the sense of individual need of salvation is absent or that this experience is necessarily typical. But in such instances as these, the purely personal aspects develop later. The community is the primary concern.[18]

In other words it is the personal appeal of the gospel of the Crucified and Risen Christ, seen as the foundation of the Christian fellowship and the larger secular brotherhood, that made them decide for Christ as the bearer of ultimate human destiny.

The relation between the Living Person of Christ Crucified and Risen and the renewal of man and nation in history has been put most profoundly by S. K. Rudra, the first Indian principal of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, in his pamphlet *Christ and Modern India.* He said:

That Living Person in the plenitude of His spiritual power embodies in Himself all the moral forces which go to create a vital and progressive organism—an organism which may find its goal in a unified and independent nation. He embodies them, not merely as being teacher but being Himself the Living Motive Power behind them; the Power who gives new moral life to those who come to Him. For He is no mere prophet or moralist who stands outside the life of His disciple, but the Lord of Life Himself, who has declared His own unconquerable power by the supreme sacrificial

love and by the moral glory of His risen life. In Him, the Living Person, and not in writings however sacred; in Him, the Living Person and not in any human philosophy or system, lies the key to India's future. For Christ stands out before all mankind for faith and belief in the One Invisible and Incomprehensible God, in whom He himself dwells, and whom He has revealed as the Father, implying thereby the Sonship of men to God, and their brotherhood with one another.[19]

The statement sees the Person of Christ as the bearer of a new community in India and connects that function of Christ with the saving work of making us the sons of God in Himself.

Perhaps the early educational missionaries in India—Duff, Miller and Wilson—had worked out the relation between mission and humanisation of society more or less systematically in their theology of mission. In their opinion evangelism needed a preparation, and that preparation was the transformation of human values through the impact of Christian civilisation and culture on Indian society and systems of ideas and values. This approach says:

'Christian civilisation is in one sense the embodiment of the Christian faith, and this Christian civilisation must be given to India, as well as the Christian message, if the message is to become intelligible.'[20]

Here we have a too easy identification of Christ with Western civilisation and a total rejection of Indian culture. But that error does not affect their theology of mission in which they saw the humanisation of India as a preparation for the gospel. Men like C. F. Andrews corrected the error of Duff and discerned Indian national awakening and its new humanism as *preparatio evangelica*. Leaders

of thought and action like K. T. Paul and S. K. Datta followed the same line of thought, and considered the national renascence with its new sense of human dignity, its new ideal of casteless and classless brotherhood and its new idea of a historical secular destiny, as the product of the gospel and therefore as real preparation for the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word Incarnate. I have often quoted Bishop Newbigin making the same point from within his recognised status as a theologian of mission. Speaking of the changes taking place in the economics, society and culture of India, he says:

> I believe that this great new upreach of vital power which is expressing itself in the whole life of the country—in rural development, in industry, in politics and social change—is in the last analysis the fruit of the meeting of the gospel with the Soul of India. I do not mean only the gospel as the missionaries have brought it, but the gospel reflected and refracted in a thousand ways—yes, and distorted too—in the civilisation of the West, within its literature, its science, its jurisprudence, its political ideas and in many other ways. India is responding to that contact now for the first time with her whole strength. And that means vast opportunity and vast danger. The coming of Christ always means mercy and judgment.

He goes on to say:

> We shall fail India and fail our Lord at this moment of decision if the Church is not more ready than it is today to identify itself much more thoroughly with the life of the nation, and to show Christ as the one in whom all things, all the riches of all the nations and all created things, are to find their harmony and fulfilment.[21]

Note in this the Christological emphasis. Jesus Christ who is the 'lover of my soul' is also the One who renews 'all the riches of the nations and created things' and brings them to their true fulfilment in the New Creation, to witness to whom the Church must identify with the struggles for national regeneration now and here.

In this connection it is worthwhile to look at the distinctive features of Christological thought as it has developed in Indian Christian Theology, which have been surveyed briefly but ably by Robin Boyd in his *Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*.[22] It is evident that from Keshub Chunder Sen through Chenchaiah and Chakkarai to Paul Devanandan, the most characteristic feature of the Indian understanding of Jesus Christ is as the Divine Man, or the New Adam, the bearer of the New Humanity, the New Creation. And they all see in the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ the assumption in the Godhead of Christ's historical humanity so that Christ remains 'unto man a man, a pattern man, a God-man',[23] the Divine Head of Humanity, the New Adam, the Son through whom the Holy Spirit brings all men into sonship to the Father. At this point the final destiny of man is ultimately an incorporation into Christ's glorified humanity. That is, Salvation itself could be defined as humanisation in a total and eschatological sense. And all our struggles on earth for the fragmentary realisation of man's humanity point to this eschatological humanisation as their judgment and fulfilment.

To sum up. Salvation has always been seen by Christian missions in India in close integration with humanisation. Indian theologians have even sought to define Christ and his salvation in terms of the New Humanity offered by God for the ultimate humanisation

of all mankind. This is not altogether alien to the thinking of some of the foremost evangelical theologians. For instance, according to Berkhoff, the gospel is a great movement of God in creation and history 'directed towards its ultimate goal, a glorified humanity, in full communion with God, of which goal the risen Christ is the guarantee and the first fruits.'[24]

The real issues any theology of mission has to grapple with are about the nature and meaning of the Person of Christ, and in relation to it the nature and meaning of *koinonia* which is the New Humanity in Christ. New Testament scholars of competence have pointed out that *koinonia* in the New Testament does not refer primarily to the Church or the quality of life within the Church, but that it is the manifestation of the new reality of the Kingdom at work in the world of men in world history. If all this is true, then the religious fellowship within the church and the human fellowship in secular society are both within the reality of Christ and the history of salvation in the world.

II

DIALOGUE WITH HINDUISM ON HUMANISATION

Let us make a brief survey of the fundamental spiritual issues of debate within Hinduism, as seen in its renascent phase, and try to indicate the nature of the task any theology of mission has to undertake to enter relevantly into dialogue with Hinduism. It is my conviction that the relation between Salvation and Humanisation, i.e. between the ultimate destiny of man and his historical destiny, which we saw as fundamental in Christian rethinking, is also the fundamental issue debated within all the religions, and, I would add, secular movements, of modern India. Only the language of discourse varies from one movement to another. My thesis, therefore, is that it is the theme of humanisation which provides the most relevant point of entry for any Christian dialogue with these movements on Salvation in Christ at spiritual and theological depth.

When I was studying the debates on Christ and Christianity which took place between some of the prominent Neo-Hindu leaders of the Indian renascence and Christian thinkers,[1] it struck me that there are two types of Neo-Hinduism in India. One of them is in the tradition of Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi where the main concern is with the moral regeneration of Indian society. It considers religion primarily as a spiritual foundation for social morality. The other type of Hinduism is in the tradition of Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan. Their main concern is with the ultimate spiritual liberation or philosophical vision characteristic of

Hinduism. They try to show how Hinduism can take serious account of the human values and secular interests to which modern India is awake and give spiritual support to them. Therefore, though from different angles, one from the social and the other from the spiritual, both types of Neo-Hindus are dealing with the question of the relation between man's ultimate spiritual destiny and the regeneration of human society in modern Indian history.

Paul Devanandan in his essays on contemporary Hinduism[2] has summarised the ferment in Hindu religion, philosophy and society as a rethinking of the relation between the ultimate and historical destinies of men, or as he put it, between classical theology and the new anthropology. He points to ideas of fundamental rights of the human person, of equality between man and man irrespective of sex or caste, and a new sense of community as a moral fellowship of persons, gaining ground in India in actual practice. The pace of this movement has been accelerated after Independence through the processes of social legislation, plans for economic development and the commitment to the ideology of socialism. All these ideas of man and society and the values they underlie, Devanandan says, are 'new in the sense that they are not based on traditional Hindu scriptures about the nature and destiny of man.'[3] Confronting these, the Hindu leaders are convinced that the traditional doctrines about the destiny of man and the underlying view of world-life and history can be re-stated in terms of their own fundamental spiritual core, to give support to the new sense of historical destiny to which India is awake today. Devanandan surveys the efforts made at such re-statement by the Neo-Advaitins. He also speaks of the

search for spiritual authority for historical mission in a theistic interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, leaving aside 'a rigorous monism although the stress is still laid on the advaita nature of reality'.[4] Swami Vivekananda found a basis for Practical Vedanta and its programmes of service through his re-statement of the doctrines of *Karmayoga* and *Jivanmukti*. His affirmation of the sphere of morality, personality and history as means to the realm of the Impersonal Ultimate, and his equation of the advaitic selflessness (the renunciation of *jivatva*) with the personalist unselfishness (the renunciation of *ahamkara*) are all efforts at justifying the new sense of historical destiny of modern India under the classical understanding of salvation as liberation from world and history. Perhaps the grandest attempt to find room for moral persons, social justice and historical purpose within the ultimate advaitic philosophical vision and spiritual self-realisation is that of Radhakrishnan. John Arapura in his book *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience*[5] and Surjit Singh in his book *Preface to Personality*[6] which is a critique of Radhakrishnan, show how Radhakrishnan's distinction between an abstract monism which negated plurality in the ultimate spirit and a dynamic monism which fulfilled it, his ladder of reality with degrees of manifestation and involvement of the Spirit, his re-statement of the relation between the Absolute as it is in itself and the Absolute envisaged as Iswara from the cosmic end, and his reinterpretation of maya as the mystery of contingent reality are all worthy efforts to 'save the world' as Radhakrishnan says, and to give spiritual foundation to the new humanism. Radhakrishnan puts the emphasis on 'a recognition of spiritual realities not by abstention from the world, but bringing to its life, its business (artha)

and its pleasure (kama) the controlling power of spiritual faith. Life is one and in it there is no distinction of sacred and the secular. Bhakti and mukti are not opposed. Dharma, artha and kama go together.'[7] P. T. Raju, a student of Radhakrishnan, says that while in the past Hinduism elaborated the last of the *purusharthas*, namely *moksha*, the need now is to give greater attention to the spiritual values to be realised in *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* in man's social destiny in relation to the ultimate. In fact when one reads the many advocates of Neo-Vedanta, it becomes evident that the crucial spiritual and 'theological' issue in Vedanta Hinduism today is the relation between ultimate salvation and historical human existence, within the Ultimate Reality of Brahman. The Sarvodaya philosophy developed under the leadership first of Gandhi, and later of Vinoba and Jaya Prakash is one of the most significant philosophies of action seeking to realise the welfare of all in society, based on the Gandhian conviction that 'man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God and all his activities social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God.'[8] Satya is the end and Ahimsa is the means. Its scriptural basis is Bhagavad Gita. Devanandan says:

> The Gita doctrine of *nishkamakarma* is seen as providing the support and motivation for historical action. Likewise the Gita emphasis on *svadharma* and *lokasangraha* (are) both reinterpreted as to provide a dynamic and religious faith to the modern Hindu understanding of personality and community.[9]

Ahimsa, Asteya and Aparigraha which could be literally translated as non-injury, non-stealing and non-grabbing have been given a new content to mean respectively

(1) respect for life: that is, for the dignity of the human person; (2) recognising that others have certain rights which should be held inviolate; and (3) abandoning all exploitation which stems from covetousness and avarice. This makes room, within the framework of traditional religious doctrine of spiritual self-realisation, for the new human values emerging in contemporary India.

It is a moot question whether Neo-Hinduism has succeeded in building a creative relation between man's historical and eternal destinies in its own religious fundamentals. John Arapura says:

> Radhakrishnan's philosophy of Integral Experience involves a significant revision of the traditional Advaita. The questions that the Advaita has always been called upon to answer are: Is the drama of human life a meaningless story . . . or is it significant history? are the struggles and travails of man of no avail or do human achievements have eternal value?; is the destiny of conscious life a mere return to where it came from or is it a consummation, a fulfilment that adds a new dimension to being?; or is history such that it would make no difference if it had not been? Radhakrishnan answers all these questions positively and tries to do so as far as possible within the framework of Vedanta. This is no small achievement.[10]

Surjit Singh is however more sceptical of Radhakrishnan's success and even Raju admits contradictions, vagueness and incompleteness in his working out of the nature of the positive movement from the human to the spiritual and the possibility of human values being protected in the spiritual. Devanandan discusses the theological difficulties not only Radhakrishnan but all modern leaders of Hindu thought face in this process of

relating the Hindu doctrine of salvation to the new Hindu concern for humanisation of man and society. He says:

> The stumbling block continues to be the supreme difficulty of putting meaning content into the term 'personal' as applied to God and His relationship with man, especially in view of the new significance given in contemporary Hindu society to the concept of the human 'person' in relation to other persons. The other difficulty arises when the point is made that beyond all the activism, openly admitted as theologically valid, there is the 'actionlessness' of mystic advaitam (non-duality) of the finite self and the Infinite Self, still upheld as the one desirable end of all religious pilgrimage. Even in its theistic form the Vedanta is not able to overcome this problem of reconciling the active life of the temporal here and now with the mystic quietude of the eternal present. Finally, whatever the emphasis (or de-emphasis), adherence to Vedanta view of reality makes almost impossible a belief in a doctrine of creation especially such as would do justice to the reality of God's purposive work in world-life as directed towards an end, and to the 'creative' activity of the human person as capable of co-operating with (or retarding) the fulfilment of the Divine Purpose of Creation.[11]

Devanandan was never tired of insisting that it is at these points of the struggle of Hinduism to relate the world to God and historical purpose to eternal salvation and the difficulties it faces in the struggle, that Christ is in dialogue with Hinduism and Hindus; and that Christians may participate relevantly in this dialogue of Christ with Hinduism if they can enter it with spiritual and theological

sensitivity, using the language of discourse of Hinduism, within the framework of active Hindu-Christian co-operation in the work of building up the nation. It is the co-operation in the tasks of humanisation of society and State that acutely raises the question of the meaning of human existence and destiny and invests the dialogue with existential significance.

Some of the fundamentals of Christian theology are to be thought through afresh in the light of their relevance to the issues which contemporary Hindu theology is facing. In so doing, the common Christian and Hindu concern for a spiritual basis for true humanisation is the most fruitful frame of reference which can illumine the theological dialogue at depth between Hinduism and Christianity.

After this rather long introduction let me come to the topic. What are some of the crucial Christian theological issues which make such a dialogue challengingly relevant both to the theological struggle within modern Hinduism and to the communication of the Christian message within it?

The aspect of the Gospel which both the traditional and the new Hinduism consider to be scandalous in the Christian faith is that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself'—that the life, death on the cross and the resurrection of a particular person in history is the unique act of God by which He has brought salvation to the whole world. I submit that this is precisely the element which is going to help Hinduism in its inner theological struggle to affirm the eternal significance of man's historical destiny and provide a spiritual basis for the newly emerging human values. But it is also the element which is now demanding further exploration in

the light—or darkness—of the crisis in theology created by radical questions concerning the relation between faith and history in the Christ-event.

Let me put this discussion in the Hindu context. Swami Vivekananda spoke repeatedly of the uncertainties of a religion and of human salvation built on the historicity of a historical person. He said:

> If there is one blow dealt to the historicity of that life, as has been the case in modern times with the lives of almost all the so-called founders of religion—we know that half the details of such lives is not now seriously believed in and that the other half is seriously doubted—if this becomes the case, if that rock of historicity as they pretended to call it is shaken and shattered, the whole building tumbles down broken absolutely, never to regain its lost status[12].

In contrast to the centrality of a historical person in Christianity, salvation in Hinduism is centred on principles, with persons only illustrating them. The Swami says:

> It is in vain if we try to gather together all the peoples of the world around a single personality. It is difficult to make them gather together even around eternal and universal principles. If it ever becomes possible to bring the largest portion of humanity to one way of thinking in regard to religion, mark you, it must be always through principles and not through persons.[13]

According to him, Jesus is the manifestation of the spiritual principle of Christhood, of oneness with God, to which every man is destined on his own without the mediation of Jesus. As the historicity of Jesus and his personality are not essential to the principle he

manifested, Vivekananda asks Christianity to separate the personality of Jesus from the universal principle of Christhood, and present Christhood rather than Jesus Christ as the Christian message, holding the person as a non-essential part.

Mahatma Gandhi was also indifferent to the historical Jesus, and concerned only with the principle he represents—particularly in his case, the ethical principle of non-violence. He says:

> I have never been interested in a historical Jesus. I should not care if it was proved by someone that the man called Jesus never lived, and that what was narrated in the Gospels was a figment of the writers' imagination. For the Sermon on the Mount would still be valid.[14]

For Gandhiji, 'it would be poor comfort to the world, if it had to depend upon a historical God who died 2000 years ago.' So he advises Christians, 'Do not then preach the God of history but show Him as He lives today through you'—to preach not the historical Jesus, but the contemporary realisation of what he stood for. The birth, death and resurrection of Jesus were significant not as historical facts but as symbols of ever-recurring events which can be enacted in the moral life of every man under the inspiration but not the mediation of the Person of Jesus. In this sense, for Gandhi, 'the miraculous birth is an eternal event, so is the cross an eternal event in this stormy life'. He made explicit his conviction that the Person is not essential to the moral regeneration of man, only the Principle he represented is.

It may be noted that none of the Hindu thinkers are saying that Jesus of Nazareth is not a historical person.

In fact they go on the assumption he is. Radhakrishnan even in his severely critical essays does not question the historicity of Jesus. But what they all question is whether the historicity of Jesus should have any theological importance for a truly spiritual faith. The quest of the historical Jesus should be interesting for historians, but why should it be so for religious faith itself?

It is in this setting of the Hindu thinking that we must look at the question regarding the relation between faith and history in general and the significance of the historical foundations for Christian faith in particular—which have been questioned within Christianity itself today. Christian theologians who did not want their faith to be dependent on the day-to-day findings of the scientific quest of the historical Jesus on the one hand, and those who were concerned more with the Christ of faith and its meaning for contemporary life than with the fact of historical Jesus itself on the other, have been both involved in reducing the importance of scientifically ascertainable facts of secular history for faith. Probably one of the most important tasks of a theology of mission is to restate the significance of the historicity of the Person of Jesus within the essential core of the Christian message. It is only if a historical event belongs to the essence of the Christian Gospel that historical human existence can acquire a positive relation to our eternal salvation. And certainly the Christian mission which proclaims a historical person, and not merely a principle, as the bearer of salvation for all mankind, stands or falls with the person it proclaims. I would like to make a few random comments on this crucial task of the theology of mission.

(1) The central issue of a theology of Christian mission

which affirms the Person of Jesus Christ rather than any principle he represents as the core of the gospel is the reality of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. In this reality there are three components which remain integrally related to one another. Firstly, the bodily resurrection of Jesus as a happening in secular history. Of course one could be as sophisticated as one wants with regard to the definition of the term 'bodily', with respect to the nature of the spiritual body of the Risen Jesus and its relation to the mortal body before death. But man is a bodily being and it is this that makes him a historical human being. The question whether the ultimate spiritual destiny of man involves a redemption and consummation of his history is ultimately based on the resurrection of Jesus being a bodily one—being a *happenedness* with some deposit in the chronological history, and not only in some primal salvation history known only to God and faith or only in the history of the internal soul of individual believers. And in a sense, therefore, the *happenedness* is subject to historical research and in a way dependent upon it.

Secondly, the resurrection of Jesus does not acquire any stupendous significance for the world and world mission unless it is seen as the unique act of God for the salvation of man. It is here that the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians is important. It sees the risen Christ as the first fruits of a harvest, and as the inauguration of a historical movement towards the establishment of Christ's victory not only over sin, but also over principalities and powers and finally over death itself, and being consummated in the Kingdom of God. This is the work of God, in the sense that it is a reality independent of the acceptance or rejection of it by man;

and it will lose its reality if it is reduced to a subjective self-understanding of man.

Thirdly, one should add that the faith of men in the work of the Holy Spirit alone can discern it and appropriate it for themselves and their societies.

Secular historicity, its significance as the divine act of salvation in history, and the falth-response of a historical community—the combination of these three in the scheme of salvation which the Church proclaims is relevant to Hinduism at this stage of its life, when Hinduism is seeking an idea of salvation which does not negate but comprehends and fulfils human personality and history.

(2) Having said that, it is still necessary to work out a theology of the relation between the Principle and the Person, by which we can affirm the Christian significance of the recognition of the spiritual and moral principles which Jesus represents for human existence and which are accepted by people who cannot acknowledge the Person himself. Rammohan Roy spoke of the moral teachings of Jesus and their significance for human happiness, and Gandhiji spoke of the Sermon on the Mount and its principle of forgiving and suffering love as the law of human destiny in individual and corporate existence. What is the Christian significance of all this? Much of the traditional theology of mission which is still current sees it in purely negative terms as a movement away from Christ. My own feeling is that it has to be more dialectical than this, the positive and the negative being held together. And further, it is necessary for missionary theology to dig into the Principle itself to clarify three things. *First*, that the principle is never self-validated, and negates itself when considered as

standing on its own. *Second*, that when the principle is made autonomous and self-sufficient, the spirit of self-righteousness makes it impossible of fulfilment and introduces contradiction and tragedy in the very movement towards moral regeneration. *Third*, that the ultimate validity and fulfilment of the principle posits a realm of transcendence within the principle itself, and it is necessary to explore the nature of the origin and goal of this realm. In fact, the question of the relation between Principle and Person posed for Christianity by Neo-Hinduism is not unlike that of the relation between Law and Grace which has a long history and has been debated through the ages in Christian theology. The recognition of the positive and the negative status of the acknowledgment of the Principle without the Person is paralleled in the status which Christian theology gives to Law—the Law as schoolmaster to Christ and the Law as the source of sin, guilt and death. In this connection I would like to quote two statements made in the Indian context. First by a layman, Dr. John Mathai, in his inaugural address at the Christian Consultation on a Socialist Pattern of Society held in Bombay, 1956. He said—

> There is a distinction well observed in the teachings of Christ: knowledge of right is not the same thing as the power to do right. That is why the personality of Christ fills so big a place in the Christian philosophy.[15]

The other is from a letter Dr. Stanley Jones wrote to Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Jones has been compelled to call Gandhi 'a natural Christian', a category which he leaves undefended. The compulsion has come from a recognition that Gandhi's acknowledgment of the principle of the cross as the law of individual and political life, and the

extent to which he has been able to practise it, imply that Gandhi lived not merely under law but was in the realm of the Grace of the Person of Christ, appropriating it, even if Gandhi himself rejected the assumption implied. And Jones' letter reads as follows:

> I thought you had grasped the centre of the Christian faith, but I am afraid I must change my mind. I think you have grasped certain principles of the Christian faith which have moulded you and have helped to make you great—you have grasped the principles but you have missed the Person. May I suggest that you penetrate through the Principles to the Person and then come back and tell us what you have found. I don't say this as a mere Christian propagandist. I say this because we need you and need the illustration you could give us if you really grasped the Centre—the Person.[16]

The theology of mission for contemporary India must explore the nature of the acknowledgment of the Person implied in the acknowledgment of the Principle on the one hand, and the meaning of what Jones has called 'penetrating through the Principle to the Person'.

(3) The parallelism between the Principle—Person debate with the Law—Grace one brings me to the necessity of an Indian theology of dialogue to take serious account of the significance of the Old Testament, especially its prophetic interpretation of history, for the understanding not only of the gospel of Christ but also of the sense of historical mission which has played such a part in modern history. The history of Western culture and its many ideologies, including the liberal and the Marxian idea of progress towards a goal, and the history of British imperialism and of its counterpart Indian nationalism, and the Indian

religious renascence itself, are all involved in this sense of historical mission which comes from the prophetic tradition. Thus one could well say that not only the gospel of Christ but also the humanist renascence in Hinduism today has a continuity with the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. And it is necessary to work out a theology of mission which recognises it and sees the nature of the relation between its two fulfilments or developments —one as seen in the gospel of Christ and the other in India's renascent religious and secular humanism.

Here again I realise there are Christian theologies which take Jesus Christ and Christianity out of the framework of the prophetic understanding of history. Demythologisation as an attempt to understand and communicate the truth and meaning of the saving act of God in the person of Christ in terms of the ontology of human existence is both justified and welcome; but when it goes to the extent of rejecting the very idea of a saving act of God in history, it is not different from the attempt of Neo-advaitins to detribalise Jesus, i.e. to take him out of the Semitic framework of thinking characteristic of the Old Testament prophetic tradition, and spiritualise him within that of advaitic spirituality. The difficulty in doing this lies in the fact that the prophetic idea of purposive history is an essential aspect of modern humanism and the spiritual basis for the struggles for modernisation, which we want so much for India. Therefore, Christianity will serve the struggle for humanisation best if we see the prophetic tradition as integral to the gospel of Christ.

Any theology of mission which seeks to study how much of the Old Testament world-view is integral to the Gospel and how much demythologisation is permissible,

should look at it within the context of a recognition that the historical dynamism of modern India, whether in national renascence or nation-building, and the humanism which inspires it, have deep roots in prophetism whether it is mediated through Christianity or western liberal or Marxian historicism. In fact, the historical dynamism of Neo-Hinduism and of secular ideologies of humanism is itself to be transformed in the light of the prophetic understanding of history as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, if they are to serve the humanity of man and not betray it. The dehumanisation inherent in RSS communalism and Stalinist Communism is proof of this. But it is a greater betrayal if the historical dynamism itself is destroyed by any kind of a swing-back to the a-historical world-view either of traditional Hindu mysticism or of the subjectivism of individualistic existentialism.

(4) In this connection it is necessary to consider the Christian-Hindu dialogue at the level of advaitic vision and mystic experience of the Ultimate Reality which Swami Abhishiktananda and the Cuttat group consider as the most significant meeting point between Hinduism and Christianity. If we think that Divinism and not Humanism is the most theologically valid meeting point between Christianity and other religions, their approach would be correct. I doubt it myself, as I have already hinted. I believe that Swamy Abhishiktananda, being a Christian monk among monks in India, somewhat exaggerates its importance. But I agree that, considering the fundamental place given by both traditional and modern Hinduism to the philosophic vision of the One behind the Many and the ultimacy given to the experience of mystic oneness with it, it is a necessary and important point of inter-religious dialogue in India. But this

dialogue requires a theology which clarifies the status of mysticism in the Christian scheme of salvation, as well as the nature, meaning and goal of the mystic experience when interpreted within the Christological apprehension of ultimate reality. In fact the relation between the prophetic and the mystic apprehensions of Reality and the nature of the judgment and fulfilment of both in Christ need greater theological exploration in an Indian theology of mission. Protestants are used to emphasising 'obedience' to the Word of God Jesus Christ, and other more metaphysically inclined traditions have in them a greater understanding of 'union' with the Divine nature in Christ. The relation between obedience and union in our life in the Divine Humanity of Christ needs spelling out. But ontologically, the necessity is to work out the relation between Being and Becoming, within the context of the Christian-Hindu dialogue. In Hinduism, Being includes Becoming, but Becoming is considered as a reality of a lower order. Iswara as mediator of creation and the avataras are of this lower order in relation to Brahman, and that is why Christ cannot be identified with Iswara or defined as an avatara, and that is why Christianity cannot be identified with bhakti—either Iswara bhakti or avatara bhakti—as Appasamy tends to think. Klaus Klostermaier is right in emphasising in his new publication *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban*[17] that knowledge of Christ must be on level with Brahma Vidya and advaitic vision and mystic union, and not with Iswara-bhakti. But then it seems that he tends to sacrifice Becoming for Being, history for God. It is this problem which the doctrine of the Trinity sought to solve by affirming that the Son through whom all things were created was 'of the same substance with the Father', thus upgrading the

Divine Purpose of Becoming to the level of the reality of Being. Surjit Singh, Mark Sunder Rao and Russell Chandran have grappled with this problem from the non-Roman Catholic side. A trinitarian concept of Mission, reinterpreted in the language of Hinduism, might well help develop an Indian theology which can do justice to mystic experience without reducing the eternal realities of the purpose of God for the created order and our creative humanity and the redemption wrought for us in Jesus of Nazareth. I must however confess that Chenchiah's view that it is impossible to give reality to history and radical incarnation, or rather the *inhomanisation* of God in Jesus in History, so long as the concept of the Absolute remains, appeals to me a great deal. Chenchiah reverses the order of reality and sees the historical process and incarnation as fundamental, and the Absolute as a construct of the human mind involved in the process.[18] I suppose his thought is in line with a good deal of modern process theology. But I have digressed.

We cannot leave out the very important theological issue which underlies all that I have said so far, and which have agitated many minds both Christian and Hindu who have seen and acknowledged Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world and the bearer of human destiny. Sometimes this issue has been put in the form of the question: Should there be a church into which a convert to Christ must enter through baptism? However, if we look more closely at the statements of those who have questioned whether the Church and baptism are essential, I think in most cases it will be clear that what they are asking is whether it is necessary for them to join the Church as it has found its form in the Christian communities of India.

That is to say, in most cases the question is not that of the necessity of the Church or of Baptism as a sacrament; it is with regard to the *form* of the Church. In fact Keshub Chander Sen who acknowledged Christ but kept outside the Christian community did defend the idea of the Church and set up one with ministry and even the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The difficulty with Dr. Baago[19] has been in the main that he confused the two questions—whether the Church is essential, and what form the Church should take. The former is a rather outdated question of liberal theology, but the latter is a relevant question of post-liberal and even post-neo-orthodox theology. And I am surprised that Bishop Newbigin in his otherwise post-Kraemer stance in *The Finality of Christ*[20] misses narrowly the crucial issue in this second question, when he discusses the necessity and the nature of the Church—the issue of the transcendence of the Church over religious communities, which makes possible the Church's taking form in all religious communities.

The 1966 Narsapur Consultation[21] of church leaders organised by the National Christian Council of India raised some of the real issues involved in the hesitation on the part of some converts to accept baptism and enter the religious communities of India, known as the Christian churches. After saying that 'the new converts should be recognisable as the first fruits for Christ of the society to which they belong, bringing their specific gifts into the fellowship', the Report goes on to say that this has not always been kept in view, so that 'baptism has been made to appear as an act by which a person repudiates his ancient cultural heritage and accepts an alien culture'. The situation is changing, both through the impact of

urban secular culture and through Indian theology and Indian Church recognising the need to allow the whole culture of India 'to provide the focus in which India's offering of herself to Christ is to be made'. And then the Report defines the meaning of conversion to Christianity as a turning from idols to Christ, and points out that it is 'not moving from one culture to another, or from one community to another community as it is understood in the communal sense in India'. It continues: 'Nevertheless, there are certain given elements which belong to the proper character of the Church at all places and at all times. These include the Scriptures, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the ministry and a corporate life whose members are committed to an active fellowship, prayer, witness and service.' The statement affirms that conversion does mean joining a fellowship sharing the common faith and the essential sacramental and ethical expressions of the faith, but that it does not mean moving from one community to another community as understood in India. It is a statement worthy of special note. In fact, in the discussion I remember myself urging that the phrase 'religious community' should be used instead of 'community in the communal sense as understood in India', because communal community in India is religious community with religion, social structure and even the politics of the group integrated into one totality. I submit that the unity of the churches has not made any change in their communal character as a religious community. If we take the Narsapur findings seriously, then there is a very important theological task that remains to be attempted, namely to explore what form the Church as a Fellowship of faith in Christ (and I would add—of

Christ-centred ethics) should take in India in contrast with the present form of religious community.

I would like to go a little further. Once we acknowledge that the Christ-centred fellowship of faith and ethics transcends the Christian religious community, are we not virtually saying that the Church can take form as a Christ-centred fellowship of faith and ethics in the Hindu religious community? This was the thesis of Keshub Chunder Sen and in our day of Manilal Parekh. They believed that it was possible to have a Hindu Church of Christ in which Christ (and I would add—and the given elements of His Church including in the long run unity and historical continuity with the whole Church) is allowed to judge and fulfil not merely the cultural and social but also the religious life of the Hindu. This is on the assumption that Faith is different from Religion and transcends religions though it should have religious expression; and that religions, like cultures, can be redeemed of idolatry and self-justification, and in that process secularised to a large extent through bringing them under the judgment and renewal of Christ. In this sense Raymond Panikkar's idea of Hinduism itself coming under the mystery of Christ through His death and resurrection is not untenable. Indeed I cannot see any difference between the accepted missionary goal of a Christian Church expressing Christ in terms of the contemporary Hindu thought and life patterns and a Christ-centred Hindu Church of Christ which transforms Hindu thought and life patterns from within.

I know that the whole theme raises a host of theological questions; but it is important for the theology of mission to face them in India where men of all faiths, religious and secular, are involved together in building a secular,

national community transcending religious communalism and sensitive to men's common humanity. In this setting the Church must move away from being a communal entity to become an open fellowship able to witness, in all religious and secular communities, to Christ as the bearer of both true human life and salvation. In fact, there have been several missionary theologians of repute in India who spoke of Mission to Hindus within the framework of Mission to Hinduism. This needs further exploration by any theology of mission in India today.

III

DIALOGUE WITH SECULARISM ON TRUE HUMANISATION

Let us now briefly survey the fundamental spiritual issues of debate within modern secular movements in general, and within such movements in India in particular. Let us try then to indicate the nature of the task the theology of Christian mission has to undertake in order to enter into dialogue relevantly with them.

The movements which draw their inspiration from the philosophy of secularism have been primarily concerned with promoting, in the name of man, the process of secularisation of thought, of values and of structures of social life. Therefore, the concern for humanisation has been basic to their central task. Naturally, then, when certain trends in the process of secularisation seemed to go counter to man's genuine humanity as it had itself defined it, modern secularism raised the question within itself whether it had adequately discriminated between the human and the inhuman forces at work in the process. It further reviewed whether such inadequacy in its own understanding arose out of its losing sight of the dimension of transcendence in human existence and self-hood. The discussion going on in modern secularism, no doubt in various forms and categories indigenous to secularism itself, could be described as a reappraisal of *the relation between secularity and transcendence* in the being and becoming of man. In Christian theological categories, it is the relation of salvation to humanisation

or the relevance of the *ultimate eschatological* dimension to the *relative historical.*

One could illustrate this from any area of secular humanism. One might take the rethinking that has been going on in Liberal Secularism ever since individualism without spiritual roots was caught sacrificing individuals at the altar of modern totalitarian collectivism of the nation, class or state. Or one could speak of the ethical reappraisal of scientific secularism which has been going on, especially among men of science and technology, ever since the atomic destruction of Hiroshima. Perhaps the best illustration is the revision of Marxian Socialist Humanism which has been going on within the Communist movement of the world ever since Krushchev's revelations of the inhumanities of Stalinism. In all these cases it is seen that *self-sufficient* secularism, individualism, collectivism, scientism and communism which reject the dimension of transcendence for human existence became closed and dehumanising. Hence, rethinking is based on the insight that secularism, if it is to remain open and human, must recognise a new dimension. 'Socialism with a Human Face' was the slogan of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Dubcek. It is significant that, as Lochman and Moltmann have stated, the search for a more abiding humanism urged the Marxists of Eastern Europe themselves to take seriously the question of ultimate human destiny in some form. Says Lochman: 'At the very time when some Western theologians started the God-is-dead talk, a leading Marxist thinker in my country wrote a best-seller titled *God is not Quite Dead.* Does that fact not suggest that a society committed to a programme of humanisation cannot escape a confrontation with that "ultimate

concern" . . . .'[1] It does not mean that every reappraisal of secular humanism ends in the categorical affirmation of God. Very often it does not go beyond the search for the deeper dimensions of humanism within the framework of the closed secular humanism itself. But sometimes the framework bursts open and secularism confronts a reality which impinges upon man from beyond himself, making life itself either a gift of cosmic love or a matter of constant anxiety, and thus compelling a reform of the framework, either making room for a recognition of the new vision or forcing it into a defensive stance. When the impersonal collective and secularist framework is too rigid to be reformed, men awake to the dimension of transcendence tend to return to personal religion or purely individualist existentialism, rejecting the structures of collective thought and the processes of secular life as of no significance to authentic human living. Here in fact is the rationale behind the spiritual emigration from secularism. The experience of Svetlana Alliluyeva is symbolic—both her return to religion and her emigration from Russia.[2]

This double pattern in the dialectics of secularism is clear also in India. In a study I once made of Jewaharlal Nehru's socialist secularism, I was struck by the way he struggled to find a spiritual and ethical framework which would make secularism subservient to the cause of humanism in Indian society through political action. This is true also of M. N. Roy's pilgrimage from Dialectical Materialism through Physical Realism to Radical Humanism. Before Ashok Mehta gave up socialism, he too sought a humanist political philosophy which would combine the scientific insights of Karl Marx with the spiritual insights of Mahatma Gandhi. Three

other leaders of Indian political life, Aurobindo, Patwardhan and Jai Prakash started as secular politicians. Patwardhan and Jai Prakash were socialists, but then gave up power politics for Sarvodaya politics, as they found the former too full of dehumanising forces.[3] Aurobindo abdicated politics for religious spirituality. Jai Prakash's journey from Communism through Democratic Socialism to Gandhism in the name of man is an illustration of the kind of pilgrimage secular political philosophers who are awake to transcendence are sometimes inclined to make in India.[4]

A theology of mission should help the Christian Church to participate in these struggles of secularism and secular men for an authentic understanding of man as he is confronted with the historical task of humanising the world, and with the radical demand for meaningful personal human existence. It should help the Church to enter into a dialogue with them, opening secular men and secular ideologies to an awareness of the relevance of the Gospel of Christ. What are some of the issues involved in the formulation of such a theology of mission to secularism?

Perhaps we should discuss, before we pass on to the issues, the very validity of this relevance to secular man as a criterion at all in evangelism. On the outcome of this discussion will depend whether we should go into the specific questions of language and methodology to make the presentation of the gospel relevant to secularism. There undoubtedly are deeply theological issues involved in the discussion.

On this theme Bishop Newbigin has raised some radical questions in his comment on the correspondence between Dr. Berkhoff and myself on the communication of the

gospel to modern secular man.[5] His argument could be summarised as follows: The gospel of Christ is relevant to human existence in any situation, at any place and in any period of history. The proclamation of the gospel creates its own relevance and raises its own questions in every human situation. Why then should we be so concerned with the situation of the modern secular man in the presentation of the gospel?

This is an interesting attempt to release the Christian mission from any concern with particular situations by stressing the universality of the human situation. I suppose this universality of the human situation is expressed in the encounter of all men with the problems of human destiny created within the framework of life bounded by the realities of life to which the biblical categories of law, sin and guilt and the common experience of suffering and death point. The proclamation of the gospel of salvation through Christ in biblical categories is supposed to have within it the inherent power to penetrate any situation and make itself relevant. I appreciate the theological point the Bishop is making, but I must confess I have no sympathy with a universalism and a biblicism of this kind. For two reasons. *First*, it conceives God and human nature in too static terms and assumes that no new dimensions of human existence or divine purpose have emerged in the modern world, through the acts of the living God in the past and the attempts of men to recreate their environment of nature and society and to formulate new goals for mankind. I think the situation men face in the modern world is new in many respects, and even if the basic problems and solutions of human existence remain universally the same, they emerge with a newness which

is all their own; and it is the duty of the Church to grasp this newness. *Secondly*, while I believe that the biblical realities are basic, I cannot consider the biblical categories and form of language as universally intelligible enough to modern secular man, without translation and some creative updating in terms of the language and the categories of the secular man. For this a continuing dialogue with him and with the terms in which he expresses the fundamental problems of his situation is essential. In fact, both Oscar Cullman and Reginald Fuller have shown clearly how in the New Testament period itself the biblical categories themselves changed as the gospel moved from one community and culture to another. And today, if both Vatican Council II and Uppsala '68 have held up Jesus Christ as the New Man and the bearer of the New Humanity as the basic category in which Christ could be presented, it is on the assumption that this category is more relevant to the questions and problems of modern man and the dialectics within modern secular and religious humanism. The particular situation we face must determine the method and language, and to a certain extent even the content of the message of the Gospel.

Dr. Visser't Hooft has often spoken of the Socratic method in evangelism. By this I suppose he means the Christian entering into the ethos of the unbeliever and articulating ethical and ontological questions regarding human existence from within that ethos, in a form which the unbeliever will feel and own as expressing his own deepest spiritual problems, at the same time opening him up to the questions of human destiny for which the Gospel of Christ is the answer. As Roger Garaudy has rightly said, it is in the formulation of right and relevant questions that the future of dialogue between Christianity

and Secularism on Christ at spiritual depth ultimately depends.[6] From this angle, its seems most important that we learn to understand the categories of secularism in which the question of God is raised within the dialectics of secularism itself. Is it not our conviction as Christians that no man and no ideology can escape the dialogue of God with man and help being exposed to the light that lighteth every man? Is it not true that, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, there are witnesses to the pressures of the Word of God, and man's answer in responsive faith or rejection, in every ideology and religion? This would also be true of secularism. When the self-sufficiency of secularism is affirmed there would be rejection of God; and when it is being challenged in the name of the humanity of man, as at present in the situation of secularism, there must also be partial but positive response to God. Both the rejection and the partial acknowledgment find expression in categories of secular thought. It is important that we understand the categories in which secularism speaks of God, whether to reject or to acknowledge Him. Karl Rahner has made the distinction between a transcendental theism which is real experience of God at the spiritual depth of man, and a categorical theism which is the expression of it in theistic symbols and categories.[7] It is the task of Christian mission to discern the transcendental atheism and theism in modern secularism even when it expresses itself in purely secularist categories.

Karl Rahner himself has given two illustrations of the possibility of speaking of God in secularist categories. *First*, as the absolute future. Rahner says: 'Absolute future is merely another name for what is really meant by God.'[8] It follows that God is 'the absolute fullness

of reality as the moving force of the dynamism of the future.' Thus He is 'not an object alongside others . . . but the very basis of this whole draft of the future', and therefore, known in man's projecting himself towards the future, but always transcending every idea of 'intramundane future utopia'. *Second*, as absolute love. Rahner says: 'Because of its doctrine of the unity of love of God and love of neighbour, Christianity certainly holds that if someone in absolute selflessness lovingly serves man and his dignity in the affirmation of moral values and imperatives, he affirms God at least implicitly.'[9] Similarly Bonhoeffer affirmed the reality of transcendence in Christ, when he defined him as the Man for Others. It means we should look for the question of God in secular humanism where secularists ask questions about an absolute dynamic basis of constant renewal and/or the ultimate goal of the relative future which men are planning and for the relative love and justice for which they are struggling. It is in the context of such questions that Christians can converse on the meaning of Jesus Christ as God Incarnate—that is, as the presence of man's absolute future and absolute love in history, as the constant source of prophetic protest against every dehumanising absolutization of societies and as the dynamic for human creativity to build society ever anew.

We do not yet have an adequate study of Indian secularists and secularism and the categories within which they seek for and speak of God. But what little evidence we have confirms that India's secular democratic socialists are involved in the search for an adequate spiritual foundation for a secular morality which can, on the one hand prevent political and economic power from becoming an instrument of individual and group selfishness and

exploitation, and on the other provide room for continued human creativity and dynamism to build a new human society. In the evening of his life, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke a great deal about the ethical and spiritual approach to the problems of life to give meaning to material development and to keep development in scientific and technological spheres from degenerating into power rivalries. He did not reject the idea that his new quest could be defined as his search for God.[10] Perhaps the most dominant feature of Indian secularism has been the debate within it as to how to overcome the moral anarchy of amoral power politics resulting from the moral relativism of secularism. Most of those who have been seized by this problem have either oscillated between the moral relativism of secularism and Gandhiji's moral absolutism without a solution (e.g. Nehru) or have rejected secularism and its morality in favour of Gandhian moralism (e.g. Jai Prakash). Asok Mehta as leader of the Praja Socialist Party came nearest to a solution of the problem here posed when he wrote: 'There undoubtedly are aspects of the ethics that are relative but man's deepest responses are to the absolute ethic, that nostalgia of life's ultimate triumph over all limitations. It is man's nature to live simultaneously in temporal truths and eternal verities'. On the nature of the absolute ethics and its relation to the relative he says that the absolute is not a rule or code but the 'achievement of self-harmony and acceptance of the rights and reality of other men', recognised as 'the final fruit of all efforts and the end of all quests', and 'the touchstone to judge and improve the historically conditioned morality.'[11] This comes nearest to an appreciation of absolute selfless love as the basis and source of the renewal of all relative moralities.

Perhaps M. N. Roy has given the greatest attention to the question of a philosophy for human freedom defined as man's capacity for creation of self and the world.[12] Of course he was deeply concerned to keep his philosophy radically secularist by emphasising the material and biological bases of life and mind, as well as of the human spirit of self-determination and creativity, and by keeping out all categories of Divine Creation and metaphysical teleology in history. Nevertheless, the movement of his thought from materialism to realism, transcending materialism and idealism, as well as class collectivism and individualism; his quest for a future society in which man as the ultimate root and measure of human creativity is the criterion; and his emphasis on the 'spiritual' human being who would be the end-product of the creative evolutionary historical process all seem to indicate that he was deeply conscious of man as self-transcendence living in the context of necessity but in tension towards the future and creating it. No doubt Roy interpreted it strictly within the categories of his dynamic but self-sufficient humanism, but at this point he does appear to come close to the question of God because it is 'a future open on the infinite'. But for him as for all those who accept Marxist methodology as he does, the infinite is, to use Garaudy's words, 'absence and exigency, while for the Christian it is promise and presence'.

Here in Roy's Radical Humanism the basic debate between the fundamental faith of secularism and that of Christianity is sharply focussed. It is the ultimate divergence between the Promethean conception that the fulfilment of freedom in love, which is the goal of historical becoming, is in its totality the creation of man, and the Christian conception that it is the gift of grace,

on which man's free creativity is based and within which it operates. The real question is whether a dimension of Gracious Love conceived symbolically as the Origin, the Beyond or the End penetrates and controls the exigencies of natural necessity, human subjectivity and self-transcendence and conditions the human vision of man and his future, his creation of community, the tragedies and distintegrations of that community and the search for renewal, all of which together form the historical dimension of human existence.

Let us now look at some of the issues relating to the content of the gospel which a theology of mission to secularism and secular man in our generation should clarify. The most basic thing to urge here is that the Church should hold on to the claims of 'radical secularity and radical grace'—which is the title of an article which Dr. J. M. Lochman, professor at Prague and Basel, has recently written.[13] There was a time when the churches identified conversion to Christ as a rejection of secularity and a return to religion. But the theologians today are aware of the roots in Christian faith of modern technology and secularisation, and of the forces of social justice and liberating creativity brought to traditional societies by the scientific and secular outlook. This has made them look at secularity in a positive way. In addition, it has led to a theology of the secular which sees in the long run the gospel of Grace through Christ as the only foundation for a truly humanising secularity, insofar as it keeps secular ideologies open to the creativity of God and man. Lochman makes this double point in the light of his experience with the Marxist-Christian dialogue in Czechoslovakia. He says that 'authentic biblical thought

is really unique among religious traditions in its readiness to "let the world be" what it is: a secular datum.[14] The Old Testament prophets oppose any deification of the world of nature or the potentialities of human history.

The new Testament apostles unhesitatingly interpret the eschatological commitment of God to man as a radical victory over principalities and powers. Thus, for a Christian, the world is truly a *saeculum*, a secular realm in which he can exercise his freedom in nature and history. Authentic biblical faith is the source of radical secularisation.

At the same time the biblical vision reveals the dimension of 'radical grace'. The world of secular reality is God's creation. It is not forsaken, not surrendered to demons, not left to its own distortions and guilt. . . . The New Testament reveals the Cross of Christ as the final consummation of the unconditional solidarity of God with man. His resurrection is the break-through of eschatological (i.e. irrevocable) salvation. Though apocalyptic horror threatens nature and history, the vision of radical grace remains—the promise of the 'New Jerusalem', of 'all things new.'

Here again, the core of the gospel, namely the presence and activity of God and His Kingdom in the world in the Person of the Crucified and Risen Christ, defines both the infinite possibilities of man's creativity in history and the eschatological spiritual foundation, openness to which supports and integrates that creativity and redeems it from self-destruction.

In the light of the necessity to emphasise in dialogue with secularism both the historical and the eschatological dimensions of the gospel, several isssues regarding the

relation between the two need fuller exploration by the theology of mission. Among these are:

(*a*) the debates which Bultmann's theory of the New Testament has initiated, with his exclusive emphasis on the individual and the now. The question is whether the eschatological reality is concerned only with the struggle for authentic humanisation of *individual persons in their isolation* from the structures of nature, society and cosmos which are supposed to be spiritually irrelevant to its concerns, or with the struggle for the authentic humanisation of these structures also as an essential aspect of meaningful personal existence in community. Or again, is eschatology concerned exclusively with its demand for self-realisation *now*, or is it primarily also openness of the self to the future? Bultmann says:

> God who stands aloof from the history of nations, meets each man in his own little history, his everyday life with its daily gift and demand; de-historicised man (i.e. naked of his supposed security within his historical group) is guided into his concrete encounter with his neighbour in which he finds his true history.[14]

The debate corresponds to that between the humanisms of Marx and Heidegger, i.e. between those secularists who are seeking a socialism with human face and a technology subservient to man on the one hand and those who are seeking a return from socialism and scientism to the ideology of individualism and the religion of personal piety on the other. I have no difficulty in affirming that if we take the bodily resurrection of Jesus seriously, nature, society and cosmos are in a real sense part and parcel of human personhood and are glorified in the divine humanity of Jesus Christ. As Reinhold Niebuhr has

shown, the dramas of the history of 'nations' is a reflection of the struggle of the self for meaningful existence.[15]

(*b*) The relation between the Kingdom as operating within history as dynamic teleology pushing history to its fulfilment through human creativity, and the Kingdom as the consummation of history solely through judgment of man's creation. It is the old debate between continuity and discontinuity, between history and eschatology, or between the historical and futuristic realisation of the New Creation in Christ, in new forms.

In our days this issue has come again to the surface in the thought of Tielhard de Chardin, who sees creation itself moving through man's response to Christ, expressed in his directing the creative evolution of the world, towards the gathering of all things in Christ. Of course de Chardin finds that not only has the actuality of the original couple Adam and Eve to be discarded by science and theology, but even the story of their original Fall must be discarded because it is 'basically nothing but an attempt to explain evil in a deterministic universe'. And the problem it posed was the question of 'reparation and expiation'. On the other hand, according to him what is needed in the context of an evolving universe is for us to become for God 'the pillars of evolution'. He explains it thus: 'As men, it is our duty to act as if there were no limits to our power. Having become, by existence, collaborators in a creation which is developing within us in such a way as will very likely lead us to an end (even earthly) which is far more exalted and far off than we think, we must help God with all our strength and so work with matter as if our salvation depends on our industry alone'[16]. By way of comment I may add that the doctrine of Original Sin needs

radical redefinition, but the identification of God's Kingdom with the creative process of history does not adequately explain or deal with evil in a dynamic universe. One is reminded of R. H. Crossman's words in *Twentieth Century Socialism* that the Doctrine of the Fall, taken of course symbolically, has more truth in it than the utopianism of the evolutionary and revolutionary ideas of social progress which informed the socialist movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries. De Chardin is however right in attacking the attitude which renounces matter in the name of the spirit and makes man's creativity irrelevant for the eschatological kingdom. It is true that the early Barth, in refusing to discriminate between ideologies because revelation is of a totally different order, did fall into the error of making historical action theologically irrelevant. But the later Barth was different. Reinhold Niebuhr made 'the impossible possibility' of the Kingdom a principle of discrimination in the relativities of ideologies and decisions of history. To my mind Harvey Cox follows this direction in his *Secular City* to a more positive though fragmentary realisation of the Kingdom in secular history. Perhaps there is an element of triumphalism in his thinking which needs correction.

Jacques Ellul is a very important theologian whose *Presence of the Kingdom* has been influential in the thinking of many on the eschatological foundation of ethics in the modern world. But in his opposition to the theology of society developed in the ecumenical movement in recent years, he has made the Kingdom so transcendent to the process of human evolution that it becomes utterly irrelevant to historical decisions and struggles for a genuine humanism and for a social revolution in this technological age. In the section on the 'Theology of the Revolution'

in his book *Antopsie de la Revolution* Ellul criticises the Christian intellectuals of the World Conference on Church and Society for having jumped on the bandwagon of the revolution in order not to be left behind, and moving 'from ignorance to the most extreme enthusiasm, overlooking all the profounder issues'. They are not 'prepared for thinking about the questions and are confused; and their leaders are only 'very superficially theological'. He is a little kinder to my own speech at the Uppsala Assembly and points out that I do not leave out the eschatological nuances when I emphasise the distinction between Faith and the Ideology of revolution, the eschatological renewal as the basis of historical action and as the protector of revolution from false messiahnism and the gospel as reconciliation within the strategies of the revolution. He adds: 'All that is excellent and Mr. Thomas should have developed these three ideas. But why did he think it necessary to proclaim that the return to God is return to politics, that the work of Christ can be seen in the revolutions of our time, that Christianity makes sense only if it leads to a new humanism; that not to be for the revolution is to share the ideology of the conservatives; that revolutionary violence is legitimate, and finally that the Church has always been on the side of the strong?' And he characterises these as 'a great collection of platitudes, of ready-made ideas, and of errors, either sociological or historical, testifying to what point there is this obedience to the massive currents which push the whole world and animate the Christians, to call themselves revolutionary today'. I submit, he does not even begin to prove his point, because he has not shown why he is negating all politics in the name of the Kingdom and where

I have committed theological errors in my attempt to relate eschatology to the politics of social change.[17]

Perhaps the most balanced statement on the issue under present debate has come from the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches which starts from the primary axis, that of Creation-Incarnation-Resurrection, but integrates within it the realities of Fall, Judgment and Atonement as necessary motives. This statement to which we have already referred owes its inspiration to no less an evangelically orthodox theologian than Berkhoff, and it speaks of the Gospel as 'a great movement from lower to higher, going through estrangement and crises, but also through atonement and salvation, and so directed towards its ultimate goal, a glorified humanity in full communion with God, of which goal the risen Christ is the guarantee and the first fruits'.[13]

Ultimately, however, the dialogue between Christianity and Secularism at the inter-faith level acquires its evangelistic significance only within the context of an active co-operation between them in the humanisation of the structures of society and state. Dr. Hromadka used to speak of the problem of the credibility of the gospel; that is, the problem of believing the Christian affirmation that the Gospel is a more adequate basis for humanisation. In his opinion it was dependent upon the Church being there where the action is, participating in the protest against dehumanising conditions of life, and in the political struggle for social justice and personal dignity, alongside the secularist. Participation is the presupposition of dialogue. And the form of the Church and its congregational life oriented to mission to secular man should be such as to make this participation effective. Probably for a long

period, participation may well be in silence, without the noise of dialogue, to live down the unholy past of Christianity and to create confidence. Silence is necessary in many situations. Of course, this is a period of listening and learning; and it is also a waiting in expectancy, for sooner or later the dialogic situation creates a dialogic movement which, under God who is ever in dialogue with man, may also become evangelistic.

The form of the Church is a question of radical importance in this secular age. It is evident that the process of secularisation has destroyed, or is in fact destroying, in all lands, whatever integration had existed at the institutional level among Religion, Society and State, so that the idea and ideal of Christendom have no more validity. The Church no longer controls society and politics—which was the characteristic of the long Constantinian era. In this setting the danger is that the Church will become one minor department of life, a private affair of individuals who care, with no creative, prophetic or redemptive word to the larger areas of public life. This would be denying the very core of the essence of the Church which is its message that all things are to be summed up in Christ. But this rather exclusively individualist piety is not the only alternative to the idea of Christendom. The idea of the Church as the Suffering Servant of society and state has taken shape through the life and witness of the Confessing Church in Germany. Hitler would have gladly allowed the Church to take care of the disembodied souls of men if only it would leave the secular affairs to his control. The Confessing Church was not prepared to accept that narrow role but took the role of the Suffering Servant, concerned with the totality of personal and social existence, but expressing this

concern without power but in witness and service. Harvey Cox has pointed out certain aspects of the form and meaning of the Church as God's avant-guard and as cultural exorcist in the emerging secular city.[19]

In this connection it is necessary for us in India to consider whether the pattern of the Christian religious community obtaining here is of any value at all for the new shape of the Church. I have already indicated elsewhere that it has little value. For two reasons. *First*, it is in some sense an attempt to take control of the total life of Christians in the same way as Christendom did, that is, by controlling their lives through institutional authority. This will become more and more impossible with secularisation, with Christians finding their various social needs and urges met by a plurality of secular groupings. *Second*, because it isolates the Church from other religious communities by communalism, i.e. by making the Christian community one self-regarding religious community among many such religious communities; and it is hard if not impossible to distinguish between the Church which is the open servant of all men and the communally-oriented Christian Community, conscious of its minority status. We have to find a more proper form for the Church in India than the very unsatisfactory form of an Indian religious community. The goal should be its capacity to witness to Christ as Saviour, Servant and Perfector of all men not merely as isolated individuals, but as persons in and with their various secular and religious group-ties and longing for fuller life and expressing it in categories of thought and life characteristic of the different groupings. We need a new pattern of combining Christian self-identity and secular solidarity with all men.

NOTES

ONE

[1] See *The Collected English Works of Rajah Rammohan Roy*, Allahabad, 1906.

[2] *The Uppsala Report, 1968*—Official report of the Fourth Assembly of WCC, Uppsala, July 4-20, 1968. Edited by Norman Goodall and published by the World Council of Churches, Geneva, pp. 27f.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 28.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 29.

[5] *Ibid*, pp. xviiif.

[6] *The Lambeth Conference 1968:* Resolutions and Reports, SPCK and Seabury Press, p. 65.

[7] This and the preceding quotations are from a book by Peter Beyerhaus, *Humanisation, the Hope of the World*, published in Germany. A Memorandum on the book was submitted to the WCC and I take these extracts from it.

[8] Lesslie Newbigin, 'Which way for Faith and Order?' in *What Unity Implies*, edited by Reinhard Groscurth and published by WCC, 1969; p. 119.

[9] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison.*

[10] J. Rossel, *Mission in a Dynamic Society*, p. 73.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] C. E. Abraham, *William Carey and the Indian Church*, Calcutta, p. 7.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope.*

[15] Quoted in Manilal C. Parekh, *Christian Proselytism in India: A Great and Growing Menace*, Rajkot, p. 173.

[16] J. W. Pickett, *Christ's Way to India's Heart*, Lucknow, pp. 22-25.

[17] C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid* (quoted) pp. 248ff.

[20] *Ibid*, See pp. 33-39.

[21] Lesslie Newbigin, in *Revolution in Mission*, edited by Blaise Levai.

[22] C.L.S., Madras.

[23] See my book *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, C.I.S.R.S.—C.L.S. p. 66 (Indian Edition).

[24] In an essay on *God in Nature and History*, contributed by Dr. Berkhoff to the Faith and Order Studies of the W.C.C.

TWO

[1] See my book *Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, C.I.S.R.S.—C.L.S.

[2] *Preparation for Dialogue*, C.I.S.R.S., pp. 1-60.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Asia Publishing House. New Delhi, 1944.

[6] C.L.S., Madras, 1952.

[7] *Religion and Society*, London, 1947, p. 106.

[8] *Harijan*, 29 August 1934.

[9] Devanandan, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[10] J. Arapura, *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience*, p. 204.

[11] Devanandan, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[12] *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* III, pp. 182ff.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus*, p. 35.

[15] See the lecture published in the Report of the Conference on *A Socialistic Pattern of Society*, N.C.C. & C.I.S.R.S.

[16] E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* pp. 80f.

[17] S.C.M. Press, London.

[18] D. A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah*, p. 117.

[19] See his essay 'The Post-Colonial Crisis of Missions' in *IRM*, 1966 pp. 331f.

[20] S.C.M. Press, London, pp. 88-115.

[21] For the findings of this consultation, from which the extracts that follow have been taken, see *Renewal for Mission*, C.L.S., Madras, pp. 214-255.

THREE

[1] *Christian Century*, July 29, 1970.

[2] See her book *Only one Year.*

[3] See P. D. Devanandan, *op. cit.*, pp. 75f.

[4] See 'Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy' in *Selected Works of Jai Prakash Narayan*, Asia.

[5] See *Secular Man and Christian Mission*—edited by Paul Loeffler, and the comment on it by Lesslie Newbigin in 'The Call to Mission—A Call to Unity?' in *The Church Crossing Frontiers*, pp. 254-265.

[6] Roger Garaudy, *From Anathema to Dialogue*, Collins, 1967.

[7] Karl Rahner 'Implicit Christianity' in *Theological Digest*, 1968.

[8] Karl Rahner in Roger Garaudy, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[9] *Ibid*, pp. 19f.

[10] See my article 'Nehru's Secularism: an Interpretation' in *Religion and Society*, March 1962.

[11] In his presidential address to a socialist convention.

[12] M. N. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism, and Revolution*, Vols. I & II, Calcutta.

[13] *Christian Century*, July 29, 1970.

[14] R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, S.C.M. Press, London.

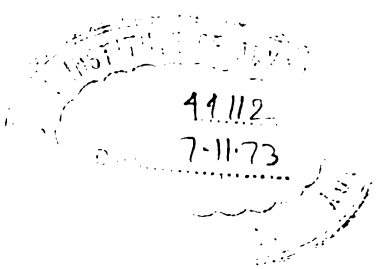
[15] Reinhold Neibuhr, *Self and the Dramas of History*, Faber and Faber, London.

[16] Quoted by Garaudy, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[17] See my review of Ellul's book *Violence* in *Religion and Society*, December 1970.

[18] *Faith and Order Studies* 1964-1967: 'God in Nature and History' p. 14, W.C.C.

[19] See Harvey Cox, *Secular City*.



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