Introduction to Christian Theologies in India

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by
Laji Chacko

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FOREWORD

For many years theological education has been done within the well-protected campus with the primary objective of training pastors. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an attempt to do theology beyond campus. The vision of TEE is not confined to ministerial training programme of the churches alone; rather is involves equipping the whole people of God; it is for the *Laos* - the whole people of God. It seeks to empower the whole people of God for formation and transformation of the whole community and search to build a just and inclusive community in the context of the people of other faiths and to all people. Thus, the theological education by extension programme is meant to strengthen building an inclusive community. Those who go through the process of such education will be able to work not only "for" the people, but also "together with the people".

To aid external candidates in their studies, the production of study materials was under consideration for a long time. We are happy that the resource materials are ready and I am sure this will greatly benefit the BD/BCS/MCS candidates especially those who do not have access to library facility. We record our appreciation to Laji Chacko for writing this book *Introduction to Christian Theologies in India*. We thank EMW, Germany, for journeying with us in strengthening theological education and making the resources available for the production of study materials.

Wati Longchar
Dean
Kolkata
November, 2014

Contents

Foreword v

Introduction 1

1. Historical Narration and Methodological Issues in Christian Theologies in India 3-13

1.1. Brief Historical Narration

1.2. Methodological Issues in Indian Christian Theology

2. Indian Renascent Engagements with the Gospel of Christ 14-40

2.1. Raja Mohan Roy

2.2. K.C. Sen

2.3. Mahatma Gandhi

2.4. Swami Vivekananda

2.5. Bhimrao Ambedkar

3. The Theological and Praxiological Expressions of Hindu Converts 41-62

3.1. Brahambandhav Upadhyaya

3.2. Nehemiah Goreh

3.3. Pandita Ramabai

3.4. Krishna Mohan Banerjee

4. Missionary Constructions of Indian Christian Theology 63-84

4.1. Robert De Nobili

4.2. J.N. Farquhar

4.3. A.G. Hogg

4.4. Lesslie Newbigin

5. Christian Life as Bhakti Marga and Contemplation 85-110
5.1. Sadhu Sunder Singh
5.2. A.J. Appasamy
5.3. Sr. Sara Grant
5.4. Sr. Vandana

6. Christian Responses to Freedom Movement and National Building 111-152
6.1. S.K. George
6.2. K.T. Paul
6.3. P.D. Devanandan
6.4. P. Chenchiah
6.5. V. Chakkarai
6.6. M.M. Thomas

7. Intra and Inter-Faith Dialogue: Towards a Community of Communities 153-195
7.1. Swami Abhishiktananda
7.2. Raymond Panikkar
7.3. S.J. Samartha
7.4. K.P. Aleaz

8. Christology in Indian Contextual Approach 196-210
8.1. Christ the Liberator
8.2. Dalit Theology and Christology
8.3. Tribal Christology
8.4. Feminist Christology

9. Search for an Indian Ecclesiology 211-226
9.1. Social Ministry of the Church
9.2. Churchless Christianity
9.3. Church as People's Movement
9.4. Ashram – A Model of Adaptation during 20th Century

10. Scriptural Knowledge: An Invitation to Hermeneutics 227-244

Conclusion 245-246

INTRODUCTION

Christian Theology is a discipline that seeks to reflect and interpret God's revelation in Jesus Christ and this interpretation is based on and for the faith community. It tries to determine truth and this message of truth is conveyed through symbols because the adherents' understanding is based on symbols available in their life situation. In other words theology cannot be detached from the life situation of the community even though it is the reflection of God.

Christianity in India is as old as Christianity itself but it was only when the Hindu reformers debated and presented Jesus Christ in their own perspective that Christians started to respond and this evolved in developing Indian Christian Theologies. In India it is not Christian theology but Christian Theologies because theology in India is a complex endeavor involving variety of activities and it represents broad spectrum of traditions, e.g. the multi religious context challenges theology to reflect on the meaning and message of Jesus based on religious thought; the philosophical approaches require theology to articulate itself based on *Advaita*, *bhakti*, various *margas*; the socio-political awareness consider theology as a means to transform theology; the political dimensions of theological articulation challenges theology to act for nation building etc.

This book certainly does not attempt to write definitively of Indian Christian Theologies but rather only acknowledges the main concern in these theologies. It tries to acknowledge the efforts of Indian Christians who dialogued with the rich cultural and religious context and offered their reflections and contemplations based on their particular context.

1

HISTORICAL NARRATION AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES IN INDIA

1.1 Brief Historical Narration

Christianity in India is as old as Christianity. According to the traditions, St. Thomas came to India in 52 A.D. and thus appeared a small group of Christians in Malabar. This small Christian community lived its Christian faith in the cultural and social milieu of its land and thus their socio-cultural practices were similar to people of other faith. The Nestorian influence, probably in the late fourth century, did not upset these Christians original faith because they were hardly caught up in any theological disputes or controversies. They accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, their liturgical language was Syriac.[1] However, the Christian community of Malabar in spite of its ancient origin did not produce any theological system. The reasons might have been their isolation in a far corner of South India, their historical dependence on the East-Syrians for their liturgy, prayers and ecclesiastical administration, their easy accommodation to the Hindu Caste system, which prevented them from identifying with the struggles of the people and probably due to lack of adequate theological training and local ecclesiastical leadership.[2]

Along with these there is another problem that is lack of any original source of St. Thomas community; these sources were burned by the Portuguese Bishops and missionaries.[3] The existing sources about this community are the writings of the Western missionaries and the Acts and Decrees of the Synod of

Diamper. Most of them were prejudicial because this community was considered as pagans, schismatics and Nestorians.[4] For the Portuguese missionaries, the only true Church was the Roman Catholic Church, which, for them, was the Latin Church alone. Recapturing the spirit of St. Thomas Christians, it has been viewed by some that for them Christianity was not a set of doctrines, systems and abstract or speculative theological thinking, but a 'way of life' (*margam*), lived in concrete actual context. **They lived a profound theology**, rather than created a theological system of categories. Eastern methodology of doing theology by means of hymns, poetry, narrative, doxology and prayers, in contrast to the philosophical and speculative theology of the West, is widely acknowledged and appreciated today.[5] Although they did not elaborate an indigenous theology, they manifested a very positive approach to Hinduism and Hindu practices which approximates that of modern theology. In the rites of baptism, matrimony etc. they incorporated certain ceremonies derived from the local practices. In the words of Placid Podipara, they were "Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship."[6] Theology and liturgy are unspeakable and thus liturgical aspect gain prominence over speculative theological systems.

Among the views and practices of St. Thomas Christians as condemned by the Synod of Diamper in 1599, two points are found to be very significant with regard to theology today. The first is the harmonious and positive relationship of St. Thomas Christians with their brothers and sisters of other faiths, especially with their Hindu neighbors. Until the arrival of the Portuguese and their aggressive colonial mission policy, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Jains and Christians in South India lived with perfect harmony and peace, taking part and collaborating in each other's festivals, praying for each other and having common education in the village schools (*Kalaries*), often led by Hindu teachers (*Asans*)[7]. They believed that each one could be saved in one's own religion. In the medieval period it was, indeed, a very radical theological view quite opposite to the views of the Western Churches and missionaries, although today such views are widely accepted. This positive and open approach of the St. Thomas Christians and their collaboration with the Hindus were condemned by the Synod

of Diamper. Secondly, the St. Thomas Christians strongly rejected the view of the western missionaries that the Western and Latin form of Christianity was the only true form of Christianity and hence normative. According to St. Thomas Christians, "there is one law of St. Thomas and another law of St. Peter; the church founded by the one is distinct and different from the church by the other; each is immediately from Christ."[8] Each individual Church can have its own discipline, liturgy, administrative structures, spirituality and theology.

Another important contribution of St. Thomas Christians is their indigenous ecclesiology, where Church is conceived and lived as "the People", "the Assembly" through the unique practice of *Palliyogam and Malankarayogam*. These are respectively the local and national assemblies of the "People of God", which enjoyed full legislative, administrative and judicial powers.[9] The Metropolitan was not involved in the temporal and administrative matters of the Church; he was only a spiritual leader, who led a contemplative and prayer life, as used by the ancient sages and gurus of India.

1.1.1 Latinization and Deculturation

Forced Latinization not only tragically divided the Christian community, but also curtailed its creativity and crushed its growth. The Decrees of the Synod forbade the priests to have normal human relationships with the people of other faith, lest they lose their identity and be perverted by the surrounding beliefs. Instead of tolerance and co-existence of religions, Latinization brought exclusion and divisions. Though the synod failed to preserve the positive elements in the Christian culture of India, it removed the unchristian practices of casteism and untouchability, and introduced the practice of accepting converts from the lower caste.[10] Through the process of Latinization the synod laid the foundation of exclusive spirit and this continued to be Christian response to people of other faiths for a long period of time.

1.1.2 Colonial Mission

The proper flight of Christian theology took place only after the colonial missionary activities. The missionaries from the West,

attempted to proclaim gospel in Indian manner therefore Indian Christian Theology is an attempt to theologize in Indian approach. Thus, it has made serious attempts to reflect the Christian faith in the context of challenges from Indian background. These missionaries also understood the social realities accordingly, they started medical missions, orphanages, schools etc, they also stood against the social evils like sati, female infanticide etc.

1.2 Methodological Issues in Indian Christian Theology

1.2.1 Religious Reality

India is a provenance of many faiths. According to K. Pathil, Tribal faith is the most ancient one. The Tribals constitute 8% of Indian population.[11]They are not part of Hindu religion but the fundamental Hindu movements are presently trying to bring the Tribals under Hinduism. Hinduism, the main religion, has plurality of thoughts within itself and likewise there are plural ways to attain liberation (*jnana marga, karma marga and bhakti marga*). Philosophical foundation is also contracted plurality in the form of *Nastika* and *Astika* schools. In addition to it, there is a popular Hinduism which is different from speculative religion of Hindu Scriptures. Jainism and Buddhism attempts to remediate Hinduism or it can also be considered as a revolt against *Brahmanic* Hinduism. Both these faiths spurned ritualism in extreme and the rigid caste system. Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam came to India from outside and made its root deep in Indian soil. Sikhism is comparatively a young but reform oriented faith which is part of Indian faith heritage. Thus, it is clear that religious pluralism is at the heart of India.

Religious pluralism is one of the most pressing topics of contemporary societies. Exploring the role of religions in India confronts a paradox. There is a mutual relationship between faiths. But many religions are conventionally seen as members of the 'Hindu family', having been created on South Asian territory: Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Others are extremely long-established in the South Asian peninsula: the religions of tribal people, the religions of Dalits, Christianity, Islam and Parsi faith. Propositions such as every religion is true and valid may hold some weightage theoretically but the whole plot seems to diminish into

vassal and suzerain in Indian society because plurality constitutes the texture of Indian society. It is precisely here that one needs to journey into exploring umpteen possibilities of formulating a consistent and relevant paradigm for religious pluralism which could provide practical guidelines for interaction, co-operation and dialogue among the people of different faith.

1. 2. 2 Dialogue

On 27th August, 2013 clashes between Hindu community and Muslim community in Muzaffarnager in Uttar Pradesh claimed the life of 43 and injured another 93. This riot is considered as the worst violence of the recent times because army was deployed in the affected area for the first time in 20 years. It is only on 17th September the curfew has been removed from all the riot affected areas and the army is being withdrawn. Now this is not an isolated case, every now and then we are witnessing such events in some part of our nation. Faith as a symbolic system that gives meaning and value to our worldview is playing a violent role. Once faith becomes a decisive identity marker social and political institutions become explosive and violent act is compulsive. Violence is the symptom of a dangerous disease. Such violence arises when a particular religious group tries to promote its own concern at the expense of others. In simple term it is dividing people based on their faith. Conflict based on faith is a curse for democracy.

These reality challenges Indian Christian Theology to move towards inter and intra faith dialogue and thereby utilizing all means to establish peace and harmony between different faiths. But then there are others factors that disturb the faith- harmony. If we analyse these conflicts, one thing is clear, faiths sometimes are twisted by forces that are non-religious, political, economic and even geo-political. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor will continue to breed ground for conflicts. Religious conflicts are not about doctrines and beliefs; they are triggered by social and economic factors.[12] A theology of religions pursued from a life sustaining pluralistic perspective is committed to friendship and co-operation among religions without interfering in the personal religious interest of the individual. It is committed to life and its realities. It seeks friendly co-operation between

religion to pool their resources to sustain life at all levels to protect and enhance life. All religion needs to work together without losing their individual identity and difference.[13] Precisely, for this reason dialogue should emerge from the life situation of different communities.

1.2.3 Socio-Economic Reality

There is no denial that our nation has witnessed tremendous growth under the umbrella of liberalization, privatization and globalization, at the same time these growth are impacting only a fraction of the population i.e. the rich. According to Somen Das, we cannot hide our poverty, 30% to 40% of our population are below the poverty line.[14] This context requires theology to affirm the "preferential option for the least."

According to Galilea Segundo, "The commitment to liberation in the Christian must be a place of encounter with God, and therefore a source of inspiration to his theological life and contemplative life.[15] Gutiérrez defines libarative method as "critical reflection on praxis," and stresses that this does not involve a new content but a *new way* of doing theology.[16] First, he begins with the fact that the Christian and the Christian community are called to a definite praxis, that is, to "real charity, action, and commitment to the service of human."[17] In the Latin American context, the most striking sign of the times is clearly that of massive human suffering, and so the praxis is further qualified as the attempt to eliminate such suffering. For Gutiérrez, theology is a reflection on this definite praxis. It is a second step. Moreover, theology must be critical, both of society and of the Church in the light of the Bible. Thus, it serves the purpose of freeing both these institutions from various forms of ideology, idolatry, and alienation, while at the same time preventing pastoral practice from degenerating into mindless activism. Clearly, such an approach qualifies as prophetic, since it seeks to discover the profound meaning of historical events "with the purpose of making the Christians" commitment within them more radical and clear.[18] Critical theology is open to the world and to all of human history, with the result that it will always be changing and constantly in a process of renewal.

Indian liberation theology took this premise and offers a hermeneutics of praxis by recognizing the sensitivity of the social location thereby commitment to the poor becomes the foundation of theology. Theology here emerges in solidarity with the suffering masses, those who are dehumanized. Theology is committed towards the broken dalits, exploited tribals, subjugated women etc., and tries to identify in their struggles against the oppressive forces and thereby creating a new order relevant to their struggles.

1.2.4 Contextualization

Contextualization is the process by which the gospel tries to deeply root in the life situation of the community expressed through its socio-cultural and religious expression. According to Stephen Bevans, "in reality there is no reality as such – no 'universal theology' – there are only contextual theologies".[19] He further argues, "there is no such theology as theology; there is only contextual theology: feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, Filipino theology, Asian American theology, African theology and so forth. Doing theology contextually is not an option, nor is it something that should interest people from the third world, missionaries who work there, or ethnic communities within dominant cultures. The contextualization of theology is an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of particular context and it is really a theological imperative. As we have come to understand theology today, it is a process that is part of very nature of theology itself."[20] In order to prove the contextual element in theology Francis X. D'Sa expresses, "The Christ event is nowhere found, not even in New Testament in a form that is free of cultural conditioning. Hermeneutically speaking, all language, even revealed language, is always an expression of historical conditioning. There is no way out of this."[21] It is true that the gospels are expressed in its historical context because of the divine-human encounter. At the same time it does not provide ground for rejecting biblical revelation as normative for faith and conduct. Contextualization is method through which the gospel tries to be authentic in every community, place, culture, tradition, language etc.

1.2.5 Christology

Indian religious plurality proposes different gods and thus the Christian theology tries to answer the basic questions like Who Christ is? What is the uniqueness of Christ? How to present Christ in an acceptable manner to Indians? Jacob Pareppally raises three important questions for Indian Christology

a. Is it the suprapersonalistic understanding of the Absolute, as expressed in *Advaitic* tradition of Sankara, which can provide categories of thought and vision for the development of Indian Christology? Or, is it the personalistic understanding of the Absolute as expressed in the *Advaitic* system of Ramanuja which can explain the Christian understanding of God revealing himself in Jesus Christ? Can the theistic traditions, with its doctrine of incarnation or *Avataras* of Vishnu, provide point of insertion for Jesus Christ, the absolute and definitive incarnation of God?

b. Or do the counter-cultural movements like Buddhism and *Bhakti* movements with their ethical religiosity of love, justice and humanhood accommodate Jesus of Nazareth as the one who identified himself with these values and offered his life for the same?

c. Does the situation of social, economic and political oppression and dehumanization call for a relevant interpretation of Jesus Christ in India?[22]

Christological formulation should occur from the living experience of the community whereby the community can encounter Christ within their own experience and as the experience differs from community to community it invites for plurality of Christological discourses.

1.2.6 Ecology

Nature is created by God and it reflects God's goodness, beauty, love and concern for the humanity. Therefore, it is appropriate to respect the nature. Our forefathers were well aware of this and they considered earth as mother.[23] But due to the colonial effect we are not in a position to appreciate the nature but we try to rule over nature to gain monetary benefits. We need to change this view and learn to respect nature and thank God for providing us this priceless gift.

There is a desperate need that we should move towards eco-spirituality whereby our spirituality can discern the exploitation of nature and we should consider caring nature as an act of our worship. Nature is the web of life out of which we came and where we will go. Nature is the inextricable matrix in which we live and move and have our being.[24] The existence of the Church is for the sake of others and in the context of unjust ecological structure the ministry of the church definitely requires ecological concerns.

The restoration starts when we consider earth as our home created by God. So, earth is our *Oikos*, Greek term for home or household. From this word Oikos, we got words for economic and ecology. *Oikos* and *nomos* are used for economics which means rules of the house. *Oikos* and *logos* are used for ecology which means the wisdom of house. Therefore, we need to build an integrative vision that seeks to balance the struggle for humanization with the struggle for earth keeping. Thinking of our earth as one home reminds us that the way we structure our human economy in terms of our production, consumption and waste has to be in harmony with the ecological logic of the earth. According to Gabriela Dietrich, "the important root cause of the ecological crisis together with the tantalization of market economy or total marketisation and sexual division of labour is a technocratic understanding of development."[25] George Nalunnakkal says, "Against an alarming ecological scenario and the perplexing theological context in India, there is an urgent need to find an alternative theology of ecology which can assimilate and synthesize the related concerns of ecology, the poor, womenfolk, dalits and the tribals."[26] Eco- theology is responding to the eco-crisis and shaping theology based on care and stewardship.

Indian Christian Theology is Christian theological activity carried in India and thus connected to the religio-cultural and socio-political realities. The task of Indian Christian theology is to present theology relevant to the Indian context. It aims to communicate the self-disclosure of God in the particular context and commitment to renew the context thereby the life of God should be manifested. Down through the centuries this purpose proposed diverse theological formulation and these formulations are part of this book.

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2

INDIAN RENASCENT ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

There is no denial that the efforts of missionary activities influenced Indians in an enormous manner. Among the many things which Christian missionaries brought to India, education was the most significant one. The impact of west awakened a new nationalism. It was the elite oriented to western education who became the leaders of Indian's national awakening.[1] From Raja Ram Mohan Roy onwards there has been a long line of prophets and leaders of Indian nationalism who considered the British connection with India as part of divine providence.[2] The responses of these leaders also challenged the Indian Christian theology to provide new expressions in relation to Christian faith.

2.1 Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is known as the pioneer of Indian Nationalism. He had a rational and scientific approach and believed in the principle of human dignity and social equality. Therefore he is known as the morning star of Indian renaissance and Father of Modern India.

He was born in a Brahmin family of Ram Kant Roy probably in 1772. His father might have taught him elementary education. He obtained no satisfaction in the doctrines of his sect and at the age of fifteen determined to leave his paternal home in order to quench his religious quest. He wandered off to different places within the country and went as far as Tibet. He studied Islam, along with learning Arabic and Persian languages, which had a great influence upon his life and works. His insistence upon the

unity of God and the meaninglessness of idol worship can be traced to his studies of this great religious tradition of the Asian continent.

He founded a new religious society based on these principles, the Atmiya Sabha (the spiritual congregation) in 1815, which after a few years and with the influence of Dwaraknath Tagore and Prosonno Kumar became Brahma Sabha (the Congregation of the Brahman). Later it was called Brahmo Samaj (the society of Brahmos) in 1830. In this society, worship was to the one God, with rituals and theologies taken from both Hindu and Christian scriptures. The Society was also concerned with social reform, and published literature for the purpose.

M.M. Thomas had noted three fundamental ideas in his theological thinking: first, a monistic faith in the unity of God inspired fundamentally perhaps by Islam; secondly, the conviction that morality is the essence of true religion; and thirdly, rationalism demands that religion should hold only to beliefs which are reasonable, and that reason should serve to purify religion of superstition and unnecessary mysteries and miracles.[3] It is very clear that he valued different features of various traditions and it is these principles that shaped his ideologies.

His first book, *A Present to the Believers in One God* or *Against the Idolatry of All Religions* which was written in Persian with a forward in Arabic he demonstrate his view on the concept of monotheism. In 1820 he published extracts from the Gospels containing the teachings of Jesus, especially sermons and parables, *The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness, extracted from the Books of the New Testament, Ascribed to the four evangelist* (translation in Sanskrit and Bengali). Marshman commented critically to this work because Roy published only a part of the gospel and said "may greatly injure the cause of truth." In response Roy again published *An Appeal to the Christian Public in Defense of the Precepts of Jesus by a Friend of Truth*.[4] And this was followed by responses from both sides. He wrote (both in Bengali and English) on the Upanishads, arguing that their teaching was monotheistic and his opposition to Marshman and the Serampore Missionaries was also in the cause of monotheism, and led to his founding the *Atmya Sabha*, and later the *Brahmo Samaj*,

which was a 'theistic church'. However he co-operated with the missionaries in their educational activities and efforts at social reform, campaigning for abolition of *sati* and he also campaigned for the freedom of press.[5] The enlightened character of Roy is evident by his co-operation with missionaries for the good of the people.

2.1.1 Roy's Doctrine of God

In 1805 he produced a pamphlet in Persian entitled '*A Gift to Monotheism*,' in which he argued that monotheism as the basis for the religion of humanity. Here, he plainly opposed Indian polytheism and in '*Precepts of Jesus*,' he argues that monotheism is at the very heart of Christianity.

With his personal studies of major religions and involvement in the social and religious turmoil of his time, he came to the conclusion that the foundation of a noble human life rests on two pillars: love of God and love of one's fellow humankind. He found his religion not lacking in the first but devoid of the other. He found the second abounding in the teachings of Christ and acknowledged.[6]

2.1.2 The Precepts of Jesus

A certain image of Jesus emerges from *The Precepts of Jesus* i.e. Jesus as the teacher of wisdom: the reader constantly encounters a Jesus who gives instruction. What one can learn from this guru is somewhat clear from the subtitle of Ram Mohan's book: *The Guide to Peace and Happiness*. The strong beginning with the Sermon on the Mount colors these words immediately, after all, the Beatitudes are quoted as Jesus' first instructions. Thus, at the very beginning is the promise of happiness to those for whom it is not at all obvious: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, etc. Jesus proved to be the teacher who shows those people the way to peace and happiness. A guru cannot be known only through his words; how he treats people is just as illustrative. That becomes clear in an evocative way when Jesus dines with tax collectors and sinners. With the Beatitudes as opening the work and the commandment to love one another as the conclusion, his instruction is characterized by humanity and solidarity. Jesus becomes known as a teacher of wisdom primarily in his words; these form the basis

of every belief in which he is central.[7] For Roy, Jesus is the teacher or guru of wisdom and ethics.

2.1.3 Teaching of Christ

2.1.3.1 The person of Christ[8]

The personhood of Jesus Christ, as well as his teachings, as found in the Gospels often finds appreciation and acceptance to any reader; it is the theology that repulses the serious adherent of other faiths. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was not an exception. His attitude towards Christ is one of the reverences as due to a great teacher and messenger of God, but he could not accept the title 'Son of God' if it implies an attribute to divinity. He quotes many scriptural passages to prove the 'natural inferiority of the Son to the Father' and holds that Jesus is merely delegated with power from God; he did not possess this power intrinsically. The unity with Father implied in certain Johannine texts is merely 'a subsisting concord of will and design, such as existing among his apostles and not identity of being'. He, indeed, accepts the title 'Son of God' and other scriptural titles of Christ, but always in a qualified sense, implying that each one is special gift conferred by God, rather than his by right. Jesus, to him is 'the son of God, a term synonymous with that of messiah, the highest of all the prophets; and his life declares him to have been, as represented in the scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for temporal one, and great as the angels of God, or rather greater than they'.

It is not difficult for Roy to accept the doctrine of the Virgin birth, but he would not like the idea to associate it with the personality of the Holy Spirit. He will not deny the miracles of Jesus, including resurrection. Both these points are unimportant for the religious minds of the Indian people.

It may be helpful if we take a closer look at Jesus as understood by Raja Ram Mohan Roy:

2.1.3.1.1 The dependent Son[9]

Roy seriously read the Gospels and derived his Christology on the basis of his own readings and the reasons that satisfied his mind: 'Have we not his own express and often repeated avowal that all

the powers he manifested were committed to him as the son by the father of the Universe? And does not reason force us to infer that a being who owes to another all his power and authority, however extensive and high, should be in reality considered inferior to that other? Surely therefore, those who believe God to be supreme, possessing the perfection of all attributes, independently of all other beings, must necessarily deny the identity of Christ with God'.[10]

And he takes the passages from the Gospel of St. John to substantiate his views. He quotes I Corinthians 15: 24-28 to indicate the dependency of the son to the Father. Jesus is the Messiah yes; he is anointed Son of God- yes, he is God himself-NO.

2.1.3.1.2 Unity of Will, not identity of Being[11]

There is no problem for Roy to accept the unity of God and Jesus, but he interprets this unity as the unity of will and design, and not an identity of being. Applying the hermeneutical principle of interpreting scriptures from the internal evidence, he reads 'I and my father are one' (John 10:30) in the light of 'that they may be one as we are one' (John 17:20-23), and concludes the unity of God and Jesus is of the same character as Jesus and his disciples and offers three choices:

First as conveying the doctrine that the Supreme Being, the Son and the Apostles were to be absorbed mutually as drops of water into one whole; which is comfortable to the doctrine of that sect of Hindu metaphysics who maintain that in the end the human soul is absorbed into the Godhead, but is quite inconsistent with the faith of all denominations of Christians.

Secondly, as proving an identity of nature, with distinction of person, between the Father, the Son and the Apostles, a doctrine equally inconsistent with the belief of every Christian, as multiplying the number of persons of the Godhead far beyond what has ever been proposed by any sect.

Thirdly, as expressing that unity which is said to exist wherever there are found perfect concord, harmony, love and obedience such as the Son evinced towards the Father, and taught the disciples in display towards the Divine will. That the language of the Saviour can be understood in this last sense solely, will I trust, be readily be

acknowledged by every candid expounder of the sacred writing, as being the only one alike warranted by the common use of words, and capable of apprehension by human understanding.[12]

2.1.3.1.3 First Born of Creation[13]

Roy, however, has no difficulty in accepting the pre-existence of Jesus with God and being the first born of creatures, and supreme above all creatures including the angels: The Scriptures indeed in several places declare that the Son was superior even to the angels in heaven living from the beginning of the world to eternity, and that the Father created all things by him and for him. At the same time, I must, in conformity to those very authorities, believe him as produced by the Supreme Deity among created Beings (John 5:26; Col.1:5).[14]

He will go as far as to accept Jesus as Messiah, in the sense of the supreme messenger of God, a creature but not Creator as he says: He like Adam lived with God before his coming into his world… and afterwards was sent to the world in the body of Jesus, for effecting human salvation….. this does not preclude us from rejecting the idea of a two-fold nature of God and man.[15] One can see here the traces of Pauline doctrine of 'unfallen Adam' incarnate to save the humankind. He is not willing to accept eternal generation, coexistence with the father. He has no difficulty in admitting that the Son of God is God in the same way as the son of man is a man, if it does not coupled with the assertion of the coeval existence of the son.

2.1.4 The Work of Christ[16]

Christ accomplished his saving act through his teaching and his death was simply the supreme illustration of those precepts whose communication was the sole object of his mission. Roy rejected the ideas of vicarious suffering and sacrificial death; God is impassable and is untouched by the misery and suffering, and if Jesus suffered in his divine nature this would be highly inconsistent with the nature of God. Death of God is the dogma, which cannot be accepted by Roy. Vicarious suffering of an innocent for the guilt of others, too does not find favor in his sight; it is inconsistent with the justice of God. He has no hesitation to accept the suffering

of the innocent Jesus as a lamb, taking it just a 'symbol of innocent subjected to persecution', but he did not find scriptural support for the attempt 'to represent human blood, or that of God in human form, as an indispensable atonement for sin'.

The plan of salvation for Roy is very simple: 'this do and thou shalt live' said Jesus, and following his precepts is the 'best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of our sins, the favor of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments'. If we repent, we receive forgiveness and there is no need for an atoning death, though we are greatly helped by the supreme example of the Cross. If we fail to follow Jesus' teachings, the solution, for Roy, lies in repentance, which is the most acceptable atonement on our part to the All- merciful, when we have fallen short of that duty. This is the nearest, as Boyd notes, that Roy approaches to a doctrine of repentance, faith, grace and forgiveness.[17]

2.1.5 The God-head[18]

Jesus Christ has not been a problem for many religiously minded people in this continent, but he is with the intellectuals and theologians. Where to place him within their own 'theological and religious circle' is the serious quest of the religious intellectuals influenced by Jesus Christ and his teachings. Raja Ram Mohan Roy devoted much of his time to a polemic against Hindu polytheism and idolatry, and he was aware that inclusion of Christ, as well as Holy Spirit, in Godhead, would be a reversion, amounting to yield to something primitive and polytheistic. He would stick to the unitary principle in holding God as the sole object of worship and adoration that he expressed it so succinctly in the trust deed of the *Samaj's* place of worship, as noted by Farquhar, that the building must be used : "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title particularly used for and applied to any particular being or Beings by any man or set of men whatever."[19]

From such a 'theological circle' drawn around him, Jesus cannot be placed within Godhead, so also the Holy Spirit as a Person within the Trinitarian formulation. Even then Roy's appreciation

for Jesus did not diminish; he regarded Jesus as Son of God or Mediator, in a certain limited senses though, the messenger who communicates the will of God.

2.1.6 Evaluation

One can agree with Keshub Chunder Sen that Roy's secular approach to religion made him incapable of appreciating mystic spirituality and *bhakti* cults in any religion.[20] His deistic- Unitarian faith considered the idea of divine incarnation in any religion as a compromise of monotheism and as an inevitable source of personal and social demoralization. The later Brahmos, like Sen and Parekh, tried to correct the course.

This brings to another point to ponder, as M. M. Thomas queries: Does it mean that a modern man imbibed with rational ethical secular temper like that of Ram Mohan Roy, cannot apprehend the truth and meaning of Jesus Christ unless they revert a religious-mystical experience or vision of reality? His 'theological circle' drawn by his philosophical categories of natural theology of monotheism and rational deism did not allow him to move beyond this circle, as that will mean the complete breakdown of that circle. If he would have come out of it and seen the source of morality of God in Love, this would have opened a way for him to perceive the centrality of cross of Jesus Christ, as symbol of God's self revelation to humankind.

His methodology of studying religious traditions is worth noting; he studied Hebrew and Greek to read and understand Christian precepts without any intervention of subjective Christian theological or doctrinal bias. He did the same in search of Islamic tradition, learning Arabic and Persian for the understanding Holy Quran and Sufi thoughts. He helped in the translation work of the Bible and had the linguistic competence in understanding the import of biblical teachings. He may have his own bias, but his intension and sincerity needs to be appreciated. He was perhaps the first Hindu scholar who studied Christian Scriptures in original languages and presented his own personal reflections.

2.2 K.C. Sen (1838-1884)

Sen unquestionably remains one of the most original and influential thinkers and many concepts and categories which were used by other Indian theologians were introduced by him. Keshub Chunder Sen was born on 19th November 1838 in Calcutta, as the second son in a Vaidya caste family, to Piari Mohun Sen and Sarada Devi. Losing his father at the age of ten, Keshub came under the *vaishnavaite* influence of his mother. He joined *Brahmo Samaj* in 1857 at the age of nineteen signing the membership covenant and was soon recognized for his gift of oratory. Originally only Brahmins were to have leadership, and so the ordaining of Sen as the first non-Brahmin *Acharya* (Priest) of the *Samaj* proves his talents. From 1861 Sen worked whole time for the *Samaj*. He advocated abandoning the sacred thread. He introduced Christian philanthropy into the *Samaj* and founded the Calcutta College, in 1861, which was the first college founded by an Indian. His young wife participated in the ordination service of her husband which became a catalyst for women's liberation at the time.[21] Unlike Roy's *Samaj*, Sen's *Samaj* included the Christian elements into its sessions in a fuller way: the use of Scriptures, meeting on Sundays, earnest prayers to *Brahma*, the starting of *Brahmo* missions, to cite a few examples. He also developed *Brahmo* liturgies and annual festivals. While the former *Brahmos* accepted divine revelation only in nature and intuition, Sen added that God can be known also in history — a step nearer to incarnation than Roy's rigid position. [22] Sen can be viewed as a person of vision in a different sense from the vision of his contemporaries since he tried to associate two different traditions in a constructive manner.

M.M. Thomas provides three theological significance of Sen. First, he led the country and Hinduism to some degree towards discipleship to Christ. Secondly, he has introduced Jesus Christ to several Indians, some of whom came to the fuller vision of and commitment to him. Thirdly, he produced some original seminal ideas like doctrines of Divine Humanity and A National Church, which later found fuller expression in the search for indigenous Christology and ecclesiology by Indian Christians.[23] All this proves Sen as a visionary and his vision was carried forward by later Indian Christian theologians.

2.2.1 The Doctrine of God

Being a *Brahmo*, Sen was naturally concerned with the doctrines of the Trinity to start with. It is to Sen that Indian Christians owe their use of the term, *Saccidananda* (Sat + cit + ananda = truth + intelligence + bliss) for the Trinity. Boyd suggests that this term is more adequate than the Nicene Formula of one substance and three persons, which is still in Greek philosophical categories. It is to be noticed that more than Roy, Sen accepted this doctrine. In one of his annual lectures he writes,

> In this plane figure of three lines you have the solution to a vast problem; The Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost; the Creator, the Exemplar, the Sanctifier; I am, I love, I save; the still God, the journeying God, the returning God; Force, Wisdom, Holiness; the True, the Good, the Beautiful; Sat, Cit, Ananda; Truth, Intelligence, Joy. [24]

2.2.2 The Doctrine of Christ

Contrasting with the position of Raja's position, Sen affirms the full humanity of Jesus. His discernment of Jesus can be traced through the series of lectures. These have been published in two sets: *Keshub Chunder Sen's Lectures in India* (2 Vol.), *The New Dispensation* (2 Vol.), his other book includes *The Book on Pilgrimages, Brahmagitopanishat, The Brahmo Samaj, Divine Worship, Jeevan Veda,* and he also composed many articles in English and books in Bengali.

For Sen Christ is one among us and is as human as anyone else is. However Jesus is above ordinary humanity.[25]He emptied his own self so utterly that he became the transparent medium in which God indwells and through which human can see God. There is Christ before us as a transparent crystal reservoir in which are the waters of divine life.... We see in Jesus perfect self-surrender and perfect asceticism.[26] He emptied himself and that void was filled by Divinity since nature cannot tolerate vacuum, thus Christ becomes the transparent medium through which we can see God.

Sen accepts the pre-existence of Christ and claims, "Did he not say, before Abraham was, I am? *Christ exist in heaven* as an idea, as a plan of life, as a pre-determined dispensation yet to be realized, as purity of character, not concrete, but abstract, as light

not yet manifested.[27] Sen understood the pre-existence Christ and incarnated Christ.

Sen correctly paints Jesus as oriental and claims that watch his movements and you will find genuine orientalism in all his habits and manners, in his uprising and down-sitting, his going forth and his coming in, his preaching and ministry, his very language, style and tone.[28] Thus, Sen presented Jesus who was known to the people.

He also believed in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. He considered cross as the highest expression of self-sacrifice. It is the moral influence of his death that Christ turns men from sin to God. Each one can be saved by imitating this example of self-giving. Thus "Go Thou and do likewise" is the way of appropriating Christ's salvation. As journeying God, he becomes human, in order that we may become divine. He is also concerned of the cosmic salvation of all humanity.[29] In relation to resurrection he claims, "I do verily believe and am prepared to testify that Christ has risen from his earthly grave….That glorious fact, the resurrection of Christ, every true believer can feel and realize within even today….Not only he has risen but everyone can rise with him and in his Spirit to the highest heaven…."[30] For Sen resurrection is not a physical fact rather a spiritual fact, it is the Spirit of Christ that is risen.

Though it is difficult to find one consistent theology in relation between Christ, Christianity and other religions underlying his eclecticism, it is possible to detect three strands of his thought.

a) The first is a 'belief in the supremacy of Christ as the God-human,' which impelled him to see the harmony of religions in his Eclectic Church as definitely Christ-centred.[31] P. C. Mozoomdar remarks: "In Sen's ideal of a National Church, the religion of Christ composed a very large element, nay more than half the substance."[32]

b) We find the idea that all religions are equally true Sen has given expression to this doctrine in an article in the *Sunday Mirror* on 23 October, 1865. "Our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions but that all the established religions of the world are true… The glorious mission of the New Dispensation is to harmonize religions and revelations to establish the truth of every particular dispensation."[33]

c) The third strand was Sen's doctrine of *adesh* (divine inspiration) in which he saw himself as divinely appointed and commissioned to be 'the leader of the New Dispensation in which all religions are harmonized and which all people are summoned to enter as their spiritual home' At this point he may possibly have seen the Holy Spirit mediated through his own *Adesh* as the basis and criterion of truths in the various religions to be harmonized.[34]

Sen's fundamental Christology can be summed up in two phrase, "I and my father" and "You in me." He connects this with the *mahavakyas* of *Vedanta*: *tat tvam asi* (Thou art that) and *aham brahma asmi* (I am Brahman). So Sen attempts to explain Christ's dual relationship with God and human in an Indian Brahmanic manner.

2.2.3 Church of New Dispensation

He clearly establishes Jesus as Asian and he persist on same line thereby started an eclectic Church known as the *Church of New Dispensation*. Sen perceived himself as divinely appointed and commissioned to be "the leader of the New Dispensation" in which all religions are harmonized and in which all men are summoned to enter as their spiritual home. He claimed special divine inspiration (*Adesha*), equal to that of Moses and Jesus. He used the symbols of the cross, the Hindu *Trishul* and Islamic half-moon and stars as the emblem of his indigenous Church.

This new Church was more intimately related to the Holy Spirit, Sen monopolized the inspiration of Holy Spirit. In his new year message he claims, "Thus says the Lord, Sectarianism is an abomination unto me and unbrotherliness (sic) I will not tolerate….Let Asia, Europe, Africa and America with divine instruments praise the New Dispensation, and sing the Fatherhood (sic) of God and the brotherhood (sic) of Man (sic)."[35] But after his death the Church of new Dispensation also evaporated.

2.2.4 Evaluation

Sen is one of the main figures in developing Indian Christian Theology and the genuineness of his efforts to express his faith in

his ethnicity is noteworthy. He worked to synthesize beliefs of Hinduism and Christianity.

In this process he tried to Indianize or Hinduanize the Christian faith and tried to safeguard it from western institutionalism and dogmaticism.[36] His Church of New Dispensation emphasized the harmony of all religions where scriptures, Traditions and sects can be harmonized.

His doctrine of *adesh* where he saw himself as divinely appointed provides monopoly for individual and thus can create disharmony.

Robin Boyd says Sen is the pattern of the Hindu seeker, of one who has found the pearl of great price but not ready to sell all that he has in order to buy it.[37] Nevertheless Sen left a legacy of variety of themes which provided impulse to Indian Christian Theologians.

2.3 Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the father of nation was born on 2nd Oct. 1869 at Porbander, Gujarat. He got his training in law from Inner Temple, London. He first employed nonviolent civil disobedience as an expatriate lawyer in South Africa, in the resident Indian community's struggle for civil rights. He was an ardent advocate of the application of the principle of nonviolence in politics and life. After his return to India he provided momentum to freedom struggle. Assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, he worked wholeheartedly for freedom of India. In 1930 he challenged British imposed salt tax with 400 km Dandi March and in 1942 started quit India movement.

Mahatma Gandhi was not a systematic philosopher or religious thinker. He was a man of political and social action, inspired by a religious interpretation of human existence.[38] In his Autobiography he affirms his philosophy of life

> My uniform experiment has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth. And the only means for the realization of truth is *Ahimsa*- a perfect vision of truth can only follow a complete realization of *Ahimsa*.[39]

Along with truth and non-violence he also adopted the third principle of *swadeshi* (self-reliance) and these three can be considered as

the fundamentals of Mahatma's philosophy. For him non-violence is the means to achieve the truth.

2.3.1 Message of Jesus

Mahatma Gandhi approached the person of Christ from a different perspective in terms of *ahimsa*. From this perspective he did recognize his indebtness to the teaching of Christ.[40] His attraction to Jesus' message is based on the Sermon on the Mount

> The message of Jesus as I understand it, is contained in His Sermon on the Mount. The Spirit of Sermon on the Mount competes almost equal terms with Bhagavad-Gita for the domination of my heart. It is that sermon which has endured Jesus to me.[41]

It is very evident that Jesus also inspired Gandhi towards the teaching of non-violence (non-violence teaching is also very much part of Jainism and Gandhi was closely associated with Jains) and he considered Jesus as a perfect man

> The gentle figure of Christ, so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck but to turn the other cheek- it was a beautiful example, I thought, of the perfect man.[42]

He accepted Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice and the cross as a great example to the world. But the historical person of Jesus is ultimately irrelevant to his teaching of the eternal law. For him, Jesus represents the principle and he claims that if Jesus represents not a person but the principle of non-violence India has accepted its protecting power.[43] He claims

> Jesus did not bear the cross only nineteen hundred years ago, but He bears it today and He dies and is resurrected from day to day. It would be poor to comfort to the world, if it had to depend upon a historical God who died two thousand years ago. Do not then preach the God of history but show Him as He lives today through you.[44]

Gandhi did not 'seek redemption from the consequences of sin'; he sought to 'be redeemed from sin itself or rather from the very thought of sin' and till he 'attained that end' he was 'content to be restless'. Asking for forgiveness' meant for him that 'we should not sin again'; and granting forgiveness' means that we would have

the power to resist all temptation.'

His heart rejected the idea of divine atonement and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Though 'metaphysically there might be some truth in it', his reason was not ready 'to believe literally that Jesus by his death and by his blood redeemed the sins of the world'; and his heart refused to accept that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in Jesus 'death on the cross'. The most he could concede was that 'Jesus atoned for the sins of those who accepted his teaching by being an infallible example to them.[45] Gandhi is prepared to consider Jesus Christ as one of the many teachers and prophets of humankind, and even as one of the many names and incarnations of God, but without giving his divine nature, his atoning deed or his meditation between God and humankind any uniqueness.[46] As a devoted Hindu it was natural for him to accept Jesus as one among many.

2.3.2 Gandhi's View on Church[47]

Though Gandhi did not attach much importance to historical religious institutions, yet he had a profound respect and reverence for all religions, particularly Christianity but he considered organized Church as the greatest enemy of true Christianity.

Gandhi never considered being a Christian if it meant being part of the Church, when asked why he did not embrace Christianity, he said that he had studied the scripture and a profound effect on him still were not able to convince him. He eventually came to the conclusion that there was nothing really special in the Christian scripture, which he had not got in his own, and to be a good Hindu also meant that one would be a good Christian as well. There was no need for him to join the Christian creed in order to believe in the beauty of the teachings of Jesus or try to follow His example. Hinduism, already satisfied sufficiently and filled his whole being. An average Indian, for him, was as much a seeker after truth as the Christian and Christian missionaries were and possibly more so.

Gandhi said that he had met many people who had never known the name of Jesus Christ, people who even rejected the official interpretation of the Church of Christ, but would nevertheless, if Jesus came in our midst today in the flesh, be probably owned by

him more than many Christians. Hence, Gandhi's ultimate position was that it does not matter what religion we practice, as long as the soul longs for the truth.

2.3.3 A Re-Interpretation of Christianity

Gandhi rejected orthodox Christianity and calls for a new reinterpretation of its essence and form in India. To be a good Hindu also meant that I would be a good Christian. There was no need for me to join your crowd to be a believer in the beauty of the teaching of Jesus or try to follow his example. Indeed, Gandhi claims to have assimilated the spirit of Christ within the framework of his Hindu beliefs and would have no hesitation in claiming to be a Christian, provided he had to 'face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it'. Thus, in rejecting 'Orthodox Christianity' Gandhiji gives his reinterpretation of it and seeks to persuade the Christian missions and the Churches in India to accept that as essential Christianity. [48] There are several aspects of the Gandhian reinterpretation of Christianity. We may deal in particular with three of the most important ones.

First and foremost is Gandhi's idea of a universalized Christianity arising from his own understanding of Christ as the symbol of the eternal law of *ahimsa* (non - violence), expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity therefore, is essentially a new life and not a religion, and wherever the way of love is practiced Christianity is present. Not Christology but ethics as the means to truth constitutes fundamental Christianity, and it is the same in all religions. According to Gandhi, it is possible to say that 'where there is boundless love and no idea of retaliation whatsoever it is Christianity that lives'.[49]

Secondly, Indian Christianity must dissociate itself from Western civilization, which is based on violence and materialism. European Christianity is allied with it and 'measures moral progress by their material possessions'.[50]

Thirdly, Gandhi seeks to persuade the Christian missions in India to recognize that the call 'Go ye into all the world' has been 'somewhat narrowly interpreted and the spirit of it is missed' and that they will 'serve the spirit of Christianity better by dropping the goal of proselytizing while continuing their philanthropic work. In

his opinion, the philanthropic work of the Missions has been perverted by the proselytization motive. [51] Gandhi's interpretation is based on his own faith experience which permitted him to assimilate ideologies from various traditions.

2.3.4 Evaluation

Mahatma Gandhi was inspired by the Sermon on the Mount and held that its basic principles are also the cardinal features of Hinduism. He practiced the values of the Sermon on the Mount and proved to the world that following these virtues leads to political and social transformation.

According to E. Stanley Jones, "Gandhi was a Hindu and belongs to Hinduism, but nevertheless when you strip away all controversies between East and West and religion and religion, we cannot help but recognize affinities he had with the faith in Christ….the Mahatma was a natural Christian rather than an Orthodox one. In practice of those principles he discovered and lived by the person of Christ, however dimly and unconsciously….he never seems to get to Christ as a person". [52] The Christ he admired was not New Testament Christ and his interpretation of Christ was consequence of his reverence for Christ.

Gandhi's challenge to Christianity remains, not perhaps at the level of conformity to Gandhian theology as S.K. George sees it, but at the other level of exploring the fuller meaning of the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount for an Indian understanding of God's reconciliation of the world with himself in the person of Jesus Christ, and if the idea of the Church as the witness to him among the religious communities and secular ideologies of India.[53] Gandhi was concerned that Christ's followers should live by deeds and words and not through mere words. There is absolutely no doubt that Christ had a special place in Gandhi's heart but his convictions were deeply rooted in his own faith traditions and he utilized them to teach the validity of peace and non-violence to the whole world.

2.4 Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

He was originally named Narendranath Datta born on 12th January 1863 in Calcutta was the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Unlike Ramakrishna, Vivekananda was highly educated. He became the symbol of the religious awakening of India when at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 he presented *Vedanta* as the Universal Religion, reinterpreting it to suit the needs of the day and combining it with the Christian idea of social service; he thus provided a basis for social service within the framework of Hinduism. He was the key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of *Vedanta* and *Yoga* to the Western world. It was Vivekananda who organized the Ramakrishna Mission which now has centers in different parts of the world. Vivekananda's writings and speeches in English are published in seven volumes.

2.4.1 *Vedantic* Christ

Swami Vivekananda seeks to interpret Jesus Christ in terms of the principles of the *Vedanta* which he has enunciated. For him Jesus Christ and the New Testament cannot be properly understood and interpreted except within the framework of the *Vedanta*, so Christ for Vivekananda is a *Vedantic* and *Jevanmukta* because he rejected 'me' and 'mine.' For him, Buddha is the greatest character in the world and he is followed by Jesus. But, it is foolish to interpret these characters as other than the manifestations of the spiritual principle of Buddhahood or Christhood, to which every man is destined. Vivekananda also said that Jesus had our nature; he became the Christ, so can we and so must we. Christ and Buddha were the names of a state to be attained. Jesus and Gautama were the persons who manifested it. He continues, the real problem with traditional Christianity is that it cannot separate the personality of Jesus from the universal principle of Christhood he has manifested.[54]

> God manifests Himself to you in man (sic). But throughout Nature, what happens once must have happened before, and must happen in future. There is nothing in Nature, which is not bound by law, and that means that whatever happens once, must go on and must have been going on….Let us therefore find God not only in Jesus of Nazareth but in all the great Ones that have preceded him, in all that came after him, and all that are yet to come. Our worship is unbounded and free. They are all manifestations of the same Infinite God.[55]

Vivekananda interprets the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in the context of *Advaitic* framework. First, Jesus Christ, according to him, was a yogi, who realized himself as God in his spirit and showed others the path to the same spiritual realization as Messenger. He declares:

> Christ had no other occupation in life; no other thought expect that one, that he was a Spirit. He was disembodied, unfettered, unbound spirit. And not only so, but he, with his marvelous vision, had found that every man and woman, whether Jew or Greek, whether rich or poor, whether saint or sinner, was the embodiment of the same undying 'Spirit as Himself'. Therefore, the one work his whole life showed, was calling upon them to realize their own spiritual nature….You are all sons *and daughters* of God, Immortal spirit. 'Know' he declared, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is within you'. 'I and my Father are one'.[56]

Jesus renounced everything, most specially his ego-consciousness, so that 'to be unselfish, perfectly selfless, is salvation itself, for that the man (sic) within dies, and God alone remains'.

Secondly, Vivekandanda rejects the ethical Christ for the mystic Christ. If I as an Oriental have to worship Jesus of Nazareth there is only one way left for me that is to worship him as God and nothing else. He was concerned to build what he called Practical *Vedanta*. This he does through his ideas of *Karma Yoga* and *Jivanmukta*. *Karma Yoga* speaks of incessant work but without attachment.[57]

Thirdly, he pictures the spirituality of Jesus as *Advaitic*, as the realization of his identity with the Brahman, and explains away the dualism in his teachings about a Personal God as a concession to the necessity of dealing with the uneducated masses and his disciples at their level, thus proving the Swami's three stages of growth in spirituality. There are three ways of perceiving God.

> "All these three stages are taught by the Great Teacher in the New Testament. Note the Common Prayer he taught: 'Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name,' and so on; a simple prayer, a child's prayer, mark you, it is the 'Common Prayer' because it is intended for the uneducated masses. To a higher circle, those who had advanced a little more, he gave a more elevated teaching. 'I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.' Do you remember that he and his Father were one; and the Jews thought that that was blasphemy. What did he mean by that? That has been also told by your old prophets: 'Ye are gods and all of you are children of the Most High.' Mark the same three stages; you will find that it is easier for you to begin with the first and end with the last.[58]

Finally, Vivekananda has a great deal to say about the teachings of Christ about human's relation to God, he has almost nothing to say regarding the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, his answer to a question about the crucifixion was: Christ was God incarnate; they could not kill him. That which was crucified was only a semblance, a mirage. [59] As a *Vedantic*, Vivekananda interprets Jesus in *Vedantic* pattern thereby fashioning Jesus to be appreciated and accepted by *Vedantic* standards.

2.4.2 Christ Presented to Human the Divine Nature

According to Vivekananda we should reject the limited idea of God and see God in every person. We have to live in that one universe getting rid of the wrong notion that 'I am a limited being'[60]

> I am not this limited being, I am the universe, I am the life of the all sons (sic) of the past, I am the soul of Buddha, Jesus, of Mohammed…. Stand up then; this is the highest worship. You are one with the universe. That only is humility-not crawling upon all fours and calling yourself a sinner.[61]

Christ taking our sins means that Christ should show us the way to become perfect. God became Christ to show to humanity God's true nature that we too are God. We are human coverings over the Divine; but as the divine Man, Christ and we are one.[62] Christ and the Buddha were the names of a state to be attained; Jesus and Gautama were the persons to manifest it[63]; and all of us are called to attain that state. We have to stand on our own Self and it is only the Self that appears to our mind under the guise of different religious conceptions such as Buddha, Jesus, Krishna, Jehovah, Allah, Agni etc.[64] The highest worship is to worship man (sic) as Krishna, Buddha, Christ.[65] For Vivekananda all humans possess divinity and the great figures of history appeared so that this truth should be made plain.

2.4.3 Evaluation

Vivekananda's interpretation of Christ presents three things. First, his approach was not that of a seeker but that of one who found satisfaction in philosophical-mystical Hinduism. Secondly, he is influenced by the Christ-myth speculation of the late nineteen century. Thirdly, he viewed everything from the perspective of *Advaita Vedanta*.

He attempted to bring *Advaita* and Christ on the same platform so that humanity can be united in terms of spirituality.

By bringing great figures on the equal platform their contributions are compromised.

2.5 Bhimrao Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar is considered by many as the modern messiah of dalit community. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar popularly known as Babasaheb was born on 14th April 1891 in the Mahar family, Mahar caste was one of the largest outcaste community in Maharashtra. He claimed "I may have born in this religion but I will never die as a Hindu" in 1936 [66]Maher conference he addressed "choose any religion which gives you equality, we shall repay our mistakes at least now". He viewed conversion to egalitarian religion as a great political act, for him economic freedom and equality were equally important. To disapprove caste system on 14th October 1956 he publically accepted Buddhism new face at Nagpur along with 6 lakhs followers.

Ambedkar visualized a society on fraternity, liberty and equality maintaining that religion should treat these as the foundational doctrines, and it means a complete change in the fundamental notion of life, value of life, outlook, and attitude towards human and other thing. It means conversion he continues, if you do not like word conversion then for me it is a new life and new life can't enter a dead body it needs new and reunited body.

2.5.1 Conception of Religion

The last and the most important book Dr. Ambedkar wrote in 1956 was *'Buddha and His Dhamma'*. The concept of ***Dhamma*** was central to the ideas of Dr. Ambedkar. It was a driving force throughout the movements he carried out in his lifetime. His concept

of ***Dhamma*** was different from the concepts of *Dharma* and *Religion*. He made a very novel interpretation of Dhamma**.** It (**Dhamma**) is a principle of living a good and just life. It is one which sets you free from fear, superstition, hatred, and inferiority complex and so on and so forth. It makes you strong from within to deal with any situation without bending before any ***power.***

At the same time, ***Dhamma*** cannot be old or new. It is always fresh, lively, energetic, and full of hopes and aspirations, devoid of any depression and frustration, no sense of loss, feeling of enrichment, sense of relativity, feeling of love, affection and sex, closeness to nature, concern for self and others. It must generate inquisitiveness and longing for knowledge. It should inject deep desire for fighting ignorance and foolishness, not susceptible to petty ideas and many more things which bring goodness and welfare to human being. It is like an ever burning light which helps you locate your destination in this world. It shapes your desire for meaningful and positive results and consequences. Can a person be called religious or ***Dharmik*** if he/she is physically ill, mentally sick and spiritually unfulfilled? ***Dhamma*** brings dreams to our life and desires for the universe. At the end, one feels contended but always upgrading and modifying, relevant, contemporary, futuristic, vibrant with overwhelming with ideas and actions, no sense of deprivation and fatigue and many more things which brings happiness to the self and others. His concept of ***Dhamma*** raises the human being above religion and *Dharma*. It breaks the barrier of caste, creed, sex, region, religion, language and even geographical boundaries. It integrates humanity in one and establishes a relationship with flora and fauna in this universe. It promises to uphold the dignity of human being and accept the utility and relevance of everything. It centers on the human being and the universe.

Ambedkar considered foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices of society. According to him religion is part of one's social inheritance. Religion is the driving force of life. Religion must be judged by social standards based on social ethics. He linked religion with the social being of the people. He remarked, "The religion which discriminate between two followers is partial and the religion which treats crores of its adherents worse than dogs and criminals and inflicts upon insufferable disability is not religion at all."

2.5.2 Christianity and Equality[67]

It was largely Ambedkar's appreciation for Jesus made him hope that Christianity would help to solve social discrimination in India. Being aware of the love Jesus had for the lowly and the role he played as the liberator of the poor Ambedkar often placed Jesus alongside Buddha. For Ambedkar Jesus was the 'physician to the untouchables' and he was hence viable option to follow when dealing with the social issues of caste problems in India. Ambedkar made it known that he was friend of Christians. However, Ambedkar was severely disappointed with the Christian churches in India. This was basically because; these churches instead of fostering social equality only spread them further. He often pointed out that the churches in India wasted their resources by using it for the already rich and powerful instead of utilizing them for the poor and low class among their fold. Despite this however, Ambedkar does not defend the egalitarianism of Christianity and Islam. In his "Conversion Speech" of 1936, he points out that the caste system that exists in these religions is very different from its Hindu counterpart, as these religions themselves do not sanction them. "It is not the chief characteristic of their body, social", he point out. Therefore, he adds, "Hindus cannot destroy their castes without destroying their religion. Muslims and Christians need not destroy their religions, for the eradication of their castes. Rather, their religion will support such movements to a great extent".

Ambedkar held Christianity in great esteem for its service to the people of India. Unlike other leaders (especially Gandhi), he defended the Christian missionaries for spreading their religion in whichever way they seemed fit. He commended their intention of sharing what they considered necessary for the wellbeing of others.

2.5.2.1 Critique of Indian Christianity[68]

Ambedkar's criterion for assessing the value of Christianity in India is its ability to cater to the real (social and actual) need of the Dalits who formed the majority of converts. Stressing that his 'comments are those of a friend' and that they 'are not the strictures of an adversary' he adds that he sees "great dangers for them ahead". Among the important areas where he criticizes Indian Christianity

is in their continuation of caste discriminations and lack of a revolutionary spirit.

2.5.2.2 Caste Discrimination[69]

As already mentioned, Ambedkar was of the opinion that the Christians in India did not direct the resources and services available to them for the benefit of Dalits. At the same time, he pointed out that Christianity did not attract upper-caste Hindus, who actually enjoyed most of these fruits.

Fully aware of the caste discriminations in the Churches in India, Ambedkar felt that the way Christianity was practiced in these Churches was far removed from the ideals preached by Jesus. Christianity had not succeeded in eradicating the caste distinctions from the minds of the converts. In fact, it appeared that it had not even tried enough to do so. It was this shortcoming of Christianity that, among other things, seems to have discouraged him from joining their religion.

Missionaries, Ambedkar felt, had separated social observances from the Christian faith itself. In other words, the religion was not projected as having a social as well as spiritual message. Hence, caste was not taken seriously and the converts were not asked to question or give up observance of caste discriminations. This continuation of caste even within a religion that does not believe in such stratification, according to Ambedkar, only reflects the policy of making Christianity popular and easier.

In fact, Ambedkar blames for the inability of Christianity to remove caste distinctions on the missionaries who tried to increase the number of Christian converts and did little or nothing to uproot even what they themselves identified as evil in the society. On the contrary, they seem to have tolerated much. Therefore, the converts have not been freed from either the caste system or many of their superstitious practices.

2.5.2.3 Lack of revolutionary Spirit[70]

Ambedkar felt that there was a singular lack of a united struggle for justice and political rights among Christians. He once remarked that Indian Christians as a community never fought for the case of social justice. According to him, this itself could be due to any or both of two reasons:

2.5.2.3.1 The missionaries and Dalit Christians themselves never stressed the social relevance of Christianity. The focus was largely on spirituality. This lack was largely responsible for Christianity becoming almost an empty doctrine. This was also, as we have seen, responsible for its inability to remove caste discriminations from the converts psyche.

2.5.2.3.2 Part of this spirit of compromise is ingrained in the doctrine of Christianity itself. The Church teaches that the Fall of Man is due to the Original Sin. Hence, all responsibilities lie in the past and cannot be corrected. As a result, instead of being energized to conquer her or his present condition, the convert gives up the struggle altogether.

2.5.3 Evaluation

Ambedkar saw religion not as a means to spiritual salvation of individual souls, but as a social doctrine for establishing righteous relations between one human and the other. His philosophy of religion does not mean either theology or religion. Theology studies the nature, attributes and functions of God; religion deals with the things of the divine. Theology and religion may be linked together; but they are not philosophies. When we talk of the philosophy of religion, it is taken as a critical estimate of the existing religions in general, and in particular to evaluate the teachings and doctrines of each religion, whether it is Hinduism, Islam or Christianity, in relation to humans and society, because, a religion, ignoring the empirical needs of either human or of society does not meet the expectations of an intellectual like Ambedkar.

The theological response of these prominent personalities of India proves that they were inspired by Christian faith. At the same time they also raised their appreciation and criticism which can be helpful in the process of self-evaluation of Christianity whereby deconstructing Christian expression. The message of love and Jesus attitude of compassion challenged them to identify with Jesus without joining or subscribing to Church.

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3

THEOLOGICAL AND PRAXIOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS OF HINDU CONVERTS

The mission activities of the Church produced a new generation of Christians who were committed to formulate theology, which is related to their faith. As they were coming from the caste system their theology perpetuated within the *Brahmanical* institution. According to Timothy C. Tennent, the methodology and perspective of these new Christians varied greatly; they shared a common concern of responding to the Indian tradition and to access the validity and relevance of a Christianity which had been clothed almost solely in the thought forms of European and Western Christian experience.[1] Their theological structure originated in Indian philosophy and they relied on *Brahmanical* terminology while contemplating theology.

3.1 Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907)

Bhavani Charan Banergi was born on 11th Feb. 1861 in Khanyan 36 miles of Calcutta.[2] He had his schooling from Scottish Mission School and he became interested in Jesus. His uncle Rev. Kali Charan Banerji also inspired him towards Christianity.[3] In 1887 he joined the Church of New Dispensation. In 1888 as a *Brahmo* teacher he went to Hyderabad in Sindh and developed friendship with two CMS missionaries, Redman and Heaton and got conviction regarding resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was baptized in 1891, affirming at the same time that he did not want to join the Church of England. Before the end of the year he had become a Roman Catholic and opted for name Theophilus, which he translated as Brahmabandhav, the friend of Brahman.[4] Upadhyaya was an additional name means teacher, which he took at the time of becoming a monk. He began to maintain that he was fully a Hindu,

at the same time a Christian. He called himself culturally a Hindu whereas by faith a Christian.[5] Thus, he pioneered the Ashram movement. In 1898 he wrote:

> Monastic life is exceedingly congenial to the soil of India. In this age of materialism, when contemplative life is despised, India is dotted over with monasteries. On mountain tops, in forest glades, on the banks of rivers, in the heart of ancient cities are to be found ashrams presided over by famous *sannyasis* whose disciples range the country, keeping alive the fervor of the Hindu race.[6]

He recognized the power of pen therefore started at least seven different publications: *The Harmony* (1890), the monthly *Sophia* (1894-1899), *The Twentieth Century* (1901-1902), the weekly *Sophia* (1900), *Swaraj* (1907), the twice-weekly *Karali* (n.d.) and the daily *Sandhya* (1904-1907). The monthly *Sophia* began its publication in Karachi with the approval of the Catholic Church who later revoked consent. Upadhyay published more than one hundred articles in *Sophia* which provides an extensive and invaluable record of his intellectual development. He created a popular new style of Bangla journalism in *Sandhya*, which became the focus of his nationalist agenda. He wrote many important hymns in Sanskrit, Bangla and Sindhi including Sanskrit translations of *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria.*

3.1.1 Methodology

He is the first Indian Christian theologian to enter into a positive dialogue with the indigenous theological and philosophical tradition of Hinduism.[7] He tried to express theology through the concept and categories of *Advaita Vedanta*. According to Timothy C. Tennent his understanding of Vedantism is profoundly influenced by his reading and studying of the influential 14th century neo-*Vedantic* manual Pancadasi by Vidyaranya.[8] He perceived that for the Indian context the *Advaita* of Sankara will facilitate in formulating Indian theology.

3.1.2 Sat Chit Ananda

He followed the footprints of K.C. Sen and explained the mystery of trinity in terms of Sat- Chit- Ananda. In his journal *Sophia Weekly*

Upadhyay launched a five week series to demonstrate the philosophical underpinnings of his thought. He presented the Trinitarian God as Sat (Being), Cit (Consciousness) and Ananda (Bliss).

3.1.2.1 God the Father as Sat[9]

Upadhyay argues that Descartes' famous *Cogito ergo sum* is "beset with innumerable dangers", because it makes "human thought the measure of existence." Instead, Upadhyay argues for *Ens est ergo Cogito* (Being is, therefore I think).[10] If Being is not posited first, then one risks falling into what Upadhyay called the abyss of "nothingness" and "emptiness", an almost certain reference to Buddhism. For Upadhyay, "Being is the ultimate foundation of all certitude, the foundation of thinking". According to him, only God can be truly called *sat*, i.e. existence by itself which is eternal, immutable and infinite. All other 'being' has only a borrowed or contingent existence, enduring in time, and is both mutable and limited. To deny that true Being is self-existent "is to affirm that being and non-being are identical. If there be no sat, 'is' will be transformed into 'not."[11]

For Upadhyay, being (*sat*) implies not only relatedness, as explored earlier, but it also implies act. Two questions arise: What does an Infinite, self-existent, eternal Being act upon? How does it act? First, any form of dualism or polytheism is self-destructive, argues Upadhyay, because "there can be only one self-existence; there is no room for a separate, co-eternal recipient of its influence" which is external to the self-existent Being. Thus, as before, the action must be necessarily inward, i.e. within its own self-existent Being, without ruling out the possibility of action with and upon contingently related finite beings. Second, the only way a self-existent being can act upon itself is through knowledge and intelligence; its act is self-knowledge: "The result of its self-act is an eternal distinction between its knowing self and known self without any division in the substance".[12] Thus, the presence of *sat* necessarily involves a self-related *cit*.[13] Upadhyay depicted God as the highest Supreme Being, who exist in an absolute pure form, without attributes and the attributes are part of cit.

3.1.2.2 God the Son as Cit

For Upadhyay, the object of God's knowledge is God. The consciousness (*cit*) of God must, of necessity, be distinguishable from the Subject (*sat*) because, he reasons, "a being cannot stand in *relation* to its *identical* self." Yet, as has also been demonstrated, God cannot go outside of himself for any *necessary* relations. Thus, Upadhyay argues that there must be a "relation of reciprocity" without any division in the divine substance. This, according to the revelation, it is precisely what the Trinity provides: "God begets in thought his infinite Self-Image and reposes on it with infinite delight while the begotten Self acknowledges responsively his eternal thought-generation." Without compromising the unity of the absolute there is, nevertheless, a "variety of cognition and re-cognition, the subject and the object corresponding with each other in knowledge."[14] Upadhyay has established the ontological basis for the Second Person of the Trinity in a way consistent with *Advaitic* thought.[15] His *Hymn of the Incarnation*[16] brings forth his Christological position

The transcendent Image of Brahman,
Blossomed and mirrored in the full-to-overflowing
Eternal Intelligence-
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Child of the pure Virgin,
Guide of the Universe, infinite in Being
Yet beauteous with relations,
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Ornament of the Assembly
Of saints and sages, Destroyer of fear, Chastiser
Of the Spirit of Evil,-
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Dispeller of weakness
Of soul and body, pouring out life for others,
Whose deeds are holy,
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Priest and Offerer
Of his own soul in agony, whose Life is Sacrifice,

Destroyer of sin's poison,-
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Tender, beloved,
Soother of the human heart, Ointment of the eyes,
Vanquisher of fierce death,-
Victory to God, the God-Man.

3.1.2.3 God the Holy Spirit as Ananda

The third and final radical making up the doctrine of *saccidananda* is the term *ananda*, translated as bliss or joy. The term *ananda* as joy or bliss sounds strange to the Western ear until it is recognized that it seals the internal joy of the triune Godhead apart from any external relationships, or, to use Upadhyay's phrase, it celebrates "the beatitude of triple colloquy." All other sources of joy outside the Godhead must stand in only a contingent relationship to His eternal joy, lest the doctrine erode the doctrine of God as *asanga* (absolute). Upadhyay's development of *ananda* emphasizes three main areas. First, he seeks to demonstrate how *ananda* confirms the unrelated nature of the Absolute. Second, he seeks to make it clear that *ananda* is a person, and a third, eternal distinction within the Godhead. Third, *ananda* protects the doctrine of God from slipping into a rationalistic abstraction, but clarifies that the Christian God is one, who out of joy, does enter into direct, personal relations with humanity.[17]

To begin with, Upadhyay defines bliss (*ananda*) as "the complacent repose of a being upon its own self or its like."[18] He makes an important distinction between the *Upanishadic* usages of *ananda* as a description of the Absolute, as opposed to *vijnana*. He argues that *vijnana* "cognises self through not-self" which implies that the Supreme Being knows himself through relations outside of His own eternal existence. The term *ananda*, in contrast, implies that the infinite is "self-sufficient, self satisfied and not dependent upon relations which are not co-terminous with his substance."[19] For Upadhyay, any being which is "obliged to form alliance with something other than its own self cannot be *essentially* happy."[20] Second, the three aspects of the Trinity are not qualities, but eternal, personal distinctions within the One Absolute Godhead.

Indeed, one of the great mysteries of Hinduism is the relationship between the 'One and the many'. Upadhyay seeks to demonstrate that this *ananda* is distinct, yet One. The three eternal distinctions within the Godhead are not inconsistent with the unity of God. Upadhyay says: "*Sattva, rajas* and *tamas* cannot be confounded though they are one in *Prakrti*, *sat*, *cit* and *ananda* cannot be made to give up their distinctions though they are one in *Brahman*.[21] *Ananda* is distinct, yet it manifests "the infinitude of the Eternal Essence."[22]

Finally, Upadhyay is convinced that the *Upanishadic* summary of the essence of Brahman as *saccidananda* separates God from the mere abstraction of the rationalists. While Upadhyay repeatedly affirms his self sufficiency and independence, this does not mean that God is unknowable or unapproachable. In a review of a collection of sonnets entitled *Naivedya*, published by his good friend Tagore, Upadhyay writes:

> The keynote of the Sonnets is the direct, personal relation with the Infinite. There are some who argue that as the Infinite is not easily approachable; the finite should be worshipped tentatively as the Infinite by the less spiritually advanced. Is the Infinite really unapproachable? If it had been so, Reason would be an anomaly. The perception of the Infinite is the dawn of Reason.[23]

Upadhyay views creation itself as an overflow of bliss (*ananda*). *Vedanta* teaches that to know that the Supreme Being is bliss (*ananda*) and that the creation of the world (*loka*) is an outflow of that bliss and it is the culmination of divine science (*vidya*).[24] While it is not essential to His nature, the multiplicity of personal relationships nevertheless occurs as an overflow or abundance. Upadhyay comments, saying, "It is not a product of necessity, but of superabundance. But this overflow, this superabundance is a mystery which reason encounters as the very outset of religious enquiry."[25]God has endowed each person with a spiritual part, or sheath (*anandamaya kosha*) which "enables him to become a passive recipient of Divine grace and joy."[26]

Upadhyay's development of God as *sat*, *cit*, and *ananda* is one of the most significant of his theological contributions. It is a

bold attempt in contextualized theology which seeks to do theology 'outside the gate' and, in the process, help to communicate the Trinity in language and thought forms which are familiar to those within his own context.[27] Ultimately, the Trinity remains a mystery which can only be grasped *via* revelation. It is beyond human comprehension to understand how "God begets in thought his infinite Self-image and reposes on it with infinite delight," never losing "blissful communication and colloquy within the bosom of God-head" without creating "any division in the divine Substance."[28]

3.1.3 Evaluation

He is the first Indian Christian Theologian to identify indigenous philosophical foundation for Christian faith and consequently K.P. Aleaz calls him as the father of Indian (Christian) theology.[29] He pioneered indigenous ways of expressing Christian faith.

According to M.M. Thomas, the theological approach of Brahmabandhav is motivated by his concern for an indigenous expression of Christian faith and thus he integrated the social structures of India into the Christian way of life, the establishment of an Indian Christian monastic order, the employment of *Vedanta* for the expression of Christian theology and the recognition of the Vedas as the Indian Old Testament.[30]

He was one of the earliest Indian Christians to redefine what is meant by the term Hinduism and he helped to construct an understanding of Hinduism which was no longer tied to some form of Hindu religious beliefs but was rather the multifarious reflections of Indian culture.[31] So it was he who brought serious debate on gospel and culture i.e. inculturation. Rabindranath Tagore honored him in the following manner:

> Upadhyay was a *Sannyasi*, a Roman Catholic, yet a *Vedantist*. He was powerful, fearless, self-denying; He wielded great influence on those who came near him He had a deep intelligence and an extraordinary hold on spiritual matters.[32]

K.P. Aleaz comments, Upadhyay has "indicated to us the way forward."[33] Asian Christian theologies in India arose, Sugirtharajah argues, in response to the colonialist process of nation building. Sugirtharajah typifies Upadhyay as a 'heritagist,' by which he implies

a seeking to rediscover the 'conceptual analogies in high culture and textual traditions and philosophies of Asia.'[34] His foresight allowed him to bring Christianity and Hinduism on the same platform of dialogue and his theological efforts for that cause highlight him as theological manqué.

3.2 Nehemiah Goreh (1825-1895)

Nelakanth Shastri Goreh was born on 8th Feb. 1825, in the obscure village of Bundelkhand in Kashipura near Jhansi. He was the eldest son of Shivaram Goreh and Girjabai. He grew up in Banaras along with his grandfather and thus cultured in Shastric education.[35]

3.2.1 Conversion

Goreh heard William Smith and others preaching about Jesus in streets of Banaras. In order to confront them he visited Smith's house. Smith gave him a Sanskrit book, *Matapariksha*: An Examination of True religion by John Muir. This book had many Biblical references, out of curiosity Goreh read the Bible and was impressed and moved by Sermon on the Mount. Then Goreh raised six doubts regarding the doctrine of eternal punishment. It was Smith's argument that made a decisive impact on Goreh. He decided to take baptism and told his father. Many learned people of Banaras came to argue with him but no one succeeded. On 14 Mar. 1848, he was baptized by Rev. Robert Hawes in Jaunpore and thus adopted a new Christian name, Nehemiah and started his Christian life with C.M.S.[36]

3.2.2 Influences

He visited England in 1853 accompanying Maharaja Dhuleep Singh. He met Queen Victoria, Max Muller whose views regarding Indian philosophy were too westernized for Goreh. He also attended few theological lectures at Islington College. Here he studied two apologetic classics, Paley's *Evidences* and Butler's *Analogy*, both influenced Goreh's thought.[37] In 1857 Dr. William Kay introduced him to church fathers writings, both these made its mark on him.[38]

3.2.3 Theology

Goreh's thought may be described as the Church-in-witness-and-defence-theology,[39] so the theology he formulates is church-in-mission.[40] In 1860 he published *Shaddarshana Darpana*, its English translation *A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems* appeared in 1862. As the name suggests, it is critical evaluation of traditional Hindu philosophical systems. [41] He develops his arguments based on Athanasian Creed and concludes that these systems are inadequate to solve the problems of human existence or to lead humans to the Real.

The *Vedanta* system argues for three sorts of existence.[42] To the *Vedantins* the establishment of monism or non-duality is most essential. So Brahman alone is true. For Goreh it is taken as a postulate that with the *Vedantins*, Brahman expected, all is nihility. In a way, indeed a real existence is allowed to what is other than Brahman; but, in as much as all this has no more substantiality than nacrine silver; in which case the real existence becomes a non-existence.[43]

3.2.4 Summarizing *Vedanta*

Vedanta philosophy is so crystal clear and bold that it can be presented in plain hemistich- *Brahma satyam jagat mithya, jiyo Brahmaiva naparah* that means Brahman is the reality. The phenomenal world is illusory. The embodied Soul is indeed the Brahman itself and not otherwise. And here Goreh polemically ask, how can the external world be nothing and soul being part of Brahman is in state of ignorance? *Vedanta* answers in as effect of ignorance.[44] He continues, the external world originates from ignorance, in other words, it is all actually Brahman, but due to ignorance appears as world. So in ignorance we have the world's material cause, and from it, we have the world's name and form.[45] Ignorance is the cause of this world and it is the power of Iswara.[46] Goreh again raise his doubt that how can invisible Brahman become an object of vision and mistaken for the world? The name of the world can be false but how can the form?[47]

The soul is regarded as Brahman but due to ignorance unable to recognize itself. Goreh asks how can soul from all eternity been captivated to ignorance and yet is Brahman? And he concludes that it cannot be so. Ignorance, by reason of which the soul, the

world, and Iswara appear to exist, is false, nothing.[48]

3.2.4.1 *Vedantic* View of Supreme Spirit

Vedanta denies all qualities to Brahman to guard Brahman from imperfection. Goreh responded that it cannot be proved. He asks that what sort one charges imperfection on the Supreme Sprit, in ascribing to it such attributes as omnipotence and omniscience? Brahman without quality cannot be proved an entity because perception and inference tell us nothing of Brahman who has no relation with anything.[49] It should also be noted that Brahman as illusory-material cause, is not the pure Brahman but Brahman the illusion-appropriated, Iswara, who is ignorance-imagined and false.[50]

3.2.4.2 Maya

The concept of *maya* plays an important role in *Vedantic* theology of creation. For him, the *Vedanta* thesis of *mayavada* and *satas* or *dasas* exhibits intellectual incoherence through and through. He refutes the cosmic-illusionist interpretation of *mayavada*. He says if *paramarthika satta* abolishes the *vyavaharika satta*, as *vyavaharika satta* abolishes the *pratibhasika satta*, what is felt is that all apprehensions of plurality are illusion, for undifferentiated Brahman alone exists.[51] He rejects it, by claiming that what depends on falseness must be false and believes in creation *ex nihilo*.

3.2.5 Evaluation

As an apologist he made a significant impact, shaking the challenging and confirming the authentic of his era.

By refuting all six system Goreh's apology wanted to show that if they are wrong, then the smritis and puranas also follow it and there should not be any regard for Hinduism and it is impossible for human to know God by own efforts. [52]

Quite frequently in his work he used the term proof he thought that he was proving Christianity. But we know that no strictly a posteriori, empirical, inductive and historical proposition can be proved.[53]

Goreh's approach to Asian religion was very negative. Nirguna Brahman is the most personal Being Saccidananda, and Goreh's contention that Brahman cannot be the illuminator is a misunderstanding. The jivatman or individual soul is a reflection of the Supreme Atman in human constitution and the experience of this integral jiva-Brahman relation is liberation, which Goreh should have taken note of.[54]

There is no apologetic against the doctrine of karma-samsara.[55]

He rejects maya for creation *ex-nihilo*. If we take his own point then we can conclude that out of nothing comes nothing. Most of the modern theologian's does not agree with *ex-nihilo*.

Goreh considered *Advaita* as *Vedanta* philosophy but *Vedanta* also has other strands which are also used by Indian Christian Theologians.

3.3 Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)

Ramabai was born in the year 1858 and belong to a devout Brahmin family, and learned the Hindu way of devotion (*Bhakti Marga*) from both her parents. The spiritual, religious and cultural qualities she imbibed from them during her wandering childhood influenced the whole of her life. Pilgrimage was part of her childhood experience because her family moved from place to place making a living by teaching and reciting *Puranas*. Having seen both her parents die from starvation, she arrived in Calcutta in 1878, where her prodigious knowledge of Sanskrit and the Hindu sacred texts gained her the titles, "Pandita" and "Saraswati". When, soon after this, her husband died, she and her daughter Manorama (Mano), began a geographical, social, cultural and spiritual journey of discovery. She went to England in 1883 with the aim to study medicine. Here she was convinced about the truth of gospel and the correspondence with Nehemiah Goreh also influenced her in this regard.

Her writings includes *Stree Dharma Neety* (1882), *The High Caste Hindu Women* (1887), *A Testimony* (1917).

3.3.1 Living Christianity

She set up an impressive social relief programme for Hindu girls

and women. She took many helpless girls in her day schools and boarding schools, and offered them an education.[56] Most of these were girls who had no opportunity whatsoever to be educated, but she sometimes also took in children who had very little chance of survival. Many of her students also chose to become Christians because of their stay in these institutions. And in any case everyone who stayed in Ramabai's house saw idealistic energy and practical piety inspired by Christian faith.

Pandita Ramabai has had great significance for the spread of the Christian faith as well as for the image of the church in India.[57] She was one of the first Indians to show the social face of the church. From the start, missions had gone hand in hand with emergency aid, medical care and schooling. But that was always a Western initiative; whereas Ramabai's social and educational work was completely Indian. The different institutions, based on Indian models, were her idea and her initiative. Moreover, it was because of her great charisma that both Western donors and Indian colleagues could be mobilized.

A major famine broke out in 1896 in the middle of the Indian subcontinent, the Central Provinces and she founded a reception centre for the victims of the famine in Kedgaon, a village about fifty kilometres from Pune. Many girls and women found refuge here on the course of the years and were given vocational training. It was a large institution with room for two thousand students. Ramabai called the centre Mukti Sadan or "House of Salvation," a name inspired by a biblical text: "you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise" (Isaiah 60:18).

There is a certain radicalization to be perceived in the Charismatic experience of faith within Mukti Sadan. There were new revival movements at the beginning of the twentieth century, to which Ramabai and the other residents at Mukti were strongly attracted. In 1905, in her enthusiasm, Ramabai set up a prayer group around this great event. Ecstatic experiences began occurring at Mukti shortly thereafter. Prayer meetings that lasted for hours, people spoke in tongues and many rolled over the ground crying or broke out in hysterical laughter. There were reports of fire appearing.

3.3.2 Experience of Jesus

A Testimony does reveal what first fascinated her about the figure of Jesus Christ. After visiting a home for "fallen women" with the Wantage Sisters, she wondered what inspired Christians to take up this work. One of the sisters then read to her the story of Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4). What struck her in that story was that Christ did not reject the sinner but wanted to help her, and she was also fascinated by the words about the true worship "in Spirit and in truth." Ramabai reread the chapter and later wrote: "I realized, after reading the 4th Chapter of St. John's Gospel that Christ was truly the Divine Savior He claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India, and of every land."[58]

In her view, Jesus was the one who broke through boundaries in unexpected ways. For her it was literally a revelation that a son of God could turn to the least in society, including those who were despised by the others because of their bad conduct. In addition, she was also struck by the universality of the Gospel, which could not be claimed by a specific people or class. That contrasted sharply with classical Hindu teaching, which placed India apart and within India gave each caste its own place in a hierarchical order of life. Shortly after her conversion, the pandita wrote:

> One can feel that the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ comes from the Father, who loves not one nation, not one class, or one caste, but heard in his heart every creation of his hand, it would be a blessed day for India, if her sons and daughters could see that. He is the revelation of the Father, the bright image of His goodness, which is His glory, that he is able through His Holy Spirit to lift men (sic) up to God, and enable them so to sympathy with sorrow, no trampling up on the feelings of others, no persecution of the unfortunate, no breaking of hearts by unkindness, but true sympathy and love- readiness to suffer, if through suffering we may help others more, above all there is that utter trust in the love of God for ourselves and others which is the joy of life.[59]

In an interview with a newspaper in Chicago, she said:

> I hope someday we shall owe to their labors and their

> prayers a great army of Christian apostles among our people who will eventually regenerate the whole Hindu nation through their lives and their teachings. [60]

She firmly believed that Jesus turned the suffering and oppression with his salvation and he breaks all divisions between people, so that one could not even speak of male and female any more. She also adopted Indian elements in worship at Mukti, those who attended the Church did not sit on pews but in line with Indian custom on the floor with their legs crossed. Communion was celebrated everyday with *Chapatis* and grape juice as the elements. There were no English songs but Marathi and Hindi *bhajans* accompanied by Indian instruments.[61] These aspects in worship indeed deserve appreciation.

3.3.3 Evaluation

Her greatest significance is undoubtedly that she translated Christ's message into concrete assistance to girls and women in dehumanizing situation. More clearly than anyone else in the nineteenth century India she showed Jesus as the liberator of the oppressed. He inspired her to work on behalf of the most despised people in the society. Christ thus emerged in the first place as the savior of all. Thus, she sought new forms for the worship service in which her compatriots could appropriate this savior. She showed Jesus to be the one for whom there were no boundaries, including cultural ones.

Her significance for Indian theology lies in her quest for less dogmatic and less constrained Christianity in tune with the ethos of her Hindu upbringing and with more direct experience of Holy Spirit.[62] She was concerned about Christianity that would serve the needs of the community.

3.4 Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813-1885)

K.M. Banerjee was born in 1813 in Calcutta. His parents were orthodox Brahmins of Kulin class. He started his study of Sanskrit along with English in 1824 at the Hindu College.[63] He was one of the Alexander Duff's early converts and originally a member of Free Church of Scotland. He was ordained as an Anglican priest and in 1852 he was appointed at Bishop's college. It was here that

he developed his theological scholarship and produced his works on Hindu philosophy.[64] His evaluation of Hinduism got refined and he used Hindu understanding to proclaim Christian message.

He has been called the father of Bengali Christian literature. He helped in organizing the Calcutta University in 1857 as member of its senate. He became the first president of the Bengal Christian Association, organized in 1870s to develop autonomy from the Western missions for the Church communities in India.[65] He recognized the importance of India Church free from western domination so that it can bear Indian fruits.

His theological articulation are found in *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* (1861), *The Arian Witness: or Testimony of Arian Scriptures in Corroboration of Biblical History and the Rudiments of Christian Doctrines, Including Dissertations on the Original Home and Early Adventures of Indo-Arians* (1875), *Two Essays as Supplements to the Arian Witness* (1880. 1892), *The Relation Between Christianity and Hinduism* (1892) etc.

3.4.1 Veda's Indication towards Bible

He undertakes a comparative study of stories of creation and fall in the Bible and Vedas and present the parallel between them, especially the elements of sacrifice is common in both the traditions. Krishna Mohan points out that certain teaching in the Vedas confirms and is itself evidence for the doctrines of the incarnation and the atoning work of Christ. According to him, the offering of sacrifice for redemption from sin was an ancient practice and is a survival of the primitive revelation given by God to all human. It was an institution ordained by God to represent the future sacrifice of Christ. The primitive practice is religiously maintained in the Vedas, though the Vedic writers could not give an explanation of what it typified. A proper explanation of the sacrificial rite enjoined in the Veda can only be found from the Bible, where the sacrifice of Christ is represented as the atonement for the sins of all. So, for Krishna Mohan, the *Brahminical Sastras* themselves bear some confirmatory testimony to the truth of the Bible.[66]

> Viewed as an institution originally appointed of God to represent the future sacrifice of Christ, and transmitted from father to son in every age as a most important

> ceremony connected with the eternal happiness of human kind, the external observance of the rite would, we can easily comprehend, by religiously maintained, even though the doctrine typified by it might be forgotten. Without the light which the Biblical account affords, one can find the light which the Biblical account affords, one can find no adequate explanation of the difficulty. Why should the writers of the Vedas tell us abruptly that the only way to the felicity of heaven is the regular observance of certain sacrifices? What again could those advocates for rites and ceremonies possibly mean, who either doubted or actually denied the existence of God, and yet contended for the necessity of offering sacrifices.[67]

3.4.2 Jesus Christ the True Prajapati

At the beginning of his article '*On the Relation between Christianity and Hinduism*' Krishna Mohan states two propositions which he later elaborates: The two propositions are:

> First, that the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine in relation to the salvation of the world find a remarkable counterpart in the Vedic principles of Primitive Hinduism in relation to the destruction of sin, and the redemption of the sinner by the efficacy of sacrifice, itself a figure of *Prajapati*, the Lord and the Savior of the Creation, who had given himself up as an offering for that purpose.
>
> Secondly, that the meaning of "*Prajapati*" an appellative, variously described as a *purusha* begotten in the beginning, as *Viswakarma* the creator of all, singularly coincides with the meaning of the name and offices of the historical reality of Jesus Christ, and that no other person than Jesus of Nazareth has ever appeared in the world claiming the character and position of the self-sacrificing *Prajapati*, at the same time mortal and immortal.[68]

He discusses the self-sacrifice of *Prajapati*, which is the key to the understanding of the meaning of sacrifice. He says,

> Now, the secret of this extreme importance attached to sacrifice, and the key to the proper understanding of the whole subject was the self-sacrifice of *Prajapati*, the Lord or supporter of creation, the "*Purusha* begotten before the world", the *Viswakarma*, the Author of the Universe. The idea is found in all the three Vedas – Rig, Yajus and Saman – in Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads. The Divine *Purusha* who gave himself up as a sacrifice for the Devas, i.e., emancipated mortals, had, it is said, deserved and got a mortal body fit for the sacrifice, and himself became half mortal and half immortal. It is added that he made sacrifice a reflection or figure of himself; that the equine body was found fit for sacrifice, and that whenever a horse-offering (*Asvametha*) was solemnized, it became no other than an offering of himself.[69]

He further points out that certain passages in the Veda speak of the self-sacrifice of *Prajapati* or *Purusha* as a sacrifice made for all. He quotes Yajus where *Purusha* says, "Let me offer myself in all creations, and all creatures in myself." Krishna Mohan emphasizes the fact that the idea of the sacrifice of a Divine Person is found in various passages in different Vedas, though expressed differently in each. But taken as a whole it appears to be a prominent doctrine of the Vedas. The idea expressed is that "the world was condemned, and offered for sacrifice, that is to say, was devoted to destruction, for sin; and the Divine Savior then offered himself for its deliverance. The Bible says, 'If one died for all then all were dead'. The Veda says, conversely, because all were devoted to destruction, therefore one died for all. The one reasoned from the consequent to the antecedent; the other from the consequent, but both appeared to concur in the nature of the antecedent and the consequent.[70] Thus, Krishna Mohan concluded that the biblical doctrine of salvation by the sacrifice of Christ finds a remarkable counterpart in the Vedic understanding of salvation by the self-sacrifice of *Prajapati*.

Next, he takes up his second proposition that the meaning of *Prajapati* coincides with the meaning of the name and office of the historical reality of Jesus Christ. The name *Prajapati* not only means "the Lord of the creatures" but also supporter, feeder and deliverer of his creatures. The name 'Jesus' in Hebrew means the same. The root meaning of the word stands for help, deliverance, and salvation, and the name was given to him because he would save his people from their sins. In the prophecy cited by the Saint Mathew, he is described as a leader or ruler who shall feed the

people of Israel. "The same is the import of *Pati*; the name of *Prajapati*, therefore, singularly corresponds to the name of Jesus".[71] Then he shows how Jesus and Jesus alone, fulfils what *Prajapati* stood for in the primitive Vedic tradition and that Jesus is the true *Prajapati*; and the Christian Church – the true Ark of salvation.

Christ is the true *Prajapati* – the true *Purusha* begotten in the beginning before all worlds, and Himself both God and Man. The doctrines of saving sacrifice, the primary religious rites of the Rig Veda – of the double character Priest and victim, variously called *Prajapati*, *Purusha* and *Viswakarma* – of the Ark by which we escape the waves of the sinful world – these doctrines I say which had appeared in our Vedas amid much rubbish, and things worse than rubbish, may be viewed as fragments of diamonds sparkling amid dust and mud, testifying to some invisible fabric of which they were component parts, and bearing witness like planets over a dark horizon to the absent sun of whom their refulgence was but a feeble reflection.[72]

So, while Jesus is the true *Prajapti*, or the diamond, the doctrines of the Vedas are only fragments of the diamond sparkling amidst dust. While Jesus is the true sun and the true light, the Vedic doctrines are planets reflecting, though feebly, the light of the Sun. Then Krishna Mohan makes the very important statement that "The Vedas fore-saw the Epiphany of Christ. The Vedas shed a peculiar light upon that dispensation of providence which brought Eastern sages to worship Christ long before the Westerners even heard of him."[73] For Krishna Mohan, no person can be true Hindu, without being a true Christian. The relation between Vedic doctrine and Christianity is indeed so intimate that "you can scarcely hold the one without being led to the other, much less can you hold the one while resisting the claims of the other."[74]

3.4.3 Evaluation

He was the pioneer of indigenous theological thinking and he exhibits that Jesus is the true *Prajapati*, whose name and position match up to the level that Jesus is the Vedic ideal who offered self-sacrifice.

He proposes that *Prajapati* not only mean 'the Lord of Creatures' but also 'supporter, feeder and deliverer' thus he tries to draw a parallel between *Prajapati* and Jesus. For him Christ is the true *Prajapati* who is the Lord and creator who sacrificed himself and the true *Purusha* who is both divine and human.

In Hinduism there are several *Prajapati* and Banerjee focus is limited to the *Prajapati* of *Purusha* Sukta of Rg Veda.

These early converts acted like apologists who were convinced about the superiority of their new found faith and the need for others to gain the same faith. Thus, their efforts were to convince others through intelligence. As they were from *Brahmanic* Tradition their theological articulation continues within that tradition and they tried to express their faith in relation to their own faith traditions. They were convinced that the most effective way to proclaim the gospel in India is by applying Indian philosophy and thus they shaped their theology in Indian philosophical categories.

END NOTES

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[21] Twentieth Century, vol. 1, # 6 (June,1901); Lipner, ed., 42 quoted Timothy C. Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: The Legacy of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay*, 244.
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[32] Rabindranath Tagore cited by George Gispért-Sauch, 'Bramabandhab Upadhyay: A Forgotten Freedom Fighter,' *Mission Today* 7, no. (2005). Quoted from the preface to *Car Abhyay*, (1935) — a literary works denouncing terrorism.
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[34] Sugirtharajah, 'Asian Theologies,' 36.
[35] Balwant A.M. Paradkar, *The Theology of Goreh* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1961), 1.
[36] Ibid. ,2-3.
[37] Ibid. ,6.
[38] Ibid. ,7.

[39] Balwant A.M. Paradkar, *The Theology of Goreh*,12.
[40] Ibid., 23.
[41] Indian philosophy has six systems; Nyaya, Samkhya, Vaiseshika, Yoga, Mimamsa and *Vedanta*. The rational criterion of the discussion which Goreh assumed was coherence. The root difficulty of Samkya-Yoga is, if the supreme Self-Purusha or Brahman-Atman is detached, for perfect and non-purposive, it can never explain cosmological genesis and the rise of knowledge. The attempted solution of *Pratibimbavada* has intellectual contradiction thus not a real solution. He finds the Nyaya and Vaiseshika system the most reasonable because Samkhya and Mimamsa do not believe in God and *Vedanta* identifies God and soul. But the idea of God who is really God and not a mere god does not fit with Nyaya-Vaiseshika ontological pluralism, and without God ethics cannot be fully metaphysically vindicated. *Vedanta* here stands for *Advaita Vedanta*. Half of this book deals with *Advaita.*
Paramarthika or true existence, vyavaharika or practicle existence and pratibhasika or illusory existence. The first stage is predicable of Brahman exclusively. In the second stage the ignorant mistake them for existence, practical level. The third stage resembles the practical, in that it is false but by mistake, seems to be vertiable. The classical example of snake-rope is employed to demonstrate this.
[43] 240-241.
[44] 248.
[45] 248-50.
[46] Saguna and nirguna
[47] 254.
[48] 266.
[49] 271-2
[50] 276.
[51] Balwant A.M. Paradkar, *The Theology of Goreh*, 15.
[52] KP Aleaz, "Nehemiah Nilakantha Sastri Goreh's Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical System," *Bangalore Theological Forum*, Vol XXXIV, No. 1 (June 2002): 133-162.
[53] Balwant A.M. Paradkar,
The Theology of Goreh, 20.
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[56] Jan Peter Schouton, *Jesus as Guru: The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 56.
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[58] Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure*, 26; Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai through Her Own Words*, 308.
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[60] Cited in Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, p. 26 (the interview was conducted in December, 1887).
[61] Jan Peter Schouton, *Jesus as Guru: The Image of Christ among Hindus and*

Christians in India, 80.

[62] Jose Kuttianimattathil, et al., Asian Christian Theologies: *A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, 213.

[63] Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1969), 31.

[64] M.M. Thomas and P.T. Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1970), 23.

[65] Jose Kuttianimattathil, et al., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, 211.

[66] T.V. Philip, *Krishna Mohan Banerjea Christian Apologist* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1982), 110-111.

[67] Krishna Mohan Banerjea, Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy, 514 quoted T.V. Philip, *Krishna Mohan Banerjea Christian Apologist*, 111.

[68] Krishna Mohan Banerjea, The Relation between Christianity and Hinduism, 2 quoted T.V. Philip, *Krishna Mohan Banerjea Christian Apologist*, 116.

[69] Krishna Mohan Banerjea, The Relation between Christianity and Hinduism, 2 quoted T.V. Philip, *Krishna Mohan Banerjea Christian Apologist*, 118.

[70] Ibid., 118-119.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., 121.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 123.

4

MISSIONARY CONSTRUCTIONS OF INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Missionaries from various places came to India with one agenda i.e. to evangelize Indians. Even though their way of approach of evangelization differed but, they served the nation with full devotion. Many of them tried to prove the superiority of Christian faith thus they rejected and condemned everything related to the Indian culture. At the same time there were few who tried to learn the language and culture so that they can share the gospel effectively.

4.1 Robert De Nobili (1577-1656)

Robert de Nobili was born in Tuscany in September 1577.[1] At the age of seventeen, De Nobili was convinced that he had a vocation to become a Jesuit missionary. In 1596 he entered the novitiate in Naples. In 1605 he arrived in Goa, De Nobili was transferred to Cochin to work with superior Laerzio. In 1606 De Nobili was chosen to work in Madurai.[2] In Madurai he devoted himself to understand the local context and thereby accommodated the local Hindu life. He wrote 40 Tamil prose works and three Tamil Poetic works, beside eight in Sanskrit and three in Telugu.

4.1.1 Evaluating Missionary Activities

Robert struggled to understand why the Madurai mission was confined to outcaste *Paravas* and Portuguese. He felt himself fortunate to associate with the Hindu schoolmaster who was placed in charge of the school. From the schoolmaster, De Nobili was astounded to learn that the term used by the Indians to refer to the Portuguese and their converts, *Parangis*, was not, as the missionaries believed, a Tamil word meaning simply “Portuguese.”

Rather it signified polluted, uncultured, contemptuous foreigners and their proselytes. *Parangis* were despised, the Hindu schoolmaster said, because they ate meat, drank wine (usually to excess), bathed irregularly, wore leather shoes, and ignored the rules of social interaction. With the help of his Hindu mentor, he also realized how the caste system was the cornerstone of Indian society and culture.

Robert was convinced that Hindus would never listen to the gospel until a break was made with *Parangi* Christianity. He therefore determined to disassociate himself from people and customs which might identify him as a *Parangi*.[3] Therefore, the first thing de Nobili did was to give up referring to his religion as *Parangi Markkam* and to call Christianity *Satya Vedam* (true religion).[4] And thus he committed his life to prove Christianity as *Satyavedam*.

4.1.2 A Radical Accommodation to Hindu Life

In order to achieve his goal, he accepted the social customs of his time. He moved from the missionary compound into a hut in the Brahman quarter of the city and shaved his head except for a small tuft on hair. He spoke only Tamil, hired a Brahman cook and houseboy and became vegetarian. Like other Brahmin, he limited himself to one meal a day. He abandoned the black cassock and leather sandals of the Jesuit order and adopted saffron robe and wooden clogs. To cover the "nakedness" of his forehead, he put sandalwood paste on his brow to indicate that he was a guru. He referred to himself not as a priest but as *sannyasi*. Eventually, he ate only with the Brahmins and for a short period he also wore the Brahmin thread of three strands of cotton cord draped from the shoulder to the waist as a sign of rank. He bathed daily and cleaned himself ceremonially before the mass. He became friend with a Brahmin scholar Sivadarma and he after much reservation allowed him to study Vedas and Upanishads.[5] Thus one can find in him a radical departure from the regular system and adventuring into new terrains.

4.1.3 One More Veda

De Nobili made an attempt to compile a book. He thought that in India if Christianity could be shown as the religion, which crowned the Vedas, it should have a claim on every orthodox Hindu. With such idea in mind De Nobili began to extract from approved commentaries of the Vedas a collection of texts and allusions best suited to serve as a basis for demonstrating the truth of Christianity. De Nobili called it the Fifth Veda. As far as Nobili was concerned this was the Law which had been lost. What he meant was the primitive religion revealed to mankind but lost because of sin, embodied again and perfected in Christian revelation.[6] In order to provide right perspective about *satyavedam* he attempted to serve Biblical truth with local religious aroma.

4.1.4 Kudumi and Brahman Church

By 1609 De Nobili had persuaded Sivadarma to read the Bible, which De Nobili referred to as the "Christian Veda" and to accept Christian baptism. With that baptism, De Nobili had to face two difficult questions. He knew that, as a Brahmin, Sivadarma would be reluctant to worship with the people of lower castes. Would it then be proper to segregate the believers according to their caste? Secondly, was it necessary, as other missionaries insisted, for Sivadarma to discard the triple thread and shave the *kudumi* or single braid of hair marking him as a member of the highesr caste? De Nobili resolved the first problem by forming a totally Brahman church. To an answer to the question of the thread and the *kudumi*, he appealed to his superior Laerzio, insisting that the thread and the *kudumi* braid were social symbols rather than religious ones.[7]

Now there were Christians from different caste and priest were ministering among the Brahmin Christians during the day and among the lower caste Christians during the night. This was not a permanent solution. Hence, De Nobili introduced another group of ministers to serve the lower caste Christians and they were called *pandaraswamis*, whereas the ministers among the Brahmin Christians were called *Sanyasis*. As a missionary he approved the religious and cultural customs of Madurai.

4.1.5 Theological Scheme

De Nobili usually did not start his instruction from the History of Salvation or the Bible but from Philosophy, from the true nature of

God and his attributes.[8] Thus he avoids Indian categories and prefers scholastic categories; yet he effectively translates his ideas into understandable and familiar idioms of the people. Different arguments will be acceptable from different people and he counter argues with several arguments and examples to prove his point.[9] De Nobili writes: 'If I do not give such arguments as they give, they will say that I have not known the reasons given in their sacred books'. He adds, 'some arguments, which are difficult to understand and which are unfamiliar to many, I write them again and again in different ways, that they may be understood easily'.[10] This confession of using scholastic categories in his book *Refutation of Transmigration* could be applied to many other works of De Nobili. The apologetical tone of many of their works is to be understood properly by us. In some places De Nobili tells that his arguments against the *puranic* gods is not to offend anyone but to show better the way to heaven. Books apparently meant for the non-Christians treat mostly about the nature of true God and of true religion. Here De Nobili is apologetic; using philosophical arguments and the *Puranas* of the Hindus he proves the falsehood of the Hindu position and the correctness of his own position. In such works there is no mention of Christ. In such contexts Christ may not be understood correctly; Christ must be revealed only gradually and that too after ascertaining the right motive of the people who come for instruction.[11] Balthasar Da Costa, who joined the Madurai Mission in 1640 and who translated into Portuguese the five volumes of De Nobili's Catechism wrote in his introduction, 'Robert de Nobili did preach Christ crucified, but with due order and caution, so as not to give that which is holy to dogs or pearls to swine. In this he was following, without the slightest deviation, the example and teaching of the Apostles and of Christ himself, the Model of all preachers. Christ accommodated himself to the capacity of his hearers so much so that he never preached to them but in parables ...'[12] Thus De Nobili showed the reasonable character of the Christian faith. Hence, it was appropriate that De Nobili was popularly called *Tattuva Podagar* -the teacher of reality.

4.1.6 Evaluation

Due to his accommodative theology he was able to invite caste Hindus to Christianity at the same time by doing so he accepted the oppressive caste system.

He has been acclaimed as the first Oriental scholar and the father of Tamil prose.[13]

According to Francis X. Clooney, De Nobili is a hero for those in the Christianity who wants to divert the Christian gospel of an overly European appearance and so to deepen its roots in the non-European societies where it is present. He was remarkably courageous, sensitive and foresighted in his understanding of his religion and its relationship to his own and other cultures.[14]

His methods of work were indigenous and highly original, and he is greatly to be commended for his study and use of Sanskrit and Tamil.[15] He accepted the social customs of the people and provided much required theological vocabulary in Tamil and Sanskrit languages.

4.2 J.N. Farquhar (1861-1929)

John Nicol Farquhar was born in Aberdeen on 6th April 1861. He studied at Aberdeen University and Oxford University. In 1891 he joined the London Missionary Society.

When Farquhar came to India in 1981, the national movement was gripping Indians and in the face of India's new consciousness of national identity and national pride, Protestant missions had depressingly little to offer by the way of understanding and affirmation. Missionary proclamations were against the Hindu belief and missionaries were not trained in the field of Indian religions. "Preach the gospel and confound the heathen" was the only approach which most knew. Farquhar found it painful because he understood that the traditional missionary approach was serving to alienate India specially the youth and he realized that this approach is far remote to the emerging facts of the religious history of humankind. Farquhar felt the need for a new missionary approach to Hinduism and to Indian life.[16] As a missionary he was able to evaluate the activities of Church and he also got the guts to re-define the limited missionary mind of superiority of own faith and rejection of the other.

He wrote *Gita and Gospel* (1906), *The Crown of Hinduism* (1913) and *Modern Religious Movements in India* (1915).

4.2.1 Theological Method

By the mid-nineteenth century witnessed a new Christian paradigm for understanding Hinduism among the missionaries. Christianity (or Christ or the Christian church) in some way fulfilled Hindu aspirations (or Hinduism) became a commonplace of Protestant Christian and J. N. Farquhar is the name most commonly associated with fulfillment thought. He was interested in discovering and stating the relation between Hinduism and Christianity. His theology was based on the fulfillment Theory.

He felt the crucial need of a workable 'apologetic' approach to the university educated Indians and as a means to that end tried to find a more acceptable relation between Christianity and Hinduism than that of mere mutual exclusion.[17] In an article entitled, 'The Relation of Christianity to Hinduism' published in an issue of the International Review of Missions in 1914, he came to the conclusion that the rejection of Hinduism as evil could not be taken as a scientific judgment based on serious study, it occurred as a result of hasty inferences from preconceived notions and superficial observations. It was his belief that there is an evolutionary connection between Hinduism and Christianity as of lower to higher, so that what is only foreshadowed in Hinduism is fulfilled and perfected in Christianity.[18] According to him, every religion has some truth in it and has been instrumental in leading people to God. Every religion is valid for a person as long as it is the highest they know. But, when a higher faith is presented, sincerity requires of the person to move towards the new. Hinduism has gleams of light in it and a Hindu is right in following it until the higher light reaches them. In Hinduism there is an aspiration which would be considered as preparation for Christ, and every important Christian truth is part of Hinduism. He uses the fulfillment idea in evolutionary sense and sees the process of fulfillment as a radical displacement of Hinduism by Christianity.[19] He utilized the fulfillment theory to Hinduism and presented his interpretation regarding the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism.

4.2.2 The Crown of Hinduism

Farquhar argues that Christianity or rather Christ is the crown of Hinduism. Christ provides the fulfillment of each highest aspiration and aims of Hinduism. Every true motive which is in Hinduism has found expression in unclean, debasing, or unworthy practices finds in Him fullest exercise in work for the downtrodden, the ignorant, the sick, and the sinful. In Him is focused every ray of light that shines in Hinduism. Christ is breathing life into the Hindu people. True, Christ passes everything through His refiner's fire, in order that the dross, which Hindus know so well, may pass away; but the gold will then shine all the brighter. We have seen Christ with many crowns but we do not yet see all things put under Him. Indo- Aryans enjoyed- no caste, no child marriage, no child widows, no enforced widowhood, no sati, and no zenana. How near all this is to the spirit of Christianity?[20] He is the crown of faith in India.[21] For him,

> "The Indian religious instinct divined that God would become man (sic), but did not realize the debts of divine humility and self sacrifice. Even at its best Hindu incarnation is no true incarnation: God only seems to become man (sic). Even if by some writers the human body be conceived as a reality, God has not become man (sic), but only appears within a human shell. In Christ on the other hand, the Son of God actually becomes man (sic), shares our pain and sorrow, our temptation and moral difficulties and lives under the same conditions as we do. Thus, Jesus fulfills the Indian thought. He is the realization of the Indian ideals, but in this case, as in every other; the reality sent by God is far better and more wonderful than the imagination of man (sic)."[22]

> In him, the Indian incarnate ideal is more than fulfilled. The sketch of divine character given by Hindu writers is here fulfilled with the glory and beauty they never dreamt of. And what the Hindu books declare to be impossible, namely, that the incarnate one should be a model to man (sic), was actually accomplished by Jesus. The indifference to man (sic), which is the Indian ideal, is in him raised to that Law for the human race which was the main spring of his life.[23]

In the analysis of Eric J. Sharpe, the focus of Farquhar's faith might well be characterized as "the religion of Jesus." This was

not irrelevant to his development as a missionary theologian; far the simple presentation of Jesus as a religious teacher has long proved more acceptable to the Hindu mind then the attempt to expound an intricate system of theology.[24] The crown of Hinduism contains two aspects, first, from the perspective of the history of religions, the belief that universal religious elements reaches their fullest and most complete form in Christianity- or rather, in Jesus Christ. Second, the belief that in Jesus Christ, all people everywhere can find the resolution and goal of their religious quest. Christ, for him stands for such ideals as progress, freedom, search for truth, morality- all the ideals which India was striving to embrace, but all of which were destined to prove very elusive indeed without the motive power that only Christian faith could provide. To say that Christ was the fulfillment of Hinduism is statement with social, political and religious overtones.[25] By applying fulfillment to Hinduism he provided a new direction to the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism.

4.2.3 Evaluation

Unlike other missionaries he never rejected Hinduism as evil but he considered it in line with fulfillment. The Christianity that he talks of is not Christianity as it is practiced by Christians but Christianity as it springs from Christ himself. In fact, he passes for Christ to Christianity and back as if they were identical.[26]

His understanding of the relation between Hinduism and Christianity as lower to higher tries to replace Hinduism with Christianity that itself is the missionary motive.

4.3 A.G.Hogg (1875-1954)

Alfred George Hogg was born in Assuit, Egypt on 23rd July, 1875 to a Scottish educational missionary family.[27] He arrived in India in 1903 as a layman and was ordained in 1915. Not until 1938 did he actually appear on the international missionary scene in person, when the IMC met in Madras Christian College at Tambaram that he stood out as one of the most astute critics of Hendric Kraemer.[28] His publication includes *Karma and Redemption, Christ's Message of the Kingdom, Redemption from this World* and *The Christian Message to the Hindu.*

4.3.1 Hogg's Exploration

He contributed to the Christian mission work in India. A great deal of his most creative theological and philosophical work was done from a position of relative freedom, as a lay missionary who was not bound by creeds and confessions. But instead he felt himself bound by a much more serious moral obligation.[29] He expressed his moral obligation as

> To track out all unconscious preconceptions, and to examine with ruthless honesty their title to acceptance, has appeared to me to be one part of the serious business of life. It is not, indeed, by any means the duty of everyone; but for him who has the metaphysical bent of mind and leisure to exercise that bent; it is a sacred obligation which he owes to humanity and to his own soul.[30]

4.3.2 Hogg's Missionary Reflection

In one of his article, *The Christian Interpretation of Mediation* he says

> Is it possible to state the Christian estimate of Jesus as the one unique Mediator between God and man (sic) in a way which shall not repel sympathetic and thoughtful Hindus? In the formation of this estimate preserved in the Creeds of Christendom there is much that appears hopelessly foreign to Indian ways of thinking, and it may not be rash to conjecture that, if Christianity had made its first abiding conquest in India instead of in Europe, its Creeds would have been couched in a terminology singularly different.[31]

In his early years in India he was therefore working, not toward any lessening of belief in the uniqueness of Christ, but toward a restatement of that belief in terms that India could comprehend and accept. The root of the matter he believed rest in the area of ethics – and Hogg's theology was always of a strikingly ethical kind, consistent with his Kantian philosophy. It was this which drove him to an examination of the antithetical doctrines of karma and redemption, and to his conclusion that the former, while it may be judicial, is not truly moral, since in true morality there is reciprocity of rewards and punishments, which karma cannot embrace without losing its character. The weakness of karma, in Hogg's view, was

that it was maintained wholly apart from a corresponding belief in the moral nature of God, and thus took the form of a judicial system without a judge, and therefore without the possibility of mercy.[32] In the doctrine of *karma* and redemption he got the preparatory ground for his theological venture.

From the problem of finding a fundamental contrast of theological principle between Christian and Hindu modes of belief, Hogg next turned his attention to the question of the nature of faith. Underlying the diversity of belief he advocated the oneness of faith. According to Hogg, it is absolute and unquestioning trust in a God who reveals himself and God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ is final and normative. Hogg was strongly opposed to the suggestion that Christianity fulfills Hinduism claimed by the "fulfillment school" led by J.N. Farquhar. Hogg found Farquhar's claims that Christ is Christianity to be an extreme liberal point of view and somewhat naïve. The claim that the fulfillment relationship subsists between religions was therefore found unacceptable, unintentionally condescending and theological inadequate.

4.3.3 Karma and Redemption

Hogg was seeking for a fundamental contrast of principle, which might serve as a key for the interpretation of Christianity *vis-à-vis* Hinduism[33] and he finds it in Karma

> ….there seems ground for hoping that an analysis of the ideas of Karma and the way of release, and a comparison of the Christian conception of Redemption therewith, will lead to the discovery of elements of resemblance and contrast between Hinduism and Christianity which all must acknowledge to be vital.[34]

Hogg finds in Hinduism and its sects an exaggerated and selfish individualism resulting from *Karma* theory. He points out that a man (sic), according to *Karma* doctrine, can modify his destiny and win. For his critical examination, Hogg took the definition of the doctrine of Karma according to the *Advaita Vedanta* as stated in *The System of Vedanta* by Paul Deussen. By meritorious deeds a happier lot for himself in a future embodiment, but he cannot alter another man's destiny either for good or for ill. Consequently,

even virtue finds a selfish motive lay ready to its hand. The asceticism of Hindu ethical thought also is prompted by the desire to amass merit, thus becoming narrowly self-centred.[35] Further for Hogg, the doctrine contradicts the scientific theory of evolution which takes into consideration the influences of external nature on the individual. He finds fault with the doctrine for lacking the meaning of history, thereby denying the influence of other individuals on one's destiny.[36] He moves to the judicial and moral side of this theory

> The doctrine of karma fits beautifully into a system which recognizes no purpose in life other than expiation, but there is no room for it in a universe the purpose of which is moral and not judicial.[37] Does Christianity then, deny that justice is an attribute of God? It only denies that judgment is His present purpose…now, Christianity teaches that God's purpose in creating the present order was not to dispense judgment but to educate a race of beings into likeness to Himself….it is part of that process of self-revelation which is the purpose of divine providence, but it is no way obscures the fact that, on the whole, God's dealing with men (sic) are not measured by their deserts.[38] The question between Hindu and Christian is not whether God is just or unjust, but whether the purpose of the present order is judicial or moral.[39]

If Christians must criticize the Hindu conception of *Karma* on the grounds of their moral doctrine of the universe, what are the implications of this doctrine for the Christian doctrine of redemption? There is one moral purpose running through the whole phenomenal system[40]

> ….the one grand purpose of offering to every soul coming into life one and the same eternal boon- the boon of a fellowship with God in the voluntary service of absolute good.[41]

It all depends in the last resorts on the conception of the nature of God which is entertained

If we acquiesce in the endeavor, so typical of Hinduism and of much European thought, to conceive infinitude as consisting in imperturbable self-sufficiency, then no solution of the problem of

evil is possible, other than the desperate expedient of declaring that evil is unreal.[42]

But if God can be conceived as Love, then there is no impossibility in admitting that the world may be full of evil. To conceive of God as an absentee ruler on the other hand, unconcerned with the fate of His creatures, leaving the working of the universe to an impersonal judicial system would be to deny the possibility of love, since no human being could affect another, either for good or ill. This the Christian denies strenuously.[43] Thus, Hogg finds the possibility of reinterpreting the law of Karma in Christian manner.

4.3.3.1 The Doctrine of Karma Re-interpreted[44]

Hogg presented a revised law of Karma, interpreting it in the light of the Christian doctrine of redemption. According to this interpretation, Karma doctrine shall be simply the idea of causality applied to the ethical realm. This ethical law of causation recognizes two important factors:

4.3.3.1.1. The evil consequences of sin, though they fall on others besides the sinner, do not fall on all in the same way; but the nature of the effect will depend in part upon the individual, on the person affected. The evil consequences which the sins of others bring upon him are in themselves simply misfortunes. But for a true child of God such misfortunes are swallowed up in the joyous consciousness that they come to him through his Father's(sic) ordinance, considering them at the worst, a mystery to be accepted in patient faith and at its best, the pains that can be gloried in as a privilege and an honor. But the same evil consequences become the seeds of a new crop of evil in the case of a man living in alienation from God. Such evil consequences provoke discontent and rebelliousness and make him fall a victim to fresh temptations.[45]

4.3.3.1.2. Karma, as a law of ethical causation, should also recognize that the nature and the effect of evil fruits of sin upon the individual whether personally innocent or guilty depend not upon himself alone, but *upon others*. The parable of the Prodigal Son serves as the best illustration, says Hogg. The young man has wasted his means in prodigality and his health in licentious living. The fruits of his deeds have begun to ripen and he attains a mood of penitence.

The Father cannot undo what he has done. He cannot revoke the ethical law of causation. Yet, the way in which that law works in his son's case depends largely upon his action. If he refuses to forgive, his son very likely will grow desperate. If he forgives and restores him to the standing of a son, his penitence will become more real. Hence according to the revised law of *Karma*, the fruit of deeds is no longer merely an individual but a social burden and is subject to modifications owing to the attitudes and conduct of others also. Good *Karma* cannot wipe out bad karma, but by its own causal efficiency can alleviate the total result, says Hogg. To him, a hope for redemption is possible only through such an interpreted view.[46]

4.3.3.2 The Doctrine of Redemption Restated[47]

Hogg not only re-interpreted the doctrine of Karma, but also felt the necessity of restating the Christian doctrine of Redemption in the light of the *Karma* theory and the Hindu way of thinking concerning the way of release. The incarnation of God, according to him, was the product of a moral necessity of the divine nature to react against sin to the extent of a complete forth-putting of itself in the effort to generate human goodness afresh. Hence, if God was to express Himself freely, the missionary thinks it is necessary that the universal order must contain at least two inviolable laws.

4.3.3.2.1 The first is the Karmic Law which maintains that, if sin enters the phenomenal system, penalty must also enter.

4.3.3.2.2 The second is the law of salvation, according to which, if sin enters the phenomenal system, God shall be compelled by all the moral forces of His nature to throw the whole infinititude of His being into the phenomenal system, i.e., to incarnate Himself to abolish sinfulness.[48]

The *Karmic* order which is the system of inevitable but modifiable punishment, reveals that sin is opposed to divine intention. The *Karmic* fruit is the consequence of sinful acts. But, the *Karmic* order does not attempt to secure the realization of the divine purpose of good in the light of human sin or to provide scope for the full reaction against sin. Only the perfect moral nature which can put forth all its potentialities can alone be adequate to convert sinfulness

into goodness. Christ revealed His love through His life of patience and sorrow, full of penalties of the world's sin (*karma*). But His work signifies more than this. The incarnation of God in Christ was the product of a moral necessity of the divine nature to react against sin. Jesus suffered undeservedly the *Karma* of sin. When people know that this sufferer was none other than God, incarnated for the divine purpose of winning them to goodness, His life becomes charged with a power of regeneration for humanity. However, God's reaction of Divine love against sin, by sharing the Karma of humanity, is not done out of sheer pity. In the face of sin, God cannot but sacrifice Himself to the uttermost in the struggle to abolish sinfulness.

4.3.4 Evaluation

Hogg rejected the fulfillment model proposed by Farquhar and maintained the difference between Christianity and Hinduism.

He re-interpreted the Hindu doctrine of Karma and re-stated the Christian doctrine of redemption according to karma principle.

4.5 Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998)

James Edward Lesslie Newbigin was born in England in 1909. He was converted to Jesus Christ during his university days at Cambridge. He was married, ordained by the Church of Scotland, and set sail for India as a missionary in 1936. He spent the next eleven years as a district missionary in Kanchipuram. He played an important role in clearing a theological impasse that led to the formation of the Church of South India (CSI), a church made up of Congregationalists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists. He served as bishop of Madurai for the next twelve years. The next six years of his life were spent as an ecumenical leader, first as general secretary of the IMC, the International Missionary Council, and then as associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). He returned to India and became bishop of the important Diocese of Madras for ten years. Following his retirement in 1974 until his death in 1998, he lectured at Selly Oaks College in Birmingham, England, pastoring a small Reformed church in Birmingham, and carried out a rewarding schedule of lecturing and

writing that produced about a dozen books and hundreds of important articles.

His writing includes *The Reunion of the Church; A Defense of the South India Scheme (1948), Household of God (1953), Sin and Salvation (1956), Is Christ Divided? A Plea for Christian Unity in Revolutionary Age (1961), Honest Religion for Secular Man (1966), The Finality of Christ (1969), The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World (1974), The Open Secret: Sketches for A Missionary Theology (1978), The Light Has Come: An Exposition of Fourth Gospel (1982), Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture (1986), The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (1989), Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth (1991), Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt and Certainty in Christian Discipleship (1995), Truth and Authority in Modernity (1996),* and *Unfinished Agenda (Autobiography 1993)* etc.

4.5.1 Theology and Practice of Mission

Lesslie Newbigin was wholly committed to God's mission of the redemption of the world. He was equally committed to the unity of the church. These convictions are part of *The Household of God* and here he claims

> It is surely a fact of inexhaustible significance that what our Lord left behind Him was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought, not a rule of life, but a visible community. He committed the entire work of salvation to that community. It was not that a community gathered around an idea, so that the idea was primary and the community secondary. It was that a community called together by the deliberate choice of the Lord and re-created in Him, gradually sought- and is seeking- to make explicit who He is and what He has done. The actual community is primary; the understanding of what it is comes second.[49]

For him, the starting point in God's initiation in Jesus Christ and the calling of the church as the visible and witnessing community of gospel, this is the essential structure and not institutional system. Thus he stresses the priority of the gospel as the message, embodied in an actual story, of what God has in fact done, is doing, and will

do. Christian theology is a form of rational discourse developed within the community which accepts the primacy of this story and seeks actively to live in the world in accordance with the story. The church should consider the world seriously because it is involved in the world and it should also be careful not to be dictated by the world. True contextualization means the power of gospel to penetrate into every culture and utilize the speech and symbol of that culture.[50] Newbigin tries to give due respect to both the gospel and the context so that the context allows the gospel to be meaningful and transformative.

4.5.2 Missionary Theologian

According to Newbigin, truly missionary church "will be a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world." "The Church gathers," he argues, "to renew its participation in Christ's priesthood . . . not within the walls of the Church but in the daily business of the world."[51] The church must be local, he argued, in design, ownership, worship, structure, and leadership. This was "the simplest of missionary principles."[52] He derives inspiration from the apostle Paul

> never stayed in one place for more than a few months, or at most a couple of years ….as soon as there was an established congregation of Christian believers, he chose from among them elders, laid his hands on them, entrusted to them the care of the church, and left. What must be done if the gospel is to be truly communicated?... [T]here must be a congregation furnished with a Bible, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry…. The young church is then free to learn, as it goes and grows, how to embody the gospel in its own culture.[53]

He understood the new missionary challenges of his time and raises a valid question, if modern societies are not uniform but consist of vast pluriformity of social spheres with their own languages, issues and moral challenges and in these circumstances how a single Church can be truly local to all these spheres at the same time? Therefore he argues

> For secularized urban man (sic), even more than for his predecessors, to live in the same place does not mean to inhabit the same world. . . . The Church must be where men (sic) are, speak the language they speak, inhabit the worlds they inhabit. This is the simplest of missionary principles. In obedience to it, Christians are reaching out in new forms of presence, trying to manifest the reality of the life of Christ in the many varied idioms of the worlds which men (sic) inhabit. There are 'cells' in factories and in offices… But these missionary experiments have, until recently, left untouched the position of the local congregation as the definitive form of the Church, the place where the word is preached, the sacraments dispensed, and godly discipline administered. These other activities have been seen rather as non-ecclesiastical or at best para-ecclesiastical activities which were the outworks of the Church rather than its main structure, the scouting parties rather than the main column.[54]

Newbigin after recognizing the need of the hour tries to provide new aspects in relation to the mission. These new challenges also inspire him to identify these as opportunities for ecumenical cooperation and dialogue.

> Go to the great new industrial complex of Durgapur in India, where thousands of Indians are being thrown together from every part of the country into the melting-pot of a new kind of society. Can you really try to turn [these workers] into Anglicans, or Methodists or Canadian Baptists or Danish Lutherans? Wherever you come from, and through whatever tradition you learned Christ, you have only one thing to do there: to empty yourself for Christ's sake in order humbly to learn what kind of a community can truly represent his intention for that industrial community. . . . It would, of course, be possible to erect a series of fishing stations around that pool and fish for proselytes; but that is not mission. That will not create in Durgapur a community which is the first-fruit for Christ of the whole, an earnest of his purpose and a sign of his victory. Already the missionary experience of the past two centuries has helped powerfully to bring home to the Churches the scandal of their division. It is even more certain that a serious attempt at missionary penetration of the structures of a secularized society will make our divisions look ridiculous.[55]

Thus he suggests ecclesial creativity, openness and imagination and he bases his foundation on

> [t]he more we stress the need that the Church should develop a new openness to the world, a new flexibility in its structures, ….the more necessary it is to stress the centrality and finality of Jesus Christ. ….With the kind of openness and flexibility which I have advocated, it may be difficult to say where the boundaries of the Church lie; this does not matter provided we are clear and make clear to others where the center lies.[56]

4.5.3 The Logic of Mission

If the gospel is true, if it tells us where all of history is going, then mission must follow: the story must be made known. Jesus did not write a book but left behind a community that would make known the good news of the kingdom of God by embodying it in its life, expressing it in its deeds, and announcing it in its words. He charged them with this mission: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). They were to continue the mission of Jesus in his way. As Jesus made known the kingdom to Israel, the church was to make known the kingdom to the ends of the earth. A number of significant elements of this view of mission remain profoundly relevant for our day.

First, mission is not an optional extra but is central to this era in redemptive history. "The meaning of the 'overlap of the ages' in which we live, the time between the coming of Christ and His coming again, is that it is the time given for the witness of the apostolic Church to the ends of the earth. The implication of a true eschatological perspective will be missionary obedience, and the eschatology which does not issue in such obedience is a false eschatology."[57] One cannot understand this time period apart from mission; this era is defined by the call to make known the good news in life, word, and deed.

Newbigin speaks of the logic of mission: "The logic of mission is this: the true meaning of the human story has been disclosed. Because it is the truth, it must be shared universally."[58] The term "logic of mission" refers to the essential historical connection between the good news of the kingdom revealed in Jesus and the

universal mission of the church to make it known. The era of the church's mission must follow the revelation of the gospel in Jesus.

Second, mission is ecclesial. Mohammed left behind a book to communicate the truth he believed that he had received from God. Jesus did not write a book; he left behind a community. Thus, mission defines the church's identity: one cannot understand the church apart from its sending. Mission is not merely one (even very important) ministry of the church but defines the very nature of the church.[59] This is God's way of working in redemptive history: God chooses people, reveals to them the "secret" of his coming kingdom, and charges them to make it known in their corporate and individual lives, words, and deeds.[60]

Third, mission is as broad as human life. When the word "mission" is used in many Christian circles today, the idea of geographical *expansion* still dominates. That is, mission (or missions) is considered to be an activity that proceeds from one part of the world to another. A "missionary" is one who is an agent of this expansion, and a "mission field" is a potential area outside the West where this expansion is being carried out. Of course, the 20th century has given rise to numerous factors that have eroded this view of mission. Throughout the 20th century the ecumenical church struggled to define mission in a new way. Newbigin's book, *One Body, One Gospel, One World*, played a key role in redefining mission in a broader way. He consolidated, interpreted, and disseminated many of the gains made toward a fuller theological understanding of mission made in the early 20th century.[61]

Mission is as broad as human life (all of life is mission) because the church is sent to make known the good news that God is restoring the whole creation. Sending, however, is not the sending of some people to other parts of the world but the sending of the whole community to make known the good news (John 20:21). Yet – and this is the fourth point – it is important "to identify and distinguish the specific foreign missionary task within the total mission of the church."[62] Newbigin made an important distinction between mission and missions, or missionary dimension and missionary intention. Mission is an all-embracing term that refers to "the entire task for which the Church is sent into the world."[63] Missions or foreign

missions are intentional activities designed to create a Christian presence in places where there is no such presence, or at least no effective presence. As such the foreign missionary task is an essential part of the church's broader mission. During the time Newbigin served as editor of the *International Review of Missions*, there was immense pressure to remove the *s* from *Missions*, which he refused to do. He insisted that the missionary task of the church is to take the gospel to places where it is not known must remain an indispensable aspect of the church's mission. In a time when missionary resources are being scandalously allocated and when the task of taking the gospel to areas where it is not known remains a vital part of the church's calling, this distinction continues to hold before us that the missionary task of the church is to the ends of the earth.

4.5.4 Evaluation

Newbigin's theology is based on mission and his mission is theology. His writing proves that he is a missionary theologian.

He became an influential personality in relation with theology of mission in the twentieth century. He was aware of the context and thus he addressed the emerging issues. He gelled well in all context whether the rural context of Tamilnadu or the urban worldview of Birmingham.

These missionaries came to India and provided service that was relevant to their context. The efforts they contributed through missionary strategies and also shaped the mission understanding of the Indian Church. Their dedication and theological realism is really challenging. This was a period of positive encounter with other traditions e.g. religious, spiritual, social etc. This encounter with other led to inculturation whereby the other traditions were able to enrich Christian theology.

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5

CHRISTIAN LIFE AS *BHAKTI MARGA* AND CONTEMPLATION

The personalist stream of Hinduism provides much importance to *bhakti* i.e devotion to God. *Bhakti* refers to a sense of love, obedience, devotion and surrender to God. The *bhakta* experiences separation from God and longs to meet God, nothing else attracts, nothings else holds but God alone. Here the *bhakta* seeks a God who can be loved and worshiped and who remains distinct from the worshipper, a God who can be approached with feelings of deep love and personal devotion.[1] *Bhakti marga* helps one to experience the absolute through devotion. Some of the theologians mentioned in this section make use of *bhakti marga* to approach their theological patterns.

5.1 Sadhu Sunder Singh (1889-1929)

Sadhu Sunder Singh was born in Rampur (Punjab) in 1889. He hails from a well to do family. By the age of seven he by hearted the Bhagavat Gita. At sixteen he had read through the Granth, the Koran and several Upanishads.[2] As a student in a Christian Mission School, he came in contact with Christianity but he fiercely rejected it. He even went to the extreme of burning a copy of Bible.[3] Even though, he felt the enmity towards Christianity, his spiritual longings were not fulfilled until emotional and spiritual turmoil drove him to urgently ask the true living God to reveal Himself fully, lest he take his own life in hope of finding peace.[4] Thus one night he thought to commit suicide in the morning by lying down on railway line. Early in the morning, however, and to his complete surprise, he had a vision of Jesus, radiant in his beauty and commanding him to obedience and he got peace of mind.[5] This encounter made him to

be a living witness for Christ.

From 1910 he began the life of a wandering *sadhu* travelling all over India and Tibet carrying only New Testament. Without any formal Church affiliation, he said that he belonged to the Body of Christ. From 1919 to 1922 he travelled widely in Asia, Europe, North America and Australia. In his last years he lived in a house at Sabathu in the far North of India but on 18th April 1929 he set off to Tibet with some Tibetan traders never to be seen or heard of again.[6] As a true mystic he attained *Samadhi*.

He wrote *At the Master's Feet (1922), Reality and Religion: Meditations on God, Man and Nature (1924), Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life (1926), The Real Life (1965),* and *The Real Pearl (1966)* etc.

5.1.1 Spirituality of Mysticism

His spirituality is based on trances or visions or in contact with supernatural beings or spirits in heaven. He often speaks of his visit to heaven and his confrontation with angelic spirits concerning whatever doubt he had which he experienced here on earth and all his ecstatic experiences were always in harmony with the Bible.[7] For him faith and experience are essential to identify absolute and reality.

Christ is the center of his theology and the basis of theology is direct experience of Jesus Christ thus his theology begins from his experience of Christ rather than from any theistic considerations. [8] In Ecstasy, in every vision Christ is the centre of the scene. In ordinary life, whenever, among friends, he speaks of Christ, the love-light beams from his eyes and his face is transfigured —as sometimes in supreme moments a woman is, gazing on her beloved. Seeing him, one knows why a Christian has been defined as one "who has fallen in love with Christ."[9] As a real *bhakta* he had an intimate relation with Jesus Christ.

5.1.2 Mystical Union with Christ

"India," reiterates the Sadhu with passionate conviction "has no need of missionaries to teach a Christ who is merely a great moral teacher and not also the Lord of life." To most of us the name Christ suggests primarily the historic Jesus —in and through whom

we see, as it were, the face of God invisible. But in all ages the Christocentric Mystic is one who thinks first of an Eternal Divine Being whom now he knows and loves, and only in the second place of the Man who ate and drank and taught in Galilee. "There are those who speak of Christ as the Supreme Mystic; what," he was asked, "would you say to that?" "That is the tendency of those who are not inclined to accept the divinity of Christ. Christ is not the supreme mystic; He is the Master of mystics, the Savior of mystics."[10]

"Christ is not only an historical figure but one who lives and works to-day. He lives not merely in the Bible but in our hearts. An Indian Christian, who had travelled widely, said once: I saw Muhammad's tomb. It was very splendid, decorated with diamonds and all manner of precious things. And they told me: Here are Muhammad's bones. I saw Napoleon's tomb and they said: Here are Napoleon's bones. But when I saw Christ's tomb, it was open. No bones lay there. Christ is the Living Christ. The tomb has been open thus for nearly two thousand years."[11]For him, the presence of Christ was so real that he felt united with Christ. He claims my heart is also open to the Lord. He lives in me. He is the living Christ because He lives in the lives of Christians. Real Christians are not those who profess, but those who possess, Christ.[12] He tried to explain this relation with the help of metaphors.

> Some say that salvation consists in being absorbed in God. We Christians say that to live in Christ is already heaven. We are to live in Him and He in us. How can this be? When a ball of iron is thrown into the fire it becomes red-hot. The iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron, and yet the iron is not the fire and the fire is not the iron. In the same way we live in Christ and He lives in us and yet we do not become gods.
>
> Consider the air we breathe. The air is our life, yet man (sic) is not the air, nor the air man (sic). In like manner we breathe God's Spirit, but we are not God. Just as we draw in the air by breathing, we can inhale the Blessed Spirit by prayer. Not only do we draw near to God, but we are united with Him. This is not only union but life, and when we have this life we see the marvelous love of God.
>
> The planets have no light in themselves. They shine with

> light which they have borrowed from the sun. Christians are like them. In themselves they have no light, but they shine with light borrowed from the Sun of Righteousness.
>
> The Church is called 'the body of Christ' because the relation between Christ and Christians is not that between a master and his servants. It is more than that. Christians are Christ's own parts. They are not only friends of Christ, they are Christ Himself. He breathes through them.[13]

The same explanation he provides while dealing with the relation between Church and Christians

> Christ is always present in the Church, but unseen. Wherever men (sic) feel in their hearts a feeling of reverence, this is a dim recognition of His presence. But Christ never interferes with our freedom so as to compel us to feel His presence. He allows us to do so according to our capacity. Indeed He never interferes with us here in any way by compulsion, only by attraction.
>
> We see medicine for the eye. We see it so long as it is before us. But when it is dropped in the eye, it cools the eye and cleanses it, but we cannot see it with the eye. In the same way we cannot see the Savior who cleanses our heart and makes it rejoice with His presence. The Christian has eternal life because the God to whom he is united is Eternal.[14]

With the help of these simple illustrations Sadhu was trying to explain his experience of intimacy with God. For him, the heart of Christianity lies in a personal experience involving a total surrender and devotion to Christ.

5.1.3 The Concept of Avatara

Sadhu considers Christ as an *avatara*. He says Christ is like a king going about incognito among his people in order that he may be able to help them; humanity saw him and still see him but could not recognize his divinity. Another illustration he gives is a bottle of milk that contained in a red container (bottle). The redness of the bottle people could not able to identify that was milk inside of it, they thought of it some other liquid. Sadhu said it is impossible for any person without faith and direct experience to accept the divinity of Christ. "Faith in the divinity of Christ grows out of the immediate

experience of the heart".[15] The third illustration is taken from the practice in parts of Northern India of crossing rivers on inflated goatskins. One crosses on air, but the air cannot support one unless it is confined in the skin:[16]"So God to help human had to become incarnate. The word of life was made flesh. He will carry to those who want to cross the river of this world to heaven. We can see the living father (sic) in the incarnation of Jesus Christ".[17] For Sadhu the purpose of Jesus' *avatara* was to identify with humanity and one can realize this truth only through personal experience that Christ is both God and human and his presence is real in life of *bhakta*.

5.1.4 The Concept of Trinity

Sadhu Sunder Singh, says that to know the Father (sic) is only through the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit, for he writes

> The first time I entered heaven I looked around about and asked, 'But where is God?' and they told me, God is not to be seen here anymore than on earth, for God is infinite. But there is Christ, He is God, in heaven as on earth. 'And streaming out for Christ, I saw, as it were, waves shining and peace giving, and going through and among the saints and angels, and everywhere bringing refreshment, just as in hot weather water refreshes trees and everywhere bringing refreshment, just as in jot whether water refreshes trees and this I understand to be the Holy Spirit.' For Sadhu Christ is the fully God and God is fully revealed in Him and to know the divine is only through Him.[18]

5.1.5 The Concept of Sin and Karma

The concept of Sin for Sadhu Sunder Singh is remarkably interesting. His understanding of sin is based originally from Hindu concept. He retained many features of the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*, while at the same time he rejected the allied doctrine of *Samsara*. He also does not underestimate the gravity of sin, but regards sin as the negation of goodness rather than as an active principle of evil.[19] God does not want to send anyone to hell…it is sin which drives soul to hell. Sadhu rejects the view that suffering is penal, the penalty for sin committed in this or in previous lives. The doctrine of *Karma*

is that there is no possibility of forgiveness and all suffering is penal. Therefore, he strongly rejected it. For him, God is not the author of the penalty and his only desire is to save the sinners. Suffering, then, when recognized as a medicine or an opportunity for learning more of God's love is to be welcomed, and so Sunder Singh welcomed it in his own life. Sadhu also said that God revealed in love on the cross of Jesus and identifies Himself with the suffering of Karmic effects takes on judgment on atones far and transforms the suffering into a new life.[20] He modified the concept of *karma* thereby allowing it to amend with Christian understanding of sin.

5.1.6 Indian Expression of Christianity

This is one of the most important aspects of Sunder Singh's theological thinking. He understood and perceived that Christ in India should be presented in the Indian way of understanding in the philosophy of Indian thought. He saw that Christ was not of a particular community or country and that we present him in that context. For him Christ is universal and he can be presented in such a way that He is not alien to the receivers of the Gospel. Christ should be Indian and presenting Him to the Indian He needs to be an Indian. He further explains by an illustration:

> A Rajputan, Brahman high caste fell down due to the heat of the sun in a railway station. The railway master who was of white skin brought water in a European cup. The Brahmin refused to drink the water in spite of being at his dead end. He cannot compromised drinking the water from the white cup in order to lose his caste but when the water is brought in an Indian vessel he drank it.[21]

5.1.7 Evaluation

Sadhu lived and preached the gospel with Indian approach wearing Indian dress and using traditional Indian methods making use of parables and analogies from his own experience and from the ordinary life of the community.

He adopted Indian thought into Christianity without diluting the teachings of Christ. His religious opinion are originally his own. His love of solitude and contemplation, his steady practice of meditation and reflection, his theo-centric method of prayer, his frequent visions

and ecstasies, his conceptions of heaven — all these things point in the direction of mysticism.

He was a Christian mystic with simple evangelical faith who claimed to have continuous communion with God. A mystic who experience the power of risen Christ dwelling in him and transformed him to be Christ-like.

5.2 A.J. Appasamy (1891-1975)

Aiyadurai Jesudasan Appasamy was born on 3rd Sep. 1891 in a Christian family to Dewan Bahadur A.S. Appasamy.[22] In 1904 due to influence of R.T. Archibald he committed his life for Christ. The same year in September due to arguments from V.S. Azariah he dedicated for Christian ministry. Krishnasamy Iyer convinced him regarding importance of theological studies.[23]

Thus, after his studies from Tirunelveli and Madras, in 1915 he left to U.S. for theological studies, he earned his doctorate from Oxford and his thesis was *The Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel in its Relation to Hindu Bhakti Literature*. On 27th Sep. 1950 he was consecrated as the Bishop of CSI Diocese of Coimbatore.[24]

His theological articulation are part of *The Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel in its Relation to the Hindu Bhakti Literature (1922), An Indian Interpretation of Christianity (1924), Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study of the Johannine Doctrine of Love (1928), The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Hindu Thought (1934), The Gospel and India's Heritage (1942), The Christian Task in Independent India (1951), My Theological Quest (1964),* and *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti (1970)* etc.

5.2.1 Influences

Baron F. Von Hugel, Friedrich Heiler, Rudolf Otto, Sadhu Sunder Singh are the few theologians who became inspirational force to Appasamy. At the same time the personalistic tradition of *bhakti* and its philosophical exposition by *Ramanuja* fascinated him.

5.2.2 Theology

According to Appasamy, "The conviction behind my thinking is that Christian Church should develop Indian pattern of Christian work based on religious pattern of this country…. We must formulate our own theology using tradition available in this spiritual country."[25] Thus Christian Theology in India should be rooted in Indian heritage.

He also emphasizes the importance of experience in theology. Theology is the outcome of experience and not of theory. It is one's understanding of God as we abide with Him in *dyana* and service and confirm His will. *Dyana* and obedience are the first step in Christian thinking.[26] Therefore, experience is inborn part of authentic theology.

For Appasamy theology should be shaped after *Bhasya*[27]and thus he contemplated on theistic *bhakti* thought to bring commentary on John's gospel.

5.2.3 Theistic *Bhakti* Thought

For him, the theistic *bhakti* was the most suitable to show the inner spirit of Christian religion to real spirit of Indian religious thought. *Bhakti* is close to Christianity because it maintains a distinction between God and *bhakta*. Salvation through *bhakti* is possible to all but *jyana marga* is limited to few. For him theology can be understood and explained by those who live close to Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. The vital experiences of *Bhaktas* are so called mystic union.[28] He analyses that India Christians have spend many years in the interpretations of the Christianity that has not regarded the supreme importance of the mystic experience in their religion.[29] Mysticism can be considered as the heart of all religions.[30] The other side of mystical life is ethical experience. [31]

He defines *bhakti* as the deep, unselfish love of the whole human for God, finding its highest bliss in union with Him. And concludes that the main aspect in *bhakti* is love and it can be translated in English as faith or devotion.[32] *Bhakti* in Indian religion is closely linked with mysticism.

5.2.4 St. John's Gospel

Appasamy's hypothesis was built on assumption that mysticism will lead Christianity into becoming a living force in India. Thus, he claims that there are other profound spiritual experience described in *bhakti* literature, such as one's conviction of God's abundant grace, of His purification of soul, liberation from birth and death but they are either directly and significantly related to the enjoyment of mystic union or considered as of minor importance.[33]

Mysticism for Appasamy means the type of religious life which emphasizes the communion of human soul with a personal God.[34] Then, he goes on to prove the mystic elements in fourth gospel and brings the fact that love in fourth gospel is taken out of emotional realm and was linked with action, in the same manner knowledge (truth) was taken out of speculation and linked with ethics. Hence, he believed that St. John's gospel can play an important part in the theological task of India.

He proclaims that the gospel of John is one piece with the rest of the Bible, agreeing with it all its fundamental doctrines. Also it is quite justifiable for us to strike deep down into a well to draw fresh water. A farmer may own hundreds of acres but he sinks his well only where he know he will get the water he needs.[35]

5.2.5 I and Father are One

How Christ is related to God, the transcendent reality, is an important theological question in the history of Christianity. The traditional western position has been that Father and Christ are related metaphysically, sharing the same substance. This unity was believed to be metaphysical. Appasamy proposed a different view on this matter. He spoke of the unity of a moral one, rather than metaphysical. The son, according to him, is so perfectly obedient to the Father, and that is how he is perfectly united with the Father.[36]

By holding on to this position, he was challenging the monistic interpretation of Trinity already in the Indian scene. He refuted the *Vedanta*-based idea that God the Father, Christ, and finally, the believers are all identical and ultimately one. For him all these were united only in moral relationship of love and obedience.

It may be quite true that on the surface, this verse is like

> the texts in Upanishads which set forth *Advaita*. But we must remember that Jesus always thought of God as his father….This means that the relation between God and Jesus is a personal relation between Father and Son. Jesus also says, "The Father is greater than I." this shows that He regards Himself as wholly dependent upon Father; he is not identical with God.[37]

As further evidence to his position, he quoted the episode of Gethsemane where the struggle of Christ as a human being finally ends with his union with the Father. Christ as a true human being devotes his life entirely to the Father. His emphasis of this point has a simultaneous concern of underlining the moral unity between a believer and God.[38] According to him, based on the unity between Christ and Father, the believers are invited to foster a unity with God through love, fellowship and service. By the way of emphasizing this point of moral union, he says

> There can be no identity between ourselves and God….Fellowship with God does not consist in….a realization of our ultimate kinship with God, a kinship which always exist though hidden by mist of illusion and which has only to be made clear to the soul by some rapturous glimpse of Reality. But, it is the harmony of the individual soul with the Divine Soul in thought and imagination, in purpose and will, in humble deed and adoring devotion.[39]

5.2.6 Logos and *Antaryamin*

Having studied the Fourth gospel, he believed strongly in the immanence of God, the Logos in the world. He was in the world, John 1:10, was one of the important verses that guided Appasamy's reflections. According to him, God can be known only in the heart of the world. God is present in the world and in human beings. God, according to him, *antaryamin* (indweller)- one who resides in the inner world. To prove this he quotes from Brihad- Aranyaka Upanishad

> He who dwelling in the sky, yet is other than the sky does not know, whose body the sky is, who controls the sky from within- He is your Soul, the Inner Controller (*antaryamin*), the Immortal….[40]

The Logos, according to him, is imminent in the world right from creation. This understanding leads him to explain his position on incarnation. He explained it saying, even though the Logos was present in the world, human have not seen him. And, to make human understand and see the Logos clearly, Christ incarnated in the world.

> Because men (sic) have not understood Him, even though He is immanent in them, He has become flesh. The incarnation is a more effective means of showing than mere immanence.[41]

He emphasized that Christ came not only for the Jews, but for all the people. Christ as Logos is present in all and in all faiths. People of all faith have seen the light, in manifestations dim or bright. But we have a duty to the come to the fullest light of all and that is seen in Christ, for in him alone the Logos fully dwells.

5.2.7 Evaluation

He was perhaps the first systematically trained Indian theologians to make an effort to develop an indigenous theology with professional competence.[42]

Appasamy challenged the church to be situational thus he formulated *bhakti* theology. Situational reality deals with two important factors i.e. religio-culture and socio-economic, he dealt with the former but totally neglected the latter.

He is selective in approaches of Indian religious cultural heritage but limited with the classical Hindu tradition.

Appasamy's Aryan bias, preoccupation with evangelism and the church, excessive influence of the west in his understanding of nature and scope of theology as well as spirituality, in a way, severely restricts his significance for the contemporary Indian Church.[43]

He highlighted the personal dimension of Indian spirituality while others were presenting God as unreachable transcendent reality in so doing he brought God closer to the people. He understood *bhakti* as the deep, unselfish love of the human to God finding its highest bliss in union in God.

5.3 Sr. Sara Grant (1922-2000)

She was born of Scottish parents in England on 19th Dec. 1922.

After her schooling she joined the Mistress of Novices. In 1956 she was sent to India to head the newly formed Department of Philosophy at Sophia College, Bombay. For her Ph.D studies, she learned Sanskrit and studied Sankara's *Advaita*. She was also inspired by Swami Abhishiktananda. Grant was an ardent and successful advocate of the significance of Hinduism for contemporary Christian theology and spirituality.

Grant was influenced profoundly by two pioneering figures in the Catholic encounter with Hinduism in this century. Her intellectual study was guided by and modeled on that of the Belgian Jesuit Richard de Smet (1918-1998), one of the 'Calcutta School' of Jesuit scholars who undertook serious and sympathetic study of the various religious traditions of India. De Smet, like Upadhyay, sought to identify common ground between *Advaita Vedanta* and Thomist Christianity. On the other hand, Grant's experience of Hindu spirituality was shaped by her encounter with the French Benedictine Henri le Saux (1910-1973), better known as Swami Abhishiktananda, who founded the Saccidananda Ashram with Fr. Jules Monchanin (1895-1957) and who gave himself entirely to a deep immersion into *Advaitic* spirituality.[44] De Smet and Abhishiktananda were poles apart in their engagement with *Advaita*, the one a brilliant theologian, the other a passionate contemplative. It was Grant who combined these two approaches to non-dualist Hinduism in her own life and work.[45]

Her pen produced *Descent to the Source (1987), Lord of the Dance and Other Papers (1987), Towards an Alternative Theology: Confession of a Non-Dualist Christian (1991)* and *Sankaracarya's Concept of Relation (1999)* etc.

5.3.1 The Challenge of *Advaita* for Christian Theology[46]

As Malkovsky states, part of Grant's contribution to Catholic encounter with Hinduism was to encourage a 'greater appreciation of not only the challenge, but also the enrichment offered to Christian thought by the world's third largest religion.'[47] The idea that Hinduism (along with other religions) might have something of value to offer for the doing of Christian theology globally represents an aspect of Catholic reflection that has only come to prominence from the second half of the twentieth century. In her Teape lectures,

Grant identifies three ways in which the *Advaita* of the Upanishads and Shankara might challenge contemporary Christian theology, ways in which *Advaita* had answered her own spiritual and theological quest and where she had shared many insights with Swami Abhishiktananda and de Smet.

First, she argues, *Advaita* challenges Christian theologians to resist the idea that theology can be done as a purely academic subject.[48] In Shankara's *Vedanta*, knowledge of the Supreme Reality, Brahman, only comes about as the result of a process that involves the whole person.[49] The one who desires knowledge of Brahman must be suitably disposed in manner of life as well as intellectually and then must pursue the path of gradual realization of the truth, which is revealed in the scriptures, guided by a suitable teacher. Theology for Shankara is a practical and holistic discipline, a process of becoming, not merely one of learning. *Advaita* challenges the tendency for Christian theology to become like any other academic study:

> By its uncompromising insistence and spelling out in detail of the demands the theological quest makes on a human being; one cannot "do" theology as one may "do" mathematics or history or any other branch of academic study. Unless our value systems are in harmony with the demands of the Truth we are pursuing, we cannot hope for real enlightenment.[50]

From early on Grant herself insisted on the centrality of personal experience in theological enquiry, not least as an authority for the judgment of theological truth alongside doctrinal tradition.[51] It was the experiential path of encounter with *Advaita* that Abhishiktananda pursued and which Grant felt that she was herself compelled to follow in the course of her life. In the light of *Advaita* she came to think of authentic theologising as always rooted in the personal contemplation and moral development of the theologian.[52] For Grant this model of theologising was in any case that found in classical Christian theology in the Eastern and Western traditions.

Second, *Advaita* challenges Christian theologians to affirm that the divine reality remains a transcendent mystery, beyond any conceptualisation:

> By the apophatic character of *Advaitic* teaching about the

> Supreme, a dimension which has been heavily overlaid in Christian tradition in recent centuries and yet appeals so strongly to modern man (sic), starved of transcendence and mystery...[that] might stem the tide of disillusionment created by taking for granted, as still sufficient for us today, the myths and symbols which satisfied older and less scientifically sophisticated generations.[53]

Again this is where her own spiritual quest and that of Abhishiktananda had much in common. We have seen that from her early years Grant sensed that the transcendent divine mystery was beyond the traditional formulations and devotions of Christianity and which she felt were often made ends in themselves. From her early years in the Society Grant was taken with Aquinas' phrase, 'At the end of all our knowing, we know God as unknown: we are united to God as something wholly unknown.' In her encounter with *Advaita* this was echoed and re-enforced by an Upanishadic text, 'That from which speech turns back, together with the mind, unable to reach it'[54] *Advaita*'s apophatic approach, she argues, is especially helpful to contemporary people, faced by many different viewpoints, and uneasy with exclusive claims or the identification of the mystery with any particular doctrinal formulation.

For Grant Shankara's *Advaita* theology provides a good way of reconciling different religious traditions and points of view, without excluding the value of the doctrines and theologies that express them. Such formulations are relativised against the transcendent mystery of the divine, but not excluded. Reflecting on her many years of meeting with people of different traditions and of reading the Christian and Hindu scriptures together in her ashram, she comments that:

> Shankara's approach provides an excellent basis for unself-conscious sharing of insights across boundaries of race, nationhood and belief, often making it possible to reconcile different points of view not by cancelling one or the other out, but by transcending both in a fuller synthesis. [55]

Third, and most important, *Advaita* challenges Christian theologians to recognize the non-duality of the relationship between God and the world and to be open to the type of expression found in *Advaita*. As Grant says:

> By the Copernican revolution which would be brought about in our theological expression of our faith if we adopted as our basis the experience of "God" as the immanent yet transcendent Self instead of the "God up there" or "out there" of traditional imagery, to whom contemporary man (sic) finds it increasingly hard to relate. We have to face the fact that acceptance of either a heaven or a God "up there" is no longer culturally or theologically possible.[56]

This third aspect is what she and de Smet found so richly expressed in the *Vedantic* theology of Shankara. This was for Grant the inkling that she had from childhood and which she found expressed best of all in *Advaita*, that the divine is imminent in all things and that the divine reality is the Supreme Subject, not the Supreme Object. Grant finds the *Advaitic* perspective encapsulated in the saying of the medieval Hindu saint Sadashiva, for whom worship of God, as if exterior and other, was impossible, and who said, 'I can find no corner within my heart where I may take my stand to worship him, 'for in every 'I' which I attempt to utter, his 'I' is already glowing.'[57] For Grant, the non-dual relationship of Creator and creation is more clearly expressed in Shankara than any other account and so represents the unique contribution of *Advaita* to Christian theology.

5.3.2 Universal Call of Church

The result of the Nagpur Workshop Enquiry is her starting point as the understanding of the Christian life and prayer based on New Testament. The Nagpur workshop states

5.3.2.1 By the spirit we are reborn into the life of Christ and therefore into his way of seeing, experiencing, responding to the believers and God and their inseparable union in him.

5.3.2.2 There are different levels of this experience for us, i.e. encounter with Christ and the other one, entry into his experience of being from the Father and to the Father in and through the world and spirit.

5.3.2.3 This whole process takes place under the action of the spirit and the life of a Christian becomes more contemplative.

5.3.2.4 St. John speaks the knowledge of the Father is the source of life and action. Priestly prayer says all believers can share His love and Knowledge.

5.3.2.5 Abba- father relationship i.e. spirit adoption has been provided to us.[58]

5.3.3 Spirituality and Mystery of Faith

As she drew inspiration from *Advaita*, spirituality plays an important role in her thought. Spirituality has been defined as the basic practical attitude of people which is consequence and experience of the way in which people understand their religion. It is ethically committed existence and the way in which people understand their religious activities according to their objective and insights. Spirituality is the total immersion in the mystery of faith, culture and tradition. She claims

> Today we are becoming more and more keenly aware that the Creator Spirit who moved over the waters in the beginning, spoke to the prophets, to the chosen people and came upon Mary and the apostles on the day of Pentecost, was not thereafter shut up in the Church like a bird in a cage, leaving the vast majority of *hu*mankind to grope their way in darkness far from God's presence. We realize as never before she has not always expressed it clearly- that the Word who become flesh as Jesus of Nazareth is the light that illumines and will continue to illumine every human being born into this world and therefore shines in all the great spiritual traditions of humankind, from different angles as it were and on different planes, but always throwing into relief some aspects of the mystery of our being.
>
> There are many ways of co-operating in this travail of the Spirit, and some measure of active involvement in the transfiguring of our world is demanded of all of us, even if this only means being more just and honest in our daily dealing with each others. And however, paradoxical it may seem to some, entering silently into contact with the Spirit of Truth in the depths of our own being, in the light of the Word shining in the scriptures of the great religions, is surely one of the most effective ways of collaboration in this transforming of the earth, for in so doing we necessarily bring the whole creation of which we are a part into closer dependence on the dynamic Source of all transfiguration.[59]

She believed that spirituality is not limited to Christianity but also part of other faith's and thus challenges us to experience Spirit which will lead to transformation.

5.3.4 Word, Feminity and Creative Power

She very clearly brings the feminine aspect of Word. She claims that in the Hindu tradition *Vac* is feminine and through her the creation occurred. The Hebrew word *Ruah* is also feminine. God is beyond name and form, thus neither father nor mother, yet somehow for us, who live in the world of names and forms, God is mysteriously and necessarily both.[60] In the Vedic and the Christian tradition the creative Word gives intelligibility to creation by conferring on it and revealing its structure and purpose. So the word made flesh reveals to us through his own life, making visible to us in his human existence the pattern of the Spirit's action in the cosmos, the rhythm of our own inner being.[61] She moves beyond patriarchal perceptive of faith and brings the feminine aspect of God thereby recognizing God's special concern for women.

5.3.5 Nature and Cross

There is in all cultures a mysterious affinity between human and trees, so that to cut a tree is normally hard and painful experience. Tree is symbol and reassurance of continuity of life, of hope and joy. In Vedic tradition great tree is at center of universe, the *axis mundi*, separating heaven and earth and yet bonding them together. In Christianity the tree of cross (linked with tree of life and its companion tree of knowledge of good and evil has become so close to identity of humanity in the tree of the Upanishad which also symbolizes human, the blood of the Lord and its redeeming power seem to be strangely foreshadowed and linked in ways not clearly expressed with the ultimate Beatitude which is "the final goal of him who stands still and knows," so John, gazing upon the water and the blood, knew the gift of the Spirit.[62] She moves beyond poisoned spirituality based on humanity alone to include nature as essential part of spiritual reality.

5.3.6 Mystery of Spirit

Mystic have recognized that the union of man and woman is a powerful symbol of the union of human with God, yet this symbol is not up to the mark of reality. The Greek text of I Cor. 6:16 presents the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit is astounding in its boldness, transcending any doubt regarding duality and pantheism seem irrelevant. It would be surely wiser to fall back on the biblical understanding of wisdom, the "knowledge of the heart" echoed by the Taittiriya Upanishad: "That from which speech turns back, together with the mind, being unable to reach it; he who knows the bliss of that Brahman fears nothing…. every creature lives by a small portion of that bliss."[63] She continues

> When a human enters into the depths of his own being, he/she enters into the depth of God. It is no longer possible to distinguish clearly in that descent the point of origin, where being flows from the Source without a source whom Jesus taught us to call "our Father". And when, as the scripture says, the Spirit is given and "streams of living water flow from his heart," heart is still indistinguishable from heart in the origin text-heart of Christ or heart of the disciple? Enough that the invitation is given, "and he who is thirsty may come desires may take the water of life without price", and awaken to awareness that his heart too is "the place of the Source, Beyond light and beyond darkness."[64]

5.3.7 Evaluation

She followed the direction of Brahmabhandhav Upadhyay in building a Hindu-Christian spirituality using conceptual recourses from *Advaita Vedanta*. Her approach of comparative analysis proposes fresh insights to both Hindu and Christian spirituality.

She presents inclusive spirituality embracing people from diverse community, offering scope for feminity and recommending respect to nature needs appreciation.

5.4 Sr. Vandana (1924-2013)

Sr. Vandana is a member of the Catholic order of The Society of the Sacred Heart. She was born as a Zoroastrian and accepted

Jesus at the age of 20 while studying at Sophia College in Bombay. Inspired by the life of a Franciscan priest, she became a Roman Catholic. She completed her academic studies in 1954 and taught at Sophia College, Bombay. From 1974 to 1980 she lived in a Hindu ashram for six months each year. She practiced and taught Hindu and Buddhist meditation and Indian Christian Spirituality and was closely associated with Anglican sisters, with the re-opening of the Christa Prema Seva Ashram in Pune in 1972.[65]

Her theological perspectives are presented in *Gurus, Ashrams and Christians (1978), Waters of Fire (1981), Social Justice and Ashrams (1982), Nama Japa: Prayer of the Name, In the Hindu and Christian Traditions (1984), Jesus the Christ. Who is He? What is his Message? (1985), Find Your Roots and Take Wings: Three Essays Spiritual Formation for the East and the West (1991)* etc.

5.4.1 Theological Reflection

She is concerned about the relation between indigenous religion and Christianity. She brought together two traditions – Hinduism and Christianity. Her research and experience of ashrams inspired her to become an *ashramite*. In exposing the insights of Hinduism to Christianity and Christianity to Hinduism she fosters the search towards the ultimate reality. Her special concern has been to promote inculturation of Christian spirituality and theology so that the Church in India may recognize her genuine Indian identity and to absorb the riches of other faiths. She characterized Indian spirituality as essentially feminine. She believed that it is the feminine power of God (shakti) that instructs us and it is the Spirit that leads us all into truth. Union and total surrender to God is achieved in silence and interiority.[66]

Vandana Mataji, as she was called affectionately requested permission to create a Christian Ashram, but first to study more of her Hindu and Parsi and Christian traditions at the feet of the masters. Shantivanam and Fr. Bede were included in this project. Swami Chittananda, at the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh became her Guru. The Hindus made a great exception in allowing her to build a small *kutir* near their large ashram. In 1984 Jeevan Dhara Ashram

in the Himalayas was opened to welcome people from various backgrounds to an exploration of Indian Christian spirituality. The divine reality manifests as sound or word. The Divine name thus becomes the mystical bridge between the finite and the infinite. It links up the individual soul with the universal, thus human with divine. The name of God is venerated in all scriptures and in all religious traditions.[67] She participates in Hindu spiritual tradition of *Bhakti* and she aims to prove its authenticity in Christianity.

5.4.2 Nama Japa

Nama Japa (*nama* means name and *Japa* means repetition) is repetition of a name of God.[68] She connects *japa* with Christian understanding of prayer and claim that it is pray without ceasing.[69] She asserts

> There is a mysterious or rather miraculous alchemical transmutation taking place within the mind of the devotee when the Name of God is chanted with sincerity and love from the bottom of one's heart. Thus, japa or the holy chanting of the Divine Name is a kind of mystical process of divine communion established by the devotee with the Divine Parent in humble submission and surrender of the individual personality at the altar of the All-Consuming Almighty presence.[70]

For her *japa* is inseparable from meditation. It is inward communion with the Divine Presence by means of the summoning or invoking God's Name so meditation and *japa* are the same.[71] As we know the name of God is venerated in all scriptures and in the traditions of all religions. She advocates *japa* as a concept to build spirituality across religious traditions.

5.4.2.1 Name in Bible

She claims that for the ancient people name is not simply a conventional designation but rather an expression of a being's place in the universe. God perfects His creation by naming: day, night, heaven, earth and sea (Gen. 1:3-10). He calls each star by name (Is. 40:26) and He also commanded Adam to name each of the animals (Gen. 2:20). While common names are different in different languages, a proper name has a mysterious identity with the person named, denoting the nature and function of the person. The name

given at birth expresses a person's destiny.[72] Now the same concept is also linked with God's attribute thus, even among primitive people veneration of the divine name had great significance. This is true with Jewish community also. The name of Yahweh was a kind of entity detachable from the divine person; a greatness existing in itself apart from this person. It was a tremendous event in the history of Hebrew worship when God decided to name Himself this celebrated revelation of God's name is the occasion for the divine title of Yahweh. In the latter times, a deep reverence for the name Yahweh led to use of term Adonai.[73] She brings the historical development of understanding the name of God and this is significant because name and attributes are inseparable.

> He who is beyond all names in His essence and who gradually revealed Himself throughout the Old Testament under a plurality of names, showed Himself to be I am on Mount Sinai and finally two thousand years ago the logos of the Father gave tangible form to the idea of God as Savior. Thus, the process of revelation of God and His name in the Holy Scriptures parallels to some extent, our own spiritual progress. The name of Jesus, as His proper name, is ontologically connected with Him. The New Testament is given to us, has given us a bridge between ourself and Him, a channel through which divine strength comes to us. It is Holy and by using it we are sanctified by it. With this name and through this name, our prayer acquires certain objective form or significance: it unites us with God. In it, this name, God is present, as in a vessel full of fragrance. Through this name God becomes immanent in the world. As a spiritual entity it proceeds from the essence of the divinity and is divine in itself. As activity of God, it transcends cosmic energies. Emanating from divinity it is not an invention of human mind even though human as devised a word for it. It is priceless gift to us from on high, meta cosmic in its supra natural glory.[74]

The purpose of worshipping God in forms and reciting His various names is to enable the devotee to get rid of obsession with the name and form world, which prevents him or her from realizing non-dual and one reality that is God, which is its ground and support.[75] The original idea of *japa* was entirely spiritual deep knowledge of Upanishads and other texts was believed to have the

soul pure and enabled it to realize the Supreme reality and induced in the mind love of all human being as sparks of divine essence. *Japa* at the highest level was contemplation of God and an endeavor to attain unity with Him. The habit of repeating the sacred text should uphold the soul in the presence and thought of God. For this to happen, however, *japa* demanded three things: purity of heart, detachment and placing oneself in the hands of God.[76]

She brings the practical and theological significance of prayer. She presents that while one meditates the name of God this guide's one close to God. The divine name becomes the link between the infinite God and finite *bhakta*.

5.4.2.2 Nama Japa as Greatest Pearl

She asserts six reasons to prove that the utterance of Divine name is superior to the other disciplines taught in the Scriptures.

5.4.2.2.1 The repetition of the name, open to all irrespective of caste, age, sex, involves no injury to any living being.

5.4.2.2.2 It does not stand in need of any ancillary aid.

5.4.2.2.3 It does not require the intercession of any third person.

5.4.2.2.4 It can be practiced at any time.

5.4.2.2.5 There are no restrictions in regard to place.

5.4.2.2.6 There are no ritualistic regulations.[77]

In this age, when people are over-busy with activities and varieties of business, it is too much to expect the human mind to be able to directly absorb itself in mediation on the Universal Almighty. Just as one is able to recall to one's mind the form of an object or a person by remembering the name, its qualities and its definitions, so also it is easier to entertain in the mind the holy characterization of His Name which actually describes His might and glory. In this age of modernity in everything and weakens of will, generally speaking, *japa* or the constant taking of the Divine Name may be regarded as the best and perhaps the only means of maintaining a spiritual awareness in one's daily life.[78] Due to the busy schedule of modern times and lack of time for meditation *nama-japa* can cater the spiritual desires of many.

5.4.3 Indian Approach of Theologizing

In India reflection and commentaries on Scripture i.e. *bhashyas* are the mode used for theologizing therefore study and meditation in Indian spirituality is based on commentaries on *Shastras*. Christianity should also adopt this method instead on speculating on dogmas and articles of the faith. Theologizing in India necessarily mean a prayerful study; in contemplative manner, not only thinking about God's words and works but thinking with God, in God's presence and ultimately drawn beyond thought and sense into this very depth. Theology then would be experiential and heart knowledge of God and not merely an academic or cerebral perceptive.

In 9th century A.D. in India Anandavardhana advocated *dhvani* as the soul of poetry. He claimed that the reader should be a *rasajnata* i.e. one who experiences the atmosphere of *rasdhvani* created by the poet whose language is evocative. This *dhvani* way of reading and commenting on the scriptures might be called the approach of the heart. Since the scientific revival of 16th-17th centuries the interpretation on the Bible has been based on the Historical, literary, form criticism etc. where the experiencing the text is missing. Even in rhetorical and or metaphorical criticism can evoke a limited experience. Therefore Indian theology should express itself by mean of commentary on scriptural text rather than by a body of systematic Christian theology of western fashion.[79] She presents the Indian way of theologizing based on commentaries which is based on peoples need and provide practical and theological proposals for present concerns.

5.4.4 Evaluation

She lived in Hindu temple town of Rishikesh as living image of Indian identity of Christian spirituality based on Ashram model.

She makes use of Indian resources for theologization i.e meditation, commentaries, prayer etc., and consequently proving the authenticity of Christian efforts in India. She applied the ancient Indian method of *dvani* to grasp the truth by heart.

The Indian religious context provides diversity to Christian theological expression. Indian Christian theologians acknowledge

this truth and recognize *bhakti* as tool for theology. *Bhakti Marga* indicates devotion for God based on worship, love and personal devotion. Christian theologians used this Indian concept to refine Christian devotion accordingly advocates the mystical experience of Christ and the reality of living Christ in the lives of *bhakta*.

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6

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND NATIONAL BUILDING

The colonial oppression of India and the education based on western ideology offered the platform for spirit of nationalism. For the general Indians Christianity was inevitable part of colonial rule. To be Christian means to identify with the culture, tradition and ethos of colonial power. Regardless there was a remnant group who discerned the shallowness of colonialism and supported positively to the freedom movement and the cause of nation building. As Christian faith got minority character the contributions of these remnants are not highlighted both in Indian history and in Christian history.

6.1 S.K. George (1900-1960)

Srampical Kuruvilla George was born on 10th March 1900 at Kottayam, Kerala. In 1924 he was sent to Bishop's college for theological training. After his B.D. and just before his ordination he confessed his theological doubts. He rejected to join Christian ministry and started to teach at Noble College at Masulipatam. Later he joined Bishop's College to teach Philosophy of Religion and History of Religion. He challenged Bishop Foss Westcott, Metropolitan of India, on his stand on the Indian National struggle. In 1931 he left Bishop's and joined national freedom movement and stayed in Sabarmati Ashram.[1] In 1937 he helped in organizing the Inter-religious Students Fellowship, which tried to bring together students belonging to different religions for mutual understanding and co-operation.[2] These facts indicate that he had a radical concern for the nation-building.

He authored *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ (1942),*

Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity (1947), The Story of the Bible (1951).

6.1.1 Influence

He came under the influence of Gandhi at an impressionable age, when he was a student in Madras Christian College. Naturally one can find Gandhi's influence reflected on him. He never claimed to be an orthodox Christian even though he acknowledges the decisive influence of Jesus and Bible in his life.[3]

6.1.2 Gandhi and Freedom Struggle[4]

I believe that Mahatma Gandhi today is such a spiritual fact, another peak of human achievement, which it would be folly for the race to ignore. It may be fortunate that he is living at a time when nothing is hid, when even the least out-of-the-ordinary thing gets a blaze of publicity. He has had his share of it. It is recorded that an American tourist once said that he came to India to see three things — the Himalayas, the Taj Mahal and Mahatma Gandhi. But this kind of publicity may not be altogether a blessing. For Gandhiji is not an object to be looked at like the Himalayas, though his uncouth features and his half naked body might evoke some curiosity. But unlike a natural phenomenon a spiritual fact is a challenge— you have got to do something about it — make up your mind, take an attitude towards it. I submit that Gandhi is a spiritual fact of that category.

There are two things that make the fact of Gandhi peculiarly disconcerting to the Christian propagandist, to the orthodox Christian, and make it a challenge to Christianity. The first is that even the orthodox Christian cannot refuse to admit, what is practically the unanimous verdict of the thinking world today, that Gandhiji is living out the Christian ideal, that he has demonstrated how the *Sermon on the Mount* can be practical politics. I think the following judgment of Mr. Kingsley Martin, Editor of *The New Statesman and Nation*, will be widely accepted: "I regard Gandhi as probably being of all modern leaders the most faithful interpreter of the philosophy of the Gospels." It is strange indeed when the Christian Church as a whole has turned aside from the fundamental teaching of Christ, that *Love is the Law of Life* (I do not think there is a single Bishop

in the Anglican Church who will make a stand against war if England decides to go to war) that a non-Christian should pin his faith to this teaching and make it the basis of his political programme for a country that is almost wholly non-Christian!

Gandhi is an inconvenient and embarrassing challenge to Christian orthodoxy. But some orthodox Christians, who cannot help admitting this, have a curious, a disingenuous way of getting round it. I have heard it said by more than one of them: "Yes, Gandhi is great; perhaps the greatest person of modern times, but it is the Christ-spirit that is working in him. He would have been a greater man if he had been conscious of this and accepted the Lordship of Christ." But Gandhiji gives them no foothold for this contention. He has explicitly rejected this claim for Christ. It is this which has hardened Christian, and especially missionary, opinion against him of late. His outspokenness on this subject has made it impossible for them to exploit his achievements even in the interests of a comprehensive Christology.

But even more significant than this is the method he has evolved for the realization of that Kingdom. It is the method of non-violence, of *satyagraha.* He has clearly grasped and insisted on in practice, what Western thinkers are coming to realize, that means condition end, that ideal ends cannot be attained by ignoble means, that there are no short cuts to Justice and Peace. So insistent is he on this that he has more than once risked his political leadership, even his reputation for sanity, by recalling movements which seemed to succeed, but which had departed from the path of non-violence. It is in this, I believe, that he is giving a new lead, breaking new ground in political and religious history. For religions so far have relied on preaching and propaganda only to get their principles of Love and Justice accepted by human and so have had to be content with limited and mainly individual successes only. They have lacked a technique of mass action whereby these principles could be made operative in the everyday problems of human and thus overthrow the reign of evil and selfishness in human relationships. Gandhiji's method of *satyagraha*, of nonviolent resistance to evil, seems to supply that technique of action whereby Love can resist injustice.

6.1.3 The Cost of Christianity[5]

Jesus taught his disciples about the cost of Christianity and therefore he spoke of the cup of suffering and baptism of death which is essential for him and his disciples. Christianity when it first entered the world wore another aspect. In its simple faith in a loving Father and its hope of a Kingdom of God it challenged entrenched authority and asserted the right of human as a child in God's universe.

Of its earliest preachers it was said that they were people who turned the world upside down. The idolaters of Ephesus, who brought this charge against St. Paul and his companions, showed a truer insight into the implications of Christianity and its exponents and ecclesiastics of the present day, who invoke its sanctions for upholding the order of the world as it is, in the interests of what they consider peace and safety. For Christianity, or life according to the will of God, is ever a challenge to a world order based on anything but that undiluted will.

This truth that Christianity witnesses to is of cosmic significance. We see it woven into the very texture of life. "Life," says a great writer of modern days, "wherever you encounter it, even in the lowest of its physical forms, is always pang-born and to some extent pang-sustained. And if that is true of our physical life, it is more obviously true of the life of the intellect, of the imagination, of the moral consciousness. All the great ideals of humanity are pang-born. They are the answers which the heroic spirit of man has given to the challenge of suffering, to the challenge of frustration, to the challenge of bereavement, to the challenge of death, to the challenge of pain in one or other of its innumerable forms." "Out of sorrow has the world been built; and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain," says another!

Christianity has got to recapture this fundamental element in its teaching. A religion which has the Cross for its centre and this symbol ought never to forget that it was pang-born and that the values it stands for, can only be conserved and enshrined in the heart of a world it seeks to save by the willing endurance of pain. It is this great lesson that is being emphasized anew by that true servant of God, Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever the judgment of the world may be on his politics, his understanding and interpretation

of the significance of suffering, of the meaning of pain, will be accepted as a message from God to the times, perhaps a much-needed message to a world that has not yet, in spite of nineteen centuries of Christianity, understood the Way of the Cross. It may be that when his politics are forgotten he will chiefly be revered by future ages for the measure in which this great principle has attained incarnation in his life.

6.1.4 Christianity and New World Order[6]

Religion has the tendency to provide partial solution therefore it encourages charity instead of securing Justice. The present world situation is such that if religion fails to establish justice other forces will replace religion because the demands for economic and social justice have become irresistible. The prophets of Bible stood for the social justice and Jesus approved it by the parable of final judgment, where humans are judged not by what they profess but how they relate to their brothers and sisters. Therefore, Jesus rejected profession of faith and approved fruits of faith.

6.1.5 Religion and Politics[7]

India is on trial. We are confident that her people will come out vindicated and triumphant out of this trial. But *Chistianity in India is also on its trial*. We wish we could have been equally confident about that issue too. So far Indian Christians as a community have held aloof from the National struggle and allowed their inaction to be interpreted as acquiescence in reactionary measures and thus estranged themselves from their countrymen whom they seek to serve. But we trust they will not miss this last great opportunity to take their religion to the heart of the New India in the making. For this time the struggle will be swift and the issue decisive. We Christians ought to be devoutly thankful that the struggle is directed along strictly non-violent lines, enabling us to bear our part in it with a clear conscience. To us our Christian profession has already committed us to this struggle both as to its objective and its method. For as Christians we are bound to stand out against all injustice and oppression; and it needs no laboring the point at this time that British rule in India, in spite of all its seeming benefits, has in its totality done more harm than good to the country; and that in the interests

both of India and Britain the present relation between the two countries must be radically altered. As to non-violence, it is our Master's method, the Way of the Cross; and it is certainly up to us to be interpreters of its meaning and guardians of its integrity in the Holy War that has already begun. If I appeal to Indian Christians, men and women, in all parts of the country to join in their thousands in the movement, it is because I believe that this movement under Mahatma Gandhi will lead to a partial realization at least of that great goal before mankind the Kingdom of God, of which our prophets have seen visions and for which our Lord lived and died. It is our Christian duty, due both to God and country, to help in the realization of that ideal. May we not be found wanting in this hour of our trial!

6.1.6 Inter-Religious Cooperation

S. K. George had the conviction that the hope of world unity and human fellowship lies through inter-religious cooperation. Inter-religious movement can eliminate religious conflicts and intolerances. The spirit of co-operation, which he found among Christians, he wanted to be extended to include the different religions as well.[8] In his view inter-religious movement faces many misunderstandings. One charge is that it is syncretistic and will but results in adding one or more new fancy religions to the crowded world of religions. The clarification given by George in this context is:

> The inter-religious movement does not aim at evolving a single universal religion for all mankind (sic). That … is the dream of the militant missionary faiths, which would blot out all other religions. What inter-religionism stands for is the acceptance of the need and the fact of variety in religious experience, of diversity in *hu*man's approach towards and realization of the One Eternal Reality, which is the common object of religious quest throughout the ages. It admits the limitation of all human understanding of the Divine – even unique revelations are mediated through human channels – and is, therefore, humble and willing to accept light from various sources. It accepts the revelation through the spiritual geniuses of all *hu*mankind and while it does not aim at, or believe in, evolving a uniformity of creed and conduct, it looks forward to a time when the spiritually minded of all religions will unite in the appreciation of all known truths and is welcoming fresh revelations from the unspent deep resources of God.[9]

6.1.7 Evaluation

S.K. George saw Gandhi practicing the Christian message of love based on non-violence and thus supported Gandhi's movement.

He also recognized that the goodwill of India will lead to goodwill of Indian Christian. Indian Christian will surely have more opportunities in free India rather than enslaved India under colonial rule. His nationalism focused on building of a nation on non-violence that leads to establishment of justice.

He realized that truth is part of every faith at the same time all faiths have its own limitation therefore, we need to respect each other's faith and create harmony.

6.2 K.T Paul (1876-1931)

Kanakarayan Tiruselvam Paul was born on 24th March 1876 in a Tamil Christian family at Salem. He grew up at a time when the Indian National Congress was actively voicing the growing demand of educated Indians for representative government. Paul was committed to political nationalism, seeing in it also a self- awakening of India which would transform the totality on India's traditional life. He saw the mission of an Indian Indigenous Church in this context.

With others of same convictions he founded National Missionary Society (NMS) at Serampore in 1905 for the propagation of Gospel and the indigenization of the Church. In 1913 he was appointed one of the National Secretaries of the YMCA and in 1914 he was called to General Secretary Ship. He opposed separate communal electorate for Christians in the legislature. He argued his case against it not only because of his commitment to national unity in a religiously pluralistic society but also out of his conviction that the mission of the Church is to be a servant-community among all communities of India. He represented the Indian Christian community at the Round Table Conference in London in 1930 called to resolve the deadlock in British- India relations.[10] It is he who

coined the Phrases "Christian Nationalism" and "New *Dharma* of Citizenship", and many consider him to be the first Christian statesperson of India.[11] He was convinced of both his Christian identity and national identity thus he tried to integrate both without rejecting anyone and thus he shaped NMS to preach gospel based on Indian identity.

His conviction are presented in *Can Christianity be Nationalized in India? A Challenge to Missionary Enterprise (1921), How Missions Denationalize Indians (1921), Responsibility of Indian Citizenship in India (1923)* and *The British Connection with India (1928).*

6.2.1 Conviction

He had a positive approach to the freedom struggle of India. In relation to Christian involvement in this movement he commented, "We will do well to realize that there is a terrible danger if we persist in the policy of keeping aloof. Materially, socially, morally and politically viewed in fact from every stand point, our interests are intimately bound up with those of other Indian communities. Will it be ever otherwise? Long after Britain's political mission to India is finished let us hope five centuries later for all things earthly must end or change- we shall still be Indians."[12] In his view the only solution to his community's problem was not withdrawal or aloofness, but active participation in Indian National Congress and the national struggle. His voice was like a voice in the wilderness.[13] He sowed the seeds for a theology of the Church and its mission in the context of a religiously pluralistic country. He developed a theological interpretation of the Indian national movement in which God works through world history.[14] Recognizing the social reality he discerned that spirit of nationalism is the pulse of his time and he identified himself with that cause.

6.2.2 Constructive Supportive Role in National Building

As a national General Secretary of YMCA, he realized a designed place of necessity for nationalism in the purpose of God for humankind. K.M. Pannikar's evaluation on him is worth stating

> Paul's famous article, 'Watchman, What of the Night,' may be considered the first call to Christian community to realize the strength and weight of the new forces. Paul, a devout Christian, was also an ardent champion of the cultural tradition of India. The alienation of the Christian community from the rich inheritance of India's past was matter of great concern for him. He was instrumental in publishing, under Christian auspices, a series of valuable general studies, entitled 'The Heritage of India', written by Christian scholars with deep understanding and general sympathy. This series of books, which dealt with every aspect of India's cultural traditions, helped the Indian Christians to break away from the influence of the narrow missionary attitude of looking down upon everything which was Indian.[15]

Nationalism had a different meaning for him, for him Indian nationalism is not Indian politics but a great social revolution of which politics is but a part. His idea of nationalism was not inconsistent with the spirit of Christ. Out of his Old Testament studies, he defined nationalism as a discipline for a certain well defined purpose. To him the secret spring of nationalism was different from unity in regard to religion, language and government, but was recognition by individual persons of something as their common interests, some great object which over-rides individual interest.[16] He identified the importance of Indian cultures and encouraged others not to reject their cultural legacy. Biblical study especially the Old Testament prophets helped him to comprehend that politics is mere one aspect of social life.

6.2.3 Christian Nationalist Perspective

In his speech at The All India Christian Conference in Cuttack in 1919, he discussed God and Christ in relation to human history. God's purpose is being worked out in human history makes it possible for us to speak of Divine Providence in the life of nations. It was in the design of God that "nations should emerge in the course of human evolution, should at a later stage also freely intermingle as to teach and help one another and advance the race towards its goal of perfection."

He also spoke of Christ's presence in the whole historical process, as the agent of creativity and of redemption from evil and destructive forces. The substance of Indian nationalism is that Christ

of western culture has awakened the Christ of Indian culture, preparing India for the new life and for the Gospel. He considered the leaders of national movement giving priority to values that are in the mind of Christ as "the supreme criterion for all human conduct public and private." He saw the meaning of cross being lifted up and Jesus Christ (not Christianity) being accepted as a direct expression of what is truly human. This recognition according to him is because of Indian heritage of spiritual experiences and religious discipline which prepares one to discern Christ and thus Christ is present in Indian spiritual history.[17] He re-defined Christian perspective based on nationalist feeling recognizing Indian spiritual and religious heritage.

The task of Christianity is to discern what is of God and what is not of God in both Indian and Western cultures in the light of Christ who is the norm, to denounce with courage evil in both traditions and help to build up the corporate conscience. Thus, his effort was for the reconstruction of Indian society, synthesizing what is good and true in Indian and Western heritages. The church is called to be the servant of the national community through its struggle for the realization of the humanity of all the people and of human rights and justice for all. The Church is called for evangelism so that it can grow rather be a static minority community seeking its own narrow interest.[18] He envisioned an indigenous Church rooted in Indian reality consisting people from diverse communities realizing the fellowship with a goal to witness in secular areas of life. The Indian church should transcend not only the denominational but also caste, ethnic and racial dimensions to be the true fellowship in Christ. He spoke of the unity of "white and black, caste and dalits, Muslims and Hindus in the household of Christ" as providing the spiritual basis and pattern of values for the national community.[19] He projected a Church of inclusive spirit consisting people from every community.

6.2.4 Evaluation

Even though he supported the nationalist spirit he never compromised his Christian conviction rather he redefined it based on the time and became instrumental in forming NMS to present the gospel in indigenous manner.

Mahatma Gandhi in his speech at the Second Round Table Conference in London from 7th Sep. to 11th Sep., 1931 said, "I miss as I have no doubt all of you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr. K.T. Paul. Although I do not know, but so far as I know, he never officially belonged to Congress, he was a nationalist to the full."[20]

He insisted that Christian should enter the mainstream of society and give up the narrow ideas of communal self-protection. He was convinced that the Church is called to be the servant of the nations through its struggle for creating a just and peaceful community.[21] His appreciation of Indian culture and traditions also deserves admiration.

6.3 C. F. Andrews (1871-1940)

Charles Freer Andrews was born on 12th Feb., 1871 in New Castle in England. He had a serious attack of rheumatic fever in his childhood. As a result, for several years he was not able to enjoy his childhood like a normal child. Naturally, his attention was turned towards books. His father wanted him to become a minister of his Church. While attending a Church service he got a vision that changed his life. Close to his Church there was a slum of Camden Street. In the faces of the needy slum dwellers, he saw Christ. From then on he was consumed by a passion of love and pity.[22] In June 1897 he was ordained as a priest and on 20th March 1904, Andrews came to India as a Christian missionary and joined as staff of St. Stephen's College in Delhi. Soon he found his goal among the poor and oppressed people in India. He was shocked to find that untouchability and racial injustice were eating into vitals of Indian life. Andrews felt the agony of the suffering Indians and realized the urgent need for India's independence, the desire for which was already ripe among the political leaders of the country then.

His works consist of *The Renaissance in India: Its Missionary Aspects (1912), Christ and Labour (1923), What I Own to Christ (1932), Christ in Silence (1933)* and *Christ and Human Need (1937).*

6.3.1 Identifying with Indian Realities

By recognizing the social realities of Indian masses he tried to

identify himself with these struggling communities. He strongly supported Dadabhai Naoroji, who voiced for the first time India's claim for Swaraj in 1906. Andrews met Rabindra Nath Tagore in England in 1912 at the house of William Rothenstein. The beauty of Tagore's poetry moved him and opened up new vistas before his mind. His meeting with Rabindra Nath Tagore further strengthened his kinship with India and he came to look upon Tagore as his Gurudeva.

The conditions of Indians in South Africa who were deprived of social rights on the grounds of racial discrimination aggrieved him much. He was shocked to hear about the indentured labour system. When he went to Durban in January, 1914 with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he met Mahatma Gandhi who was fighting for the rights of Indians. His sympathy for the Indians in Fuji was intensified when he read the book '*The Fiji of Today*.' When Gokhale died, Andrews took up his unfinished work of redressing the distress of the Indians in Fiji. He worked very hard to bring an end to the heartless system of indenture. And this was finally accomplished on 1st January 1920. He was indeed a great friend of poor Indians in Fiji, who called him '*Deenabandhu*' meaning the friend of the humble, in 1917. This title has struck to him ever since.

The distress of the poor Indian laborers led Andrews to work for their welfare. He was himself the leader of the newly formed labour union. He travelled untiringly from Assam to Ceylon in order to remove the sufferings of Indian workers. He was also a friend of the railway men and was the peace-maker on the occasion of the railway strike in March, 1921. He was twice elected as President of the All India Trade Union Congress. For the next 20 years, *Deenabandhu* was everywhere. He was in the Punjab after terrible event of Jallianwala Bagh, asking forgiveness in person for wrongs and injustices committed by his own nation. He was many times in South Africa and Kenya, upholding the Indian honor and self-respect against insults and racial discrimination. Then many times, he was with Gandhiji, and always in Gandhiji's times of special need - in sickness, during the great fasts of self-purification, as at the Round Table Conference in London. His temporary home in India was Santiniketan. He along with W. W. Pearson worked in Santiniketan

to share the burdens of Rabindra Nath Tagore. He loved Santiniketan as it was to him an abode of boundless peace. Mahatma Gandhi and Gurudev Tagore were the closest associates of Andrews. He was 'Charlie' to both of them. He supported Gandhiji's campaign of non-violence. He loved and revered Gandhiji as he believed that the deliverance of the suffering people of India would come through him. He pleaded strongly for India's independence. Andrews devoted to the poorest and lowliest was prompted by love. He was a true Christian and a humanitarian. In every action he took he felt that he was inspired by the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Andrews wrote his own life story, he called it, "*What I owe to Christ*." He always carried with him Christ's message of love. Charles Freer Andrews has been rightly called the Christ's Faithful Apostle.[23] C.F. Andrews was a man of action and he devoted his life for the marginalized, he saw the face of Christ in them and thus identified with them in their emancipation struggle.

6.3.2 A Different Kind of Missionary

His vision of Christianity was simple, profound, all-embracing and above all practical. His uniqueness lay chiefly in the intensity with which having attained a vision of Christian wholeness, he labored to translate that vision into a life of practical service. He had learned to place particular emphasis on the Gospel of John in the Christian Scheme of things. Andrew as a missionary focused, "to leave behind the narrower Judaic concept and (to) dwell more and more on the thought of Christ as the Eternal Word, the Light and Life of all humankind." He was certainly a socialist. He looked at India less as a mission field to be overrun than as a source of light and truth. In this process he became India's servant.[24]

His missionary method was based on friendship and friendship was the element through which he moved. He at least did not need to be reminded of the centrality of interracial friendship in the life of Christian Church in India. Everywhere he went he carried the message of reconciliation, among individuals and communities and nations. He commented

> I have learned one lesson in all these nearly forty years I have been out here in the East and that is, that one has to go beyond the bitterness, beyond the bitterness on both

> sides, beyond the controversy on both sides, beyond the rising hatred in one's heart on both sides, beyond the burning indignation in one's heart on both sides. One has to go farther- to the cross itself….[25]

6.3.3 Evaluation

He developed friendship with everyone, his friends include revolutionary Gokhale, leader of masses Gandhi, contemplative Tagore at the same time he was close to the common people thus he identified with the Indians in Fiji and the workers in India while he was the President of AITUC. To have friendship with different kinds of people means that he was transparent person. He was the living example of compassion of Jesus.

According to Gandhi, "It is better to allow our lives to speak for us than our words. C.F. Andrews never preaches. He is incessantly doing his works. He finds enough work and stays where he finds it and takes no credit for bearing the cross. I have the honor to know hundreds of honest Christians but I have not known one better than Andrews."[26]

Rabindra Nath Tagore on Andrews's death commented, "He did not pay his respect to India from a distance, detached and calculated prudence: he threw in his lot without reserve, in gracious courtesy, with the ordinary folks of this land…. His attitude was absolutely free from any suspicion of the self-satisfied patronage which condescends from its own eminence to help the poor."[27]

He encouraged and supported social causes and spoke of the need to present Christianity in indigenous ways and the need to adapt it to the Indian situation, as well as the need for Indian leadership.[28]

6.4 P.D. Devanandan (1901-1962)

Paul David was born in 1901 in Madras. As a young man he was influenced by K.T. Paul who took him as his secretary on his visit to U.S. in 1924-25. Afterwards he stayed in U.S for seven years undergoing theological study and earned his doctorate from Yale. It was at Yale that he adopted the name Devanandan signifying his self- awakening as a nationalist Indian Christian. On his return he became faculty in UTC, Bangalore for seventeen years. In 1956

he became the Director of CISRS and where he remained till his untimely death from a heath-attack in 1962.[29] He tried to originate a theology of Christian participation in nation-building and of dialogue with religious and secular faiths.[30] He was also a proponent of Christian participation in politics and he encouraged the Christians to make a distinctive contribution to the nation. The Church, nevertheless, as the Church, should not identify itself with any political party or programme. Individuals must feel free to take part in political affairs. [31] He inaugurated a new era in Christian theology characterized with the awareness of the secular state and contemporary Hinduism with the goal of nation building.

His theological expressions are found in *The Concept of Maya: An Essay in Historical Survey of the Hindu Theory of the World with Special Reference to the Vedanta (1950), Our Task Today: Revision of Evangelistic Concern (1959), Christian Concern in Hinduism (1961)* and *A Bibliography on Hinduism for Use of Christian Students (1961)*.

6.4.1 Theological Foundation on Humanism

At U.S. he was influenced by the humanistic philosophy, thus he claimed, we as Christians ought to act as pioneers in radically removing the more important social evils in India by personal example.[32] Due to the influence of K.T. Paul he was also involved in the freedom struggles. His nationalistic concerns were by no means superficial since, he felt, any human efforts to achieve national unity must reckon with the living God who is the generating power of all true community being. From this insight two of Devanandan's deepest convictions are revealed. The first is that the fulfillment of the goals of humanism is in every way associated with the fulfillment of God's purpose for human. Without the latter the former cannot be obtained. And secondly, behind the concern to pinpoint the areas of Christian humanistic responsibility Devanandan is stressing a concept of religion as down to earth. If the Christian faith stands for anything at all it stands for the redemption of the whole humanity.[33]

Later he recognized the need of inter-religious dialogue. Because, God in Christ has broken down all the barriers between human, Jew and Gentile, believer and unbeliever, this is at once the

only basis for dialogue and collaboration with human of other faiths and no faith for the common task of service to other human.[34] However, many of Devanandan's insights into the necessity of acknowledging the common humanity of all human were afforded by the modern developments in renascent Hinduism which was coming more and more to a belief in the dignity of the human person *(svaDharma)* and the importance of community *(lokasangraha)*. Whilst Hinduism was experiencing difficulties reconciling these new beliefs to the classical theology, Christianity's answer to the solution had been provided by the Doctrine of Creation. It emphasized the double-sidedness of human-human the creature and human the child of God. Furthermore, it stressed the mutual relationship between human the creature and God the Creator. This insight became central to many of Devanandan's treatments of the human-that one side of the relationship could not be given attention at the expense of the other.

Socially, Devanandan was aware of the awful fact of human need and therefore for Christian *diakonia* in response to it. Yet he was also aware that any attempt to eradicate social evils must bear in mind that the root cause was human's self-interest and sinfulness. Thus the task of restructuring society must be, firstly, associated with the ultimate hope of the coming of the Kingdom of God "when all the children of men (sic) shall have been transformed to become the children of God."[35] And secondly, a view of human and their worth can only be measured in terms of human as God's creature and in the light of God's eschatological purpose for his Creation.[36] For him Humanity will never become New Humanity without the New Human, who is the pattern of human's salvation.

6.4.2 Transforming of the Community

He argued for a Christian concern in society and desired the creation of a theology which affirms a positive approach to other religions and cultural contexts. He says

> One of the primary tasks of Christian evangelism in India as elsewhere in our modern world is to make clear to the mind of thinking people that religion is relevant to life; that Christianity concerns this life as much as the life everlasting; that ours is a revolutionary faith which asks to realize here on earth abiding standards of righteousness and justice because these are the very nature of the Church.[37]

> For some time past, we have considered our evangelistic task in terms of confronting other non- Christian religions systems with the counter-claims of Christianity as another system of religion. We have preaching a way of life, a system of thought, instead of the gospel of Jesus Christ which still is: God's reign is already here.[38]

In this context he interpreted mission as *lokasangraha*. This Sanskrit word appears twice in *Bhagavat Gita* and means the maintenance of the world, to maintain the world order, the holding together by wise men or saints of the liturgical or sacred action, *Dharma*, caste duty, keeping of people to their duties, the order of the world and the idea of the welfare of the world.[39] To Devanandan, mission as *lokasangraha* meant the producing of the community of human with human and human with God, a triangular community, the true community, in which alone a person finds himself or herself as a person among persons in relation to the person. His theo-centric perspective accommodated all religions as within the common search for community around one God, while he yet retained his Christian claim to the uniqueness of Christ as a person who alone mattered. He spoke of God's redemptive activity outside the Church with theo-centricity transcending confessionalism. He wrote it may not be fair to say that God in His graciousness will not regard the faith of non-Christian seeker.[40] Yet, as a Christian apologetics he goes on to say

> we press forward with the mission of testimony, which has been delivered to us declaring to the end of the time that there is no other name given under heaven by which human shall be saved except the name of Jesus Christ.[41]

He interpreted the Christian task as to bring these people of faith to confront the living Christ, affecting a face-to-face meeting of the creedal claims of Christ in the gospel.[42] He envisages three different stages in the apologetical task of a Christian in dialogue. First, a detailed study of different varieties of modern Hinduism; Second, a clarification of terminology; and third, a daring task of

evolving an Indian theological expression of Christian faith.[43] For Devanandan, the goal of mission is the welfare of the whole world for that reason dialogue with people of other faith got its significance. In dialogue one must recognize the common search of humanity for God yet he approved the uniqueness of Christ. He firmly believed that dialogue should provide Indianess to Christian faith.

6.4.3 New Creation

For him, gospel essentially is the Good news of new creation in Jesus with personal, social and cosmic dimensions. He commented

> At the threshold of this century, we talked of evangelism, in terms of a social gospel. Though we erred in our understanding of its true nature, we have come to admit that God's redemptive work must radically affect human relations in society. Perhaps we reach the middle of this century, we are coming to realize that the total sweep of the Good news envelops entire creation. The ultimate end is new heaven and new earth and new creation. How utterly impossible can it be for any fragment of humankind to be changed or even for humanity to be transformed, unless the grossly material and purely animal content of world life is also care of the Gospel we proclaim? It was so from the beginning of the apostolic ministry.[44]

The new creation is a reality in the present, while its consummation is in the future therefore it is related to both present and future. In this case the pledge of the new creation is both within and outside of the Church and we can look for the signs of new creation in the lives of individuals and the struggles and purposes of social structure of religions and cultures. The pattern of God's judging and saving action to renew creation is revealed in some extend to faith. This is the basic of prophecy and service. The Bible very clearly claims that God is the creator of all and his salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to all and that in him there is a new creation. Christians are called to be a community of witness of God's salvation and reign. It is recognized that without confrontation with other faiths Christian faith cannot be relevant and meaningful. Christian faith distinguishes the Gospel proclamation of the fulfillment of God's promise of the reign and the hope in fulfillment of all religious faith. The fulfillment

of religious faith means that all sincere human striving to reach God will find God. Fulfillment as distinguish Christian sense means that reign of God is already present. In salvation history the eternal future is being fulfilled in the present. We are bound to announce the good news of the reign of God to the people of other faiths for the realization of the double fulfillment as explained above.[45] The Good news of Jesus implies that the new creation has got personal, social and cosmic dimensions, we hope for a glorified future and it is through our actions in the present which provide hints of that future glory. In this context the Church should bear witness through active participation.

The new anthropology of world community and the spiritual quest raised by it have brought all religions and ideologies into the orbit of a common ecumenical history where Gospel of New Humanity has played its part. It is in this situation of dialogic existence that the Church should project itself as a people's movement with its mission of presenting Christ in terms of dialogical participation, in the common struggle for the renewal of personal and corporate life in pluralistic society. The Church is neither as the exclusive community of the saved, nor identified as the reign to come, but as an open fellowship signifying the universal activity of Christ and welcoming into it those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord. In this sense it is the 'sign' of the New Creation in Christ, a special sign among other signs.[46] The idea of creation in Hinduism reject the reality of material world but the modern Hindu thought accept the value of material world, the importance of history and the possibility of the transforming the community and God as the creator intends for transformation of New creation.

6.4.4 Evaluation

The theological foundation on humanism helped him to recognize that God's purpose in universe is very much associated with humanity but that does not mean that it is only limited to humanity alone but with the entire creation. Thus, he was motivated by the vision of transforming the community based on *lokasangraha* whereby the mission of the Church signifies the welfare of the whole humanity.

He recognized that as Indians our thought pattern is affected by Hindu fabric thus the way forward is dialogue with Hinduism

based on social and human values resulting in nation building, social service and moral purpose of humanity. He therefore, developed a theology of Christian participation in nation building whereby having dialogue with religious and secular world.

The purpose of dialogue is to evolve an Indian theological expression of Christian faith which is open and relevant to transform the community.

6.5 P. Chenchiah (1886-1959)

Pandippedi Chenchiah was born on the 8th of December, 1886, at Nellore. Chenchiah joined the Madras Christian College. He distinguished himself there, especially in the study of Ethics and philosophy. In his youth he, like his friend and brother-in-law, Chakkarai, came under the influence of Dr. William Miller, the outstanding Scottish missionary, who was the Principal of the Madras Christian College, whose liberalism in different directions had a great effect on many of his students. [47] He got convinced by the opinions of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga and Master CVV's practical teachings.[48] As a Christian he did not sever his ties with his ancestral faith i.e. Hinduism and wanted to retain his Hindu cultural heritage, which he felt to be threatened by the most organized forms of Christianity.[49] In later years Chenchiah was one of moving spirit in a series of Christian ventures in Madras, and a leading figure in a group of somewhat unorthodox but highly stimulating thinkers who came to be known as 'the Rethinking Group' from the title of their best known publication Rethinking Christianity in India.[50] Rethinking Christianity was concerned with redefining Christian faith in Indian terms thereby relating faith to the cultural traditions of India. He was in opposition to western forms of Christianity manifested in institutionalized structures and doctrines. He participated in the 1928 Jerusalem Meeting of the IMC and its Tambaram Meeting in 1938.

His contributions are in the form of articles published under the pseudonym *Priyasishya*. He served as the editor of the Danish Mission Pilgrim.

6.5.1 Re-thinking Christianity

He was instrumental in the formation of Rethinking Christianity in India after the publication of *Rethinking Christianity in India* in 1938 as response to the *Church-centered Missiology* of V.S. Azariah and Hendrik Kramer's *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, a Barthian Theology*. In his article Rethinking Christianity he countered Kraemer's understanding of religion. He believed that there are two possible realities at the core of every religion; one a pivotal personality like Rama, Krishna, Buddha etc, and secondly the discovery of a truth or principle as the all- inclusive nature of Brahman. He considered that a religion grows up around one or both of these realities, providing different means to comprehend the principle and follow and emulate the personality. He had the interest in comparative religion where he considered it as systems to know the commonalities and differences.[51] This group was concerned about the development of expression of biblical faith as against the dominant Christian expression of faith imported for the West.

6.5.2 Christ the Adipurusha (The New Creation)

For Chenchiah the central fact of Christianity is the direct experience of Christ. He firmly affirms the historicity and humanity of Christ. For him Christ is a historical person.[52] He is the true man (sic) - the ideal of what human should be.

> The fact of Christ is the birth of a new order in creation. Through Christ, we have the emergence of a new life- not bound by *Karma*; of man (sic), not tainted by sin, not humbled by death; of man (sic) triumphant, glorious, partaking the immortal nature of God; of a new race in creation-sons (sic) of God.[53]

The humanity of Christ is permanent. Christ is not an *avatara* who comes for a limited period of time. But he is here in the world as human, rather than as the second person of Trinity. Chenchiah rejects the classical doctrine of incarnation. Jesus is not God the absolute, but He is God standing in relation to human. Jesus is God man (sic) and not that hyphenated God-man (sic). Hence he fully rejects the Chalcedonian definitions the Christ is 'fully God and fully man.' Christ is a new emergence or mutation.

> Jesus is not God or man, he is not God-man, but he is God and man (sic). That is the new mutation. He is the product

> of God and man and not God-man. He is the son of God, because the Spirit of God entered Him. He is son of man (sic) because he was born of female. He is a new creation- the Lord and Master of a new creative branch of order. He transcends us as we transcend animals. Reason is our differential but the Holy Spirit is Christ's differential.[54] Christ is the *Adipurusha* of a new creation and he is the true man, *satpurushauman*.[55]

Jesus for him was the fusion of God and human and this is something new, an emergence or muatation. As *adipurusha* Christ is the first one emerged in cosmic history and he will transform the humanity. The gospel is that God in Jesus has made a 'new creation' therefore he gave priority to the birth of Jesus instead of his atonement. The good news of Christianity is the birth of Jesus. In him is the emergence of a new life, not bound by *karma*, not corrupted by sin, not humiliated by death but triumphant, partaking the immoral nature of God.[56] The saving work of Jesus is the newness of life and this newness is reflected through reproducing Jesus in life.

6.5.2.1 Reproducing Jesus

Christ is the first fruits of the new type of existence and His work consist in calling human to share the life with him. He, the New Man, is risen and alive and still retains His full humanity, in which He calls us to share. The mystical union of the Christian with Christ as a kind of *sayujya,* but it is a transforming *sayujya* in which the believer, through not identified with Christ, becomes as it where 'a Christ' themselves. The Indian Christian must concern himself with rebirth.[57] Jesus is reproduced in us through new life and this life is not moral regeneration through repentance and faith but it is a biological process. He comments

> Unless we conceive of this new birth as a biological process, a process, which like life covers the physical, mental and moral, we miss its significance.[58]

God gave Jesus. True evangelism consists in reproducing Jesus. The Indian Christian should harness the Holy Spirit to the creation of new life. Chenchiah is very critical of judicial sacrificial theories of the adornment. The work of salvation is to be equated with the saving fact of Christ.[59] Christ requires others to mirror Christ and this is the mark of new creation and he proposes yoga of spirit to attain this goal.

6.5.3 The Yoga of the Spirit and Eschatology

Chenchiah defines this Christian *yoga* as 'the transformation of oneself into the figure and image of Christ'. When he speaks of the Spirit as 'the new cosmic energy' Chenchiah uses the word *mahasakti*, which means literally 'great power'. In Hinduism this word *sakti* is often personified as a goddess power. By using the words *sakti* and *mahasakti* Chenchiah is indicating his belief in both the personality and the cosmic energy of the Holy Spirit, and he feels that India, with its traditional understanding of the meaning of *sakti* as personalized divine energy, is in a good position for developing and deeping the meaning of the Christian life in terms of the *yoga* of the Spirit. He consciously rejects *baktimarga* as means of God-realization. God's power only found in and through the Holy Spirit. Eternal life, the life of the kingdom, comes only when our life is invaded by the mighty power of the Spirit, and it is our task to make sure that we stand at the right place, the place where the power of the Spirit will reach us. For this transformation we do not have to wait till the end, till the coming of the omega-point, for eschatology is realized and the kingdom can and does begin now when any person is in Christ.[60] He presents the Holy Spirit as the 'new cosmic energy' through which all humanity will change into new creation therefore yoga implies a total dependence on Holy Spirit.

6.5.4 Chenchiah on Christianity

In his opening editorial for *The Pilgrim* Chenchiah spelled out his perspective on Christianity, a fascinating synthesis of critique and hope. In this paper Chenchiah privileged the Indian Christian in a way that hardly seems consistent with his radical critique of Christianity in India.

> There have been till recently two persons involved in this transaction [the Hindu- Christian interface] – the missionary – Catholic and Protestant who brought the Christian message to India and the Hindu to whom the message was

given. With the passage of time and by the fruition of missionary effort a third person has arise, the Indian Christian who represents the jewel of redemption wrought by Christ set in the golden casket of the heritage of Hinduism. The Indian Christian should be the embodiment of Indian Christianity and our programme will be to give body, features, language, and utterance to Indian Christianity. Indian Christians alone can put the majesty and magnitude of Christian salvation in an idiom intelligible to the Hindu.

Indian Christianity has been undeservedly a term of reproach, an occasion for warning and admonition. All fears vanish if we remember that Indian Christianity has its anchor in Christ. It sums up the devotion and loyalty of the Indian to Christ. Far from toning down the Christian message or obscuring the features of the Nazarene, Indian Christianity welcomes Jesus into the Indian heart to be the indwelling Lord. Indian Christianity as a blueprint consists of new lines of Christian thought and activity....[61]

Chenchiah then critiqued the current situation in Indian Christianity.

Indian Christians have not shown any initiative in originating and maintaining institutions. Depending too much on foreign help they have lost self help.....Barrenness prevails in social and religious fields. One reason for this state of affairs seems to be poverty. The very fact that religion cannot move without money in [the] modern world shows how far Indian Christians have moved away from true sources of power. Before [the] Roman state became Christian the Christians were among the poorest in the state but spiritually most powerful. Spiritual power and Holy Spirit do not go with money.[62]

Finally a closing exhortation about Indian Christians and Hinduism.

Our idea of studying Hinduism means much more than scholarly studies of Hindu scriptures. It means a study of the Hindu mind and aspirations in the world of today. It means study of Hinduism in and through [the] Indian Christian who is at [the] same time a Hindu and Muslim Christian. The programme we have sketched for *The Pilgrim* may, even as a first sketch, appear to be ambitious. But with Jesus, whose unsearchable riches are barely used for humanity and with the willing cooperation of *bhaktas of* East and West, why should we not be ambitious for the Kingdom of God? Jesus had great dreams about man (sic) and why should we not dream great dreams for Jesus and His Kingdom. [63]

Chenchiah understands of Christianity mostly deals about life. Much of his thought and terminology in this area was not markedly different from historic Christian teaching. Yet Chenchiah tied this new life in Christ into the practice of yoga, and it seems a yoga that is not yet in practice but only to be developed by Indian Christians in association with Hindus.

Christianity embodies a type form or personality – new to creation – first expressed in Jesus. No creed or belief can change us into the figure and image of Jesus. Since Holy Spirit does not seem to operate of itself as a procreating agency, we have by investigation, prayer and search, to discover the condition of its operation. Yoga of Christianity will be the science of Holy Spirit – the technique of reproducing Christ in the Christian. In the general outlook there appears one difference between Hinduism and Western Christianity. The Catholic Church in its disciplines planned at the level of self-control and conduct – corresponding to *yama* of Hinduism. The Protestant discipline was philanthropic and institutional. It seeks to control life by and through changes in the environment and by regimentation of will and emotion. None of them endeavour to reach down to the level of the spirit. Yoga stands for change of life-power and not of environment or psychical apparatus of life. Christian yoga reaches beyond conduct, control and discipline to new life, creative life, new spirit – Holy Spirit. Indian Christian yoga will be, unlike its philanthropic, ascetic disciplines, an experiment in the new life of Holy Spirit. Assisted and encourage by Hinduism and science, Indian Christianity will venture into untrodden fields of experiments in Holy Spirit.[64]

A final point to note related to Chenchiah's teaching on Christianity is his critique of the Christian approach to Hinduism, which will introduce his positive teaching of what he considers a proper Christian understanding and approach. In a highly commendatory review of R. C. Das' booklet *How to Present Christ to a Hindu*

Chenchiah presented this critique:

> Much of the thinking on this matter [evangelism among Hindus] suffers from alien modes of thought and approach and from institutionalism of an incurable nature. Very little contribution has come from the convert who is competent to speak with inside knowledge. Colossal ignorance about [the] Hindu mind stands as an impassable barrier in evangelism. The missionary methods brought over from historic churches were not even adapted to Indian conditions. World conferences, by making evangelism and its methods dependant on the theory of right relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions have added confusion to confusion.[65]

He rejected the westernized form of Christianity based on creed and dogma and proposed Indian way of Christianity based on Indian roots like practice of yoga of Spirit through which one can experience new life.

6.5.5 Christianity and Hinduism

Chenchiah believes that the Christian faith must be open to receive new insights from Indian culture, and he urges his Christian friends to 'let sluices of the great Indian culture be opened for the inundation of the Christian mind. Christians have nothing to fear from such a use of Hinduism, for the new creation comes in Christ alone, even though Hinduism in some of its forms may represents a very advanced stage of the old. Christianity, in fact, is not related to Hinduism as one religion to another, but as new creation to old. Chenchiah's conception of evangelism and the spread of Christianity, he has little or no use for evangelistic preaching and puts forward what would today be called a 'Christian presence' point of view saying that, 'to live Christ is to preach Christ'. He envisages the spread of the gospel as taking place gradually through the promotion of Hindu culture by the Spirit of Christ.[66] His understanding of Christianity and Hinduism is based on new creation to the old creation. Hinduism as old creation should restore into the newness of Christ.

6.5.6 Evaluation

His theological aim was 'the new creation' based on direct

experience of Christ. Theological reflection is exploring experience to gain religious and social implications. Experience inaugurates the process of relational value which provides criteria for shaping our life and actions therefore he campaigned for Reproducing Jesus.

To create a theology that is relevant for India, Christians should explore the meaning of Jesus Christ and the Spirit in the context of the political and social struggles taking place in India: the secular mission of the church is to participate in the task of nation-building with an attitude of self-donating love.[67]

He challenged Christianity to reject the institutional set up and move towards Jesus and he moved in this direction with a call for a new humanity to emerge in union with Christ through yoga.

Christianity as a new creation should be open to approve insights from old creation i.e. Hinduism for eg. yoga. He sought dialogical encounter and synthesis in manner that transcended the standard paradigm.

6.6 V. Chakkarai (1880-1958)

Vengal Chakkarai Chetty was born in 1880 in Madras. His father was *Vedantic* and his mother was a devotee of the Vaisnava Bakti tradition. He received his early education in Scottish Mission School and then went to Madras Christian College, where he was deeply influenced by William Miller. He qualified as a lawyer but later worked with Danish Missionary Society. As early as 1906 he became part of freedom struggle and in 1920 he joined Gandhi's Non-Co-operation campaign.[68] He was a great champion of Gandhi's peaceful resistance. As a Christian socialist, he also put his time and energy into the emerging trade union in Madras. It is no wonder then that he ultimately chose for a political career, holding a number of important positions: he was mayor of the city of Madras, a member of the Legislative Assembly of the state of Madras and chairman of the All India Trade Union Congress.[69]He was sure of his socialist perspective and he participated in the political field to make his mark.

He expressed his views in *Towards an Indian Interpretation of Christianity (1923), Jesus the Avatar (1927), Cross and Indian Thought (1932), Rethinking Christianity in India (1938).*

From 1917 to 1926 he owned and edited the weekly paper *Christian Patriot* and *Harvest Field*, *The Missionary Intelligenser* and *The Guardian*.

6.6.1 Theological Approach

Chakkarai wanted to demonstrate how Christian faith can be expressed in completely Indian or Hindu concepts. For this purpose he adopts whatever suits him from all strands of Hinduism. The starting point of theology is Jesus therefore in 1926 Chakkarai published *Jesus the Avatar* and he wanted to present a Christology in Hindu terminology thus described Jesus as an *avatara.* He was conscious of the fact that by using Indian ideas, he was paving new roads that would not meet the approval of all. At the beginning of his second book, he reviews the effect of Jesus the Avatar, writing that there he wanted to use "the resources of Indian thought and the heritage of the Indian religions" and that his goal was "to find a fuller explication of the incarnation in terms of Indian thought." He did not want to present an uncritical comparison of various religious traditions thus he was not thinking of syncretism but inculturation. In 1932 he published *The Cross and Indian Thought;* he also contributed in Madras Guardian. His theology is Christocentric.

6.6.2 Jesus the Avatara

Chakkarai's emphasis of theology is based on Christology therefore he claims:

> The most outstanding feature of Christian experience is that we can no more think of God without Jesus Christ than we can think of Jesus Christ without God.[70] Christ is the known factor and from the known we come to know what otherwise is unknown. God is unintelligible apart from Christ.[71]

The central concept in Chakkarai's Christology is *avatara*. In Him is the real *avarohana* (descent) of God. As *Avatar*, He is the revealer of God. God in Himself is *avyakta* and Christ is the *vyakta lsvara.* Another significant aspect of his Christology is his view of the dynamic nature of the incarnation. The incarnation does not end by the crucifixion but is permanent and is still today advancing

to new depths of meaning.[72] The incarnation is not temporary or static but is permanent and dynamic. The classical Hindu theory of *avatara* is that it comes into the world from time to time, as need arises, and then disappears and is reabsorbed in God. But Chakkarai regards the Christ event as singular, once and for all times. God having become human in Christ remains as God-man (sic) forever, and is not simply absorbed back into God with the discarding of his human nature.[73] This dynamic conception of *avatara* is a real contribution to Indian Christian theology. The *avatara* does not cease with the cross or ascension, but God in Christ still continues to be man (sic), living and working in the lives of believers.[74] Chakkarai describes the importance of Christ by means of a typically Indian approach. The result for his theology is that the working of the Holy Spirit is given a very central place.[75] He himself makes this connection as well when he writes: "The orientation of Indian thought in respect of the Incarnation would be set on the Holy Spirit and the significance of His indwelling in human lives."[76] In India, religious experiences always ultimately concern the experience of the divine in the depth of one's own existence. That is how Chakkarai wants to understand Jesus: as the living one who continually manifests himself in humans. Christ and the Spirit more or less merge into each other. The Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ himself, who "incarnates" himself in humans and thus determines their lives.

Chakkarai can fall back on the Hindu tradition for this aspect of Christological thought as well. He calls the Spirit the *antaryamin*, the internal regulator. We find this term in the Upanishads as an indication of the working of the Brahman, the Supreme Reality, in human life (Mandukya Upanishad). It was the great philosopher Ramanuja in particular who worked out this concept for describing the divine presence in a person: God is found in one's own inner self, and whoever discovers him discovers the guiding principle of life. In line with this, Chakkarai describes the working of the Spirit, which is nothing else than Jesus in people now. The importance of the historical Jesus fades here, for we should not look for Jesus "in the tomb of forgotten facts and ancient circumstances but in the inner recesses of the *atman*. This is the dominating challenge of Indian religious experience."[77] Is there still something to be said about the direction in which the "internal regulator" leads us? What

does it mean to find this figure of Christ as the guiding principle of one's own existence? Chakkarai also uses concepts from his Hindu heritage. He sees Jesus Christ as an exemplary human, the model for being human. Already in the ancient Vedic writings one finds speculation on the mythological figure *Purusha*, who is "the human being," the original form of human life.[78]

Chakkarai links up with this tradition when he describes Jesus as the real human being, the ideal human being, or the human being in all humans. Using a Sanskrit term, he calls him the *Sat Purusha* (the true human being). He thus emphasizes the importance of the words and works of Jesus Christ. True humanness, as God promised it, emerges in him: "He is the Man of Men, the Son of Man, the original pattern in the mind of God Himself after whom all men (sic) have been fashioned."[79] This Man of God provides direction to the life so that humanity can become what God intended it to be.

Chakkarai was critical of the Church for establishing itself as an ecclesiastical organization and considering its tradition as the standard of faith. He considered the Christian preoccupation with the Church as the result of lack of emphasis on the spiritual union with the Person of Jesus Christ and on the reign of God which is preached often by the Church. The Church traditions in dogma, cults and polity were secondary. He believed the Church as an organism constituted "not by mere cults but by communion with the living Lord for social action." For this reason he opposed the CSI scheme of Church union as a Western imposition on India and irrelevant to the building of an authentic Church in India. The Indian Church will consist of decentralized spiritual fellowship centers like the Ashrams permeating and regenerating society and religion.[80] For him, the Church has to do more with the lives of the community than with the institutional hierarchies and systems.

6.6.3 The Work of Christ[81]

Jesus Christ is the *parama Vaidhya* of the soul.[82] Chakkarai regards the basic features of Pauline ideas as relevant to our effort to understand Christ, His cross and His atoning work. Chakkarai has much to say about sin in terms of *maya* and *asat.* In explaining God's act of redemption in Jesus Christ, he uses many terms and phrases in the traditional and biblical sense, but in the main, we find

that greater stress is laid on the moral influence of the life and death of Christ. *Bhakti* is identified with the Pauline conception of justifying faith.[83] Through the moral *sakti* of His redemptive suffering, Christ eradicates the disease of sin.[84] Under the influence of Christ's *sakti* the sinner turns, after the long night of sin, his face to God as the lotus opens its petals to the rays of the sun.[85] The way of salvation lies in union with Christ in *bhakti* which involves the cross and suffering. As we share in the sufferings we share in the new creation.

Chakkarai's view of salvation and the work of Christ are more comprehensive than many typical views -of redemption. Not only does it cover the whole range of individual life, the burden of sin and our justification in the sight of God, but it involves the redemption of society from the sins of the social order.[86] He has much to say about social justice, and the solidarity of the individual with society, and brings them into his comprehensive view of the Kingdom of God.

6.6.4 Evaluation

In him we find the blend of Christianity and nationalism therefore after the independence he continued to be part in the secular arena as a lawyer and also marked his presence in political world by becoming the Mayor of Madras.

For him Jesus is the *avatara* and in him God's *avarohana* took form therefore Jesus is God-human forever. Even after the resurrection he still holds the attributes of humanity. The faith community can feel the presence of Jesus through the *antaryamin* and here he equates Holy Spirit with Jesus which goes against the traditional theological understanding.

His understanding of Church as an organism providing decentralized spiritual fellowship provides encouragement to many free-Churches which contributes to Christian mission at the same time there should be some bodies to regulate and unite various Churches to avoid unhealthy competition and sheep stealing.

6.7 M.M. Thomas (1916-1996)

Madathiparampil Mammen Thomas was born on 15th May 1916 at

Kozhencherry, a village in Kerala, India. He belonged to a lower middle class family which had the evangelical background of the Mar Thoma Church. His father was a Gandhian socialist who had the responsibility of running a local co-operative society, and his mother was a teacher. The home and church played important roles in Thomas' spiritual and social consciousness. Regular attendance at public worship, cottage prayer meetings, Sunday school classes, and the strong evangelistic piety at home, determined Thomas' first steps on his journey in search of Christian *Dharma*.[87] During his college time, he had a personal spiritual experience of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ. In his auto-biography Thomas described his experience as a "new birth".[88] He found Jesus to be his "friend" and "saviour" and dedicated his life for Christ's service.

He actively participated in socio-political aspect of the nation. He was one of the prominent Christian personalities to oppose the emergency in 1975-77 and organized various movements to oppose it. He served as the Director of CISRS (1962-1976), chief editor of weekly *Guardian (1964-1975)*, editor of *Religion and Society (1968-1978)*, Chairperson on the Central Committee of WCC (1968-1975), and the Chairperson of People's Union for Civil Liberties, Kerala (1982-83). He was appointed the Governor of Nagaland on 9th May, 1990.[89]He allowed his Christian spirituality to shape the society towards humanization.

His writings consist of *The Christian Response to the Asian Revolution (1966), The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance (1969), Salvation and Humanization (1971), Man and the Universe of Faiths (1975), New Creation in Christ (1976), The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ (1976), Ideological Quest within Christian Commitment. Collected Papers 1939-1954 (1980), Religion and the Revolt of the Oppressed (1981), Risking Christ for Christ's Sake: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism (1987), Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thoughts of Some Pioneers (1992), A Diaconal Approach to Indian Theology (1995).*

6.7.1 Influences

The ideological frame work of Thomas got many major influences. At first his encounter with the national movement and social realities helped him to develop a Gandhian perspective. Later on his studies in Kerala Youth Christian Council of Action led him to Marxism. He also tried to redefine the dialects of Karl Marx within the neo-orthodox theology of Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr and Nicholas Berdyaev. In 1948 the Stalinist coup in Czechoslovakia provoked Thomas to react against it and he started to appreciate the political insights of liberal democracy. Thus Thomas redefined Gandhism, Marxism and Liberalism within the frame work of theology and realistic anthropology of Christian Neo-Orthodoxy.

6.7.2 Theology

Thomas realized the importance to formulate theology in relation to the context. Thus theology is word confronting the world. So the articulation of theology should be living situation, so it should be living. He says, "A living theology is always situational\contextual. A living theology should speak to the actual question of human. It must also speak in relation to answers being given by religions, philosophies, secularism, sciences etc." [90]He continues, "Theology has an anthropological context inherent in it and every anthropology is based on theological presupposition either explicitly or implicitly. So theology is articulation of human faith in God and anthropology is the understanding of nature of human and relation to nature, social culture and history."[91]

His view of history is central of his way of doing theology. For Thomas God is not reaching into human history from the outside to affect God's purpose, rather God is working from within history. So Indian Christian theologies should recognize God's work in Indian history and secularism and thus work for the realization of God's future purpose.

6.7.3 Salvation and Humanization

Indian Christian Theologians like K.C. Sen, Chenchaiah, Chakkarai, and P.D. Devanandan understood Christ as the bearer of New Humanity. Thomas builds his Christological understanding on this

foundation and thus salvation in Christ signifies Christ as the bearer of a new community. Salvation will lead one to be part of a new community i.e. in Christ.

The quest for salvation is the search for ultimate meaning of human existence. Thomas identifies three dimensions. The first one involves a desire for selfhood, self identity and group identity. It is human awareness of one's selfhood as distinct from nature. Secondly it involves a search for historical consciousness and purpose in history. Human seeks to understand themselves as subject of a dynamic and linear history. Thirdly it involves a search to realize the new ideal community based on freedom, equality and fraternity. On the basic of the vision of the ideal community, it implies a struggle to break oppressive structure of caste, class and patriarchy, which undermine the assumption of establishing the community.[92]

In Thomas' articulation of salvation two things are important: affirmation of the objectivity and centrality of Christ- event and Christ-event can be challenging and relevantly interpreted only by the full recognition of the context i.e. the common quest for fuller humanity.[93]The humanization of our common life becomes a common concern, a common medium of communication and even a common criterion for evaluation of the various meaning of salvation. This common concern for humanization finds expression in the struggle for fuller humanity.[94]

His book *Salvation and Humanization* begins with a crucial question of relation between gospel of salvation and the struggle of men (sic) everywhere for their humanity.[95] Thomas interprets salvation as being glorified in humanity of Jesus Christ or as being incorporated into the glorified humanity of the risen Christ, and therefore salvation is closely related to the struggle of the oppressed for a richer and a fuller human life or to the process of humanization. Salvation is historical corporate and universal and eternal life is a present possession since the timeless God entered into time.[96]

Salvation remains eschatological, but the historical responsibility within the eschatological framework cannot but include the task of humanization of the world in secular history. The mission of salvation and the task of humanization are integrally related to each other,

even if they cannot be considered identical. The ultimate destiny of man (sic) in the resurrection beyond sin, guilt and death must have its realization, however partial it may be, in terms of his (sic) historical destiny- even as no humanism which does not take into serious account of reality of sin as self-righteousness, guilt and fear of death, in the light of the cross of Christ, can grapple ever-new forms and achieve even tolerable conditions for human living in the history. [97]The glorified humanity of Risen Christ is to be realized not after death but within the historical process, not by isolated individual to society but by men (sic) in the corporateness of their relation to society and to the cross.[98]

The traditional understanding of salvation has to do with the inward character of individual but Thomas brought it par with the life setting and challenged the salvation of individual to influence the salvation of the society. Thomas affirms that Christ and His kingdom are present within the human quest of humanization.

The secular ideology of humanism is itself to be transformed in the light of the prophetic understanding of history as fulfillment in Jesus Christ, if they are to serve humanity.[99] Thus the theology of mission should help the Christian church to participate in struggles of secularism and secular men (sic) for an historical task of humanizing the world, and with the radical demand to enter into dialogue with them, opening secular men (sic) and secular ideologies to an awareness of the relevance of the gospel of Christ.[100]

6.7.4 Prophetic Ministry

The prophetic tradition in the O.T. has helped the shift from ceremonial purity to righteousness and justice in historical existence of Israel.

Church is powerful force to actualize the new humanity. But this is weekend to piety, legalism etc. Thomas emphasis the need of prophetic tradition of O.T. Thomas identifies the church as that part of the world which knows the nature and the historical destiny of the whole world and hence the call for proclamation, to proclaim the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord as the only basic for true humanity.[101]

Participation in the struggle of people for a fuller human life in

state, society and culture, in the real partnership with men (sic) of other faith or no faith, is the only context for realizing the true being of the church and exercising the church's ministry and mission.[102] He further argues that only participants can be prophets.[103] Helping the neighbor is part of prophetic ministry.

Prophetic ministry will create tension between church and society, church and state, because the spiritual root of the two communities may often be at variance with each other. But this tension could be creative.[104]

Only participation earns the right to be prophets and participation is pre-supposition of dialogue because participation will create dialogue. The real dialogue about the meaning of humanity and its ideological implications takes place in the struggle for humanity itself. Church should be there where the action is, participating in the protest against dehumanizing condition of life and in the political struggle for social justice and personal dignity, alongside the secularist. Thus church should make participation effective.

Salvation of man (sic) means everything of him (sic), his individuality and his collectivity included has roots in different levels of self-awareness, the sense of spiritual freedom and responsibility. There is no individual entirely isolated from culture, spirituality and its search for meaning and sacredness must be related to the gospel of Christ as the center of meaning around which a cut can be renewed.[105]

6.7.5 Message of Genuine Humanism is Secular Meaning of Christ

For Thomas some elements of Christian theology are relevant for secularism but then theology should be restated in secular perspective. His concern was not limited to the interest of Christians alone but for the rights of every human being in India towards bread and freedom, to enable his\er to develop their humanity to the fullest extend and church needs to serve human rights of the larger community. And as a message of spiritual salvation it seeks to bring every human person to the maturity of the human-hood of Jesus Christ. As the message of spiritual communion, it is essentially the power to transform every society into a community of persons

set in relation of freedom, justice and love to each other.[106]

6.7.6 Risking Christ

Thomas is always concerned to relate his ultimate faith commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior to the penultimate commitment to find a basis for the living together of different faiths and ideologies in a working harmony which can secure the wellbeing of all people. His experience of the evils wrought by interreligious conflict in India leads him to espouse the idea of a secular society, and this naturally shapes his vision for the global human society. His concern was to relate between ultimate faith commitments which tend to separate people and "rational, moral and other common goals" which can unite them.[107] There can hardly be a more important issue for human wellbeing. The problem is how to relate the ultimate to the penultimate. Thomas speaks of the need for Christians to put their faith "alongside other faiths and alongside rationality and other human values which we share with others", allowing the examination of each, including our faith, in the categories of others.[108] In this process we Christians, risk Christ for Christ's sake. Differing faith commitments can and must be placed "alongside" one another: this is what dialogue involves. Thus he developed theological frame work for dialogue among religion and secular ideologies.

6.7.7 Evaluation

He was an exceptional layperson of deep theological insight and social concern. He made struggle for the humanization as the cornerstone of his theology. His theology can be summarized as Humanization: humanizing the dehumanized and peopling the depeopled.

His Christ, the cosmic Lord of history is not much related to the mystery of divine, but rather to the historical plane, the struggle for equality, justice and peace. Abraham Stephen views that Thomas' approach to the practical realm of Christ centered syncretism is very idealistic one and does not take enough care of the concrete reality.[109]

Thomas put faith alongside rationality. Reason is not independent of ultimate faith commitments; it is the way we try to order our

understanding of things in the light of what we believe and this belief is our ultimate faith commitment. You cannot put light alongside the things which light enables you to see. It is not certain that the rational, moral and social goals are common to those who have different faith commitments; some may be, but not all.

His theology was a crisis/issue oriented theology. He developed his theology at the time of crisis faced by Asian Christians and thus it was a social response to Asian issues and situation. His concept of humanism itself is a safe path between tradition and modernism.

He struggles to balance the liberal theology of Christ-centered syncretism on the one hand and the theological conservatism of Lordship of Christ over other religious on the other hand, which seems to be an 'inclusive-exclusive' position.[110]

Few Indian Christians were brave enough to participate in the National movement even though Christianity is a minority faith in India and they supported the political process of our nation through their participation and identification in the Indian nationalistic spirit. In the post-independence context there is continuity were by again few courageous Indian Christians were gripped with the vision and practice of nation building and integration.

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7

INTRA AND INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE: TOWARDS A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES

Religious pluralism is part of Indian identity and Indians live with people of other faith as neighbors and friends. Even though religious pluralism is a fact but the efforts to develop a relationship with people of other tradition is one of the challenges to Christian Theology. At the cultural level, Christians in India began to appreciate different aspects of Indian culture and tried to adapt cultural elements in Christian faith. Since culture and religion are inextricably interconnected in Indian society it naturally leads to interest in other faith. In this context inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue is regarded as partner of Christian theology.

7.1 Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973)

Abhishiktananda was born as *Henri Le Saux* in 30th August 1910 in *St Briac* of France. He first felt the call to India around the age of 24, specially a call to establish a contemplative foundation in the Indian Church.[1] Finally in 1948 Le Saux received permission to travel to India, where he joined another French Priest, Jules Monchanin, in founding a contemplative community that they envisioned as both fully Indian and fully Christian. He lived a simple life style of a *sanyasi*, and was well versed in Hindu scriptures and learnt Tamil and Sanskrit. In 1950 he started *Saccidananda* ashram or the hermitage of the most holy trinity at Shantivanam in Trichinopoly, on the banks of the Kavery River in Tamil Nadu.[2] On the occasion of founding of the Ashram he took the name Abhishiktananda (Bliss of the Anointed one).[3] In 1948, Henri Le Saux was stunned by his experience meeting the great Indian sage

Ramana Maharshi. At Arunachala Ramana Maharshi took Samadhi (passed on 1950) and the questions surrounding this experience of his were to ferment within the young *Henri Le Saux*, and drive his enquiry for the remainder of his life. After Fr. Monchanin died in 1957 he spent his time between the Ashram at Trichinopoly and Himalayas where he lived as a hermit. He finally left the Ashram in 1968 and began to live permanenty at Gyyansu near Uttarkashi in the Himalayas.[4] For him *sanyasa* is the ideal goal of life and his life attempted to live out this ideal.

His works includes *The Mountain of the Lord (1966), Prayer (1967), The Church in India: An Essay in Christian Self-Criticism (1969), Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience (1974), Hindu-Christian Meeting Point: Within the Cave of the Heart (1976), The Further Shore (1975), Ascent to the Depth of the Heart: The Spiritual Diary (1948-1973) of Swami Abhishiktananda -Dom H. Le Saux (1938).*

7.1.1 Influences

Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala Pradesh was a guru who taught him the art of silent communication. He leaned the mystery that the Absolute simply penetrates in those who renounce themselves.[5] He also met guru Gnanananda of Tapovanam Ashram near Tiruvannamalai and learned the art of contemplation.[6] Under the influence of these great gurus he immersed himself into Indian *sanyasi* experience.

7.1.2 Theology

He understood the heart of Indian meditation. He advocates that we have to deepen our contemplative life, without which no communion is possible in the world of grace.[7] He taught that meditation helps towards concentration and the quietening of the mind and leads to the interior silence, without which nothing can be achieved.[8] For him theology comes from what is inner-most in the soul, not from the mind alone. A living synthesis - rather an osmosis – will result only from the achievement and completion in Christ of the Hindu *Vedantic* spiritual experience within the heart of the elect.[9] In regards to his Spiritual Awakening Abhishiktananda wrote in *Ascent to the Depth of the Heart* (p. 319):

> "...the whole long history of salvation boils down to the blinking of an eye – a flash of lightning – an Awakening. It (the long history of salvation) has conceptual, mythical and sociological form only for one who is NOT Awakened..."

Abhshiktananda followed the line of Fulfillment. He claimed, "Our role is to help the holy seed which has been sown by the Spirit in heart and traditions of India to Germinate."[10] He also held the need for Indian Church to realize the urgency of the need to integrate the spiritual values of Hinduism into her own life. Thus he gave importance to dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism and commented "the integration of the *Advaitic* experience into his own faith is for the Christian a necessary task."[11] He endorsed that the meeting place of two faiths occurs in the reality of *sanyasa* where one integrate the gained knowledge with already acquired truth.

7.1.3 On Christian-Hindu Frontier

From the early 50s onwards Abhishiktananda faced a daunting problem: how to reconcile the *Advaitic* insight which Ramana, Arunachala, and Gnanananda had brought him with his own deep Christian commitment and his vocation as a priest and a monk. In September 1953 we find him articulating the dilemma in his diary, in all its fully-felt pain:

> What does it mean, this agony of having found one's peace far from the place and form of one's original commitments, at the very frontiers of Holy Church? What does it mean, to feel that the only obstacle to final peace and *ânanda* [joy] is one's attachment to that place, that form, that *mythos*? Who is there on either side of the frontier to whom I can cry out my anguish—who, if he belongs to this side, will not take fright and anathematize me, and if he is on the other side, will not take an all too human delight because I am joining him?[12]

He was also troubled in these early years by the failure of his abbot to seek the renewal of his indult of exclaustration (the ecclesiastical authority to live outside his monastery), and thought about going himself to Rome:

> What use would it be to go to Europe? What use in going to Rome in search of ecclesiastical authorization? When Saint-Exupery had lost his way and was flying a course between Orion and the Great Bear, he could laugh a Claudelian laugh when a petty airport official radioed to him that he was fined because he had banked too close to the hangars. . . . So it is with the letters of Fr Abbot.[13]

But it was the interior problem which was most acute. He agonized over it for many years—to put his problems before Rome? To abandon his Christian faith? To turn his back on *Advaita*? There was no simple answer and it was not until his last years that the dilemma was fully resolved. In our explorations of Abhishiktananda's thought, his writings, his spiritual experience, we will find him confronting these questions again and again. Here is one of many tormented cries from his journal: "Therefore I am full of fear, plunged in an ocean of anguish whichever way I turn. . . . And I fear risking my eternity for a delusion. And yet you are no delusion, O Arunachala."[14] Nor was his predicament eased by his growing disenchantment with many aspects of the institutional church:

> If only the Church was *spiritually radiant*, if it was not so firmly attached to the formulations of transient philosophies, if it did not obstruct the freedom of the spirit . . . with such niggling regulations, it would not be long before we reached an understanding.[15]

He was deeply troubled by the thought that he might be "wearing a mask of Christianity, out of fear of the consequences" (of taking it off).[16]Abhishiktananda's spiritual crisis was at its most intense in the years 1955-56, and was to the fore during his month-long silent retreat at Kumbakonam.[17]

For the moment we can say that Abhishiktananda, with heroic audacity, chose to live out his life on that very frontier, neither forsaking Christianity nor repudiating the spiritual treasures which he had found in such abundance in India: "I think it is best to hold together, even though in extreme tension, these two forms of a unique faith until the dawn appears."[18] It was a position which was to cause him much distress and loneliness, and a good many difficulties with some of his fellow Christians, be they ecclesiastical

authorities, priests and scholars, or acquaintances—though we should also note that many of his Christian friends, far from anathematizing him, showed a remarkable level of understanding of Abhishiktananda's predicament, an unwavering love of the man himself and a deep respect for the path he had chosen. Here is Abhishiktananda in later years, pondering his journey and the two traditions which had nurtured him, both of which he loved profoundly:

> Whether I want it or not, I am deeply attached to Christ Jesus and therefore to the *koinonia* of the Church. It is in him that the "mystery" has been revealed to me ever since my awakening to myself and to the world. It is in his image, his symbol, that I know God and that I know myself and the world of human beings. Since I awoke here to new depths in myself (depths of the self, of the *âtman*), this symbol has marvelously developed. Christian theology had already revealed to me the eternity of the mystery of Jesus in the bosom of the Father. Later India revealed to me the cosmic wholeness of this mystery. . . . Moreover I recognize this mystery, which I have always adored under the symbol of Christ, in the myths of Narayana, Prajapati, Siva, Puruca, Krishna, Rama etc. The same mystery. But for me, Jesus is my *sadguru*.[19]

In another letter he wrote this:

> It is precisely the fact of being a bridge that makes this uncomfortable situation worthwhile. The world, at every level, needs such bridges. The danger of this life as "bridge" is that we run the risk of not belonging to either side; whereas, however harrowing it may be, *our duty is to belong wholly to both sides*. This is only possible in the mystery of God.[20]

He had few companions on this path. Until the Church was much more widely pervaded by contemplative awareness and open to the experience of *Advaita*,

> There is only the loneliness of the prophet . . . and the impossibility of being at one's ease anywhere except with those few people who have an intuition of this 'transcendent' level— like traveling faster than sound, or escaping from earth's gravity, to use physical metaphors."[21]

It is in this loneliness he plunged ever deeper into the Upanishads and recognized that Christianity needs this message.

7.1.4 *Advaitic* Experience[22]

His contemplative vision is basically linked with his *Advaitic* awareness of the divine mystery. The Catholic approach to *Advaita* has been with a preoccupation of keeping the distinction between God and human. According to him *Advaita* does not pose a real threat to Christian faith. In fact it could be an incomparable help in penetrating into the mystery of the Trinity in Christian life. We may call this an *Advaitic* dimension of faith. The experience of non-duality is a higher interior awareness where one finds that the soul and God are not two. According to Abhishiktananda, *Advaita* is a pure experience of God beyond notions and categories. He realized it in his own person with his deep roots in the Gospel. When one realizes *Advaita* in its plenitude one gets the pure experience of simply "to be". He transcends every expression and every other form. He can only say, "I am" or "I am just that". Since there is an indescribable oneness between the *advaitin* and God, he said there is only "one vision and one visionary".

In his opinion one can go to the Upanishads to understand the *Advaita* and to the Bible to rediscover how the *Advaitic* experience can be related to the Christian tradition. According to him, certain passages of the Gospel of St. John can help one to have an authentic Christian culmination of the *Advaitic* experience. This *Advaitic* experience is an experience of interiority. It draws human back continually to the "cave of the heart" as the Upanishads call it. In the depth of this experience, the soul of human is so overwhelmed by the glory of the presence of God that his own finite self seems to vanish altogether in its splendor. Christians are afraid of this experience because it appears to threaten the radical distinction between God and the creature, which is strongly affirmed by the Bible. However, we cannot ignore the witness of *rishis* of India who have described it so persistently. In fact the *Advaitic* experience seems to open up new depths in human, so creating in him a profound capacity for the gift of grace.

The Upanishads reveal the depth of non-duality. The

experiences of the sages confirm that the soul and God are 'not two'. The *Vedantic* night is certainly a royal road by which to enter into the ultimate secret of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Sankara is the supreme master of *Advaita*. For him, the ultimate spiritual experience is that of the Self, the One-without-a-second, the Atman which is identical with Brahman. The supreme Reality cannot be adequately represented by any concept. The ascent to the Real is by way of pure negation "*neti, neti*", "not this, not this" – the negation of all that passes away, all that is only appearance, and which therefore cannot be the Real in itself. In the Real there is neither duality nor difference. The supreme experience is of pure non-duality, and there alone truth is found.

In the prologue of St. John's Gospel we have a true Christian parallel to the 'soundings' into the mystery of being which we found in the Upanishads. It reminds the Upanishadic approach. Thus, in the prologue, John identifies Jesus with Light, the praise of which is sung in the Isa and Mundaka Upanishads. It is the same with Truth, *Satyam*, the goal of all Upanishads. At the end of the Prologue John presents the Word made flesh as "full of truth", the fullness of truth: so too with Life, the immortality or 'non-death' of the Upanishads. Jesus is the Life and the Way to eternal life. He himself is the immortality, which the sages identified with the supreme knowledge. It is also same with *Vac*, speech-Word. Everything comes from God in his Word; and it is in the Word that everything returns to Him.

In two ways Abhishiktananda has contributed to the interpretation of the Upanishads.

7.1.4.1. He looked at the Upanishads with a fresh mind, uninfluenced by philosophical schemes of interpretation. In the Hindu tradition itself it seems that the Upanishads are mostly read and understood in the context of Sankara's *Vedanta*.

7.1.4.2. In his reading of the Upanishads as a Christian monk, he could, from the depth of his own Christian experience, establish inner correspondences-precisely Upanishads-with that of the rishis.

7.1.5 Hindu Christian Meeting Point

He believed that the meeting point of Hindu and Christian can be actualized only within the cave of the heart, at the deep level of experience and not at the level of intellectual conception.[23] The cave of heart is the place of the ultimate encounter, where the spirit of human person becomes one with the spirit of God.[24] In the depth of our own being both the immediate experience of the ultimate 'non-duality' of experience of divine son ship in the unity of the spirit which lies at the heart of our Christian faith. Only with this we can formulate adequate theology.[25]

To have a genuine *Vedantic* experience he directly depended on Upanishads than the *Vedantic* system of Sankara or Ramanuja. In his *Advaitic* conception, he experienced that the very center of his soul was God's dwelling place.[26] He also says that his life and relationship with God in this world was not on the level of "becoming' and "belonging to" but on the level of "being". As a Christian *sannyasi* he discovered the source of his existence in the very bosom of the Father (sic).[27] Hence his contemplation was the seeing of his existence in the heart of Trinity. His meditation of human as the image of God signifies the unfolding of "the mystery of the divine presence in the inner-most sanctuary of human's being." [28]

7.1.6 Saccidananda

He connected the Trinitarian mystery of Being as communion to the *Vedantic* concept of *Saccidananda*. For the Hindu tradition this word symbolizes the innermost mystery of God as well as the divine presence in the innermost sanctuary of a person's being. He redefined this as a Christianized concept.

He explains that Christian *saccidananda* is not disappearance in Brahman but beyond that, by the grace of God finding oneself in God a new.[29] In Christian *saccidananda* Sat is Father (sic), who is not yet known. It is Cit, the Son who makes him (sic) known.[30] Jesus Christ, the Cit is the self-awakening of the Father (sic), the Sat, Being. In Christianity Cit is not merely an aspect or mode of Brahman, but a real procession, a real birth, first in eternity and subsequently in time.[31] It is in Father's (sic) self-awareness and presence to Himself (sic) in the Son that everything that is has

come to be.[32] The son, as is the representative Son of human, is the representation of the created beings in Cit; the created beings awake to Being through the Son.[33] Ananda, the Holy Spirit is the expression of love in God; love between God and human being and among human being.[34] According to Abhishiktananda if such Christianized version of *saccidananda* is accepted, both Hinduism and Christianity would be benefitted by such 'mutual integration'.

His theological synthesis based on mystic experiences yet framed by an inclusivist or "fulfillment" theology of religions. As a result of his Spiritual Awakening, he lived at peace with his "double belongingness" and with a non-comparative approach to the religions.

7.1.7 Characteristics of His Spirituality[35]

7.1.7.1 The Spirituality of Abishiktananda can be regarded as contemplative. He was attuned to the *sannyasa* and to the *Advaitic* tradition. Western development of the Benedictine tradition finds contemplation again in a new and deeper form through the *Advaitic* tradition. His efforts to develop a theology based on *sannyasa* and spirituality of renunciation from within Hinduism, with the help of medieval Sanskrit texts, but in constant dialogue with Christian thought.

7.1.7.2 The spirituality of Abishiktananda is dialogical. He has not only written about dialogue, but has practiced it at many levels. He sees, hears, and understands with a Christian heart. In spite of that, he lets Hinduism be real Hinduism. He simply wants to learn and accept the authentic values of the Hindu tradition. He saw the Hindu tradition not only as something good in itself, but also as an expression of the manifold and mysterious revelation of God to humanity.

7.1.7.3 Abishiktananda's spirituality is experience-oriented. It emerged from a very personal contact with the mystery that lies at the heart of the Hindu tradition, indeed at the heart of all human existence. For him, the Hindu experience was the *Vedantic*, *Advaitic* experience of

the one-only-without-a-second. He often alludes to the experience of great joy and peace that is found in the realization of non-duality. For his journey is essentially one of transcending more and more the thought pattern of duality to reach the source where the divine presence alone is manifested. He interpreted this in terms of the *Saccidananda* idiom, but correlated it to the Biblical experience.

7.1.7.4 His spirituality is symbolic. Unlike other *Vedantins*, he is thoroughly at home in the world of symbols, even when he constantly stresses their limitations. He uses them with taste and creativity. He is particularly fond of Shiva symbolic world, more than Vaishnava myth. Paradoxically, his main concern is to show the passing nature of all symbols and the need to go beyond the symbols to the Reality.

7.1.7.5 At the centre of Abishiktananda's spirituality is the experience of non-duality. He longs for it, strives for it, learns it from gurus and sacred scripture and constantly interprets it. He knows that his daily consciousness and even his religious conceptualization are called to die in this battle. He submits himself to the call of non-duality so that through death a new birth may take place. In his book, *Saccidananda*, he strives to articulate the *Vedanta* and the Trinitarian experience. He sees the non-duality as a participation of the Son's consciousness of being one with the Father. For Abishiktananda, this oneness is not merely at the level of mission, but it reaches the ontological plane too. Abishiktananda says that the *Vedantic* night is certainly the royal road by which to enter into the ultimate secret of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. The means to enter into that night is for him the classical one taught by tradition: sitting at the feet of a guru, studying the great Upanishads, and above all doing *dhyana* (meditation), surely along with the line of the *Vedantic* teaching.

7.1.8 Evaluation

His Christian *Advaitic sannyasa* life in genuine Indian religious style is a challenge. He lived the symbiosis of two tradition and both became part of him. He tried to present the *Advaitic* experience as compatible with the Christian experience of Trinity. He practiced both Christianity and Hinduism and freely resorts to theistic Christianity and non-dualistic Hinduism and he reached to an esoteric level where the relative forms are universalized.

Abshishiktananda's contention that theology should evolve from within the level of experience needs certain qualification. It is not sense experience. It is also not *anubhava* because *anubhava* in *Advaita* represent the final experience of supreme realization. So theology should evolve from our innermost Atman which is the reference to total perception i.e. in our intellect, heart, mind, sense and body successively.[36]

The ultimate conclusion of Abhishiktananda is that the Hindu thought is monistic and thus defective. So he recommended Christian faith for overcoming this Hindu defect. He also identified himself completely with the *Advaitic* experience but again it was for the sake of demonstrating the distinctiveness of Christian revelation. Thus K.P. Aleaz thinks that his thought has to grow from 'relational distinctiveness' to 'relational convergence'.[37]

He presents a heritage and a challenge to Christianity. A heritage to the mystics to experience the presence of God and challenge to express this mystery in theological terminology i.e. Christ in cave of every human heart.

7.2 Raymond Panikkar (1918-2010)

Raimundo Panikkar was born as the son of a Catholic mother and a Hindu father. His mother was a well-educated daughter of the Catalan bourgeoisie; his father derived from an upper caste Malabar Nair family from South India (Kerala). Thus he learned both *Vedanta* and Bible equally. Panikkar's father was a freedom fighter during British colonial rule in India and escaped from Britain and married into a Catalan family. Panikkar's father studied in England and was the representative of a German chemical company in Barcelona. Educated at a Jesuit school, Panikkar studied chemistry

and philosophy at the universities of Barcelona, Bonn and Madrid, and Catholic Theology in Madrid and Rome. He holds doctorates in Philosophy (1945), Science (1958, both at Complutense University of Madrid) and Theology (1961, Pontifical Lateran University in Rome), and was professor at the Complutense University of Madrid (1946-53). He was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1946. In 1953, he left Europe for India where he undertook studies in Indian philosophy and religion at the University of Mysore and Banaras Hindu University, and engaged in Hindu-Christian dialogue, with a short time as professor in Rome (1962-63). From 1967-71, he held a professorship at Harvard University, and from 1971-78 he was professor of religious studies at University of California, Santa Barbara[38].

His major works are *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism (1964), The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon-Person-Mystery (1973), Worship and Secular Man (1973), Vedic Experience: Manthra Manjari (1977), The Intra-religious Dialogue (1978), Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-Cultural Studies (1983), Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man (1980), Silence of God, The Answer of the Buddha (1989), The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness (1993), A Dwelling Place for Wisdom (1995), Cultural Disarmament the Way to Peace (1995).*

7.2.1 Theological Concerns

For Pannikar theology is the dialogue where God's logos is interacting with our own.[39] Hence theologizing is listening to the word of God coming from various sources with discernment. He stress

> With a soul and heart searching attitude, full of humility, of the spirit of prayer and of obedience to the many voices the theologian is hearing. It is an attitude which tries to come up with something harmonic 'vision' of Reality and Man's place in it, an attitude which, attentive to the Word and the Words (of God) tries to reach a certain intelligibility.[40]

For him authentic theologizing has a mystical dimension too as it proceed from an immediate contact with the reality beyond concept and doctrines. His context of Christological reflection is dialogue

with and encounter of Christianity and Hinduism. Christian claim of revelation for whole world is challenged by Hinduism argument of equality of faith. For Hinduism all ways reaches to absolute mystery and for Christianity faith is commitment to Christ who belongs to all. So dialogue is a Christian concern.[41]

Three areas into which Panikkar has given special attention: History of Religions, Theology and Hermeneutics. To promote the cross- cultural understanding he has made available to the public the philosophical and religious traditions of India. It by and by resulted in the publication of *The Vedic Experience-Mantramanjari (1977-78).* In the area of theology he is interpreting Christian doctrine in interreligious context. The three seminal works are; *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism (1964, 82), The Trinity and World Religions (1970)* and *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man (1973, 1975).* Panikkar is also a *founding father* of the prestigious *Castelli Conference* on hermeneutics at the University of Rome started in 1961[42]. *The Intra- Religious Dialogue (1978)* and *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross Cultural Studies (1979)* are telling examples of his innovative cross cultural hermeneutic achievement.

7.2.2 Interpretation of *Advaita* (Brahma Sutra)

Advaita is regarded as the highest Indian philosophical school. And that is one of the reasons that it fascinates the Indian Theologians to formulate theology based on *Advaita*.

Brahma Sutra plays a very important role in the Hindu philosophy. Every Indian classical scholar (*Vedantic*) has to deal with Brahma Sutra in his philosophical framework. Thus Panikkar also deals with the same; he begins his argument from Brahma Sutra 1:1, 2. His well known book, "The Unknown Christ of Hinduism" deals with giving a new interpretation to Brahma sutra. The *Advaitic* frame work of non-dualism shapes the whole pattern of Panikkar's theology.

The way in which the radical Trinity manifests itself in Christ presents us with the non-dualistic unity between the divine and the human (the theandric mystery of the eastern church) but the human being too, constitutes a non-dualistic unity between spirit and body,

and each of us is a non-dualistic unity between spirit and body and each of us exists in the corporeality proper to material things. The three go together with neither confusion nor separation. It is cosmotheandric or the theanthropocosmic intuition.[43] Thus Panikkar is bringing cosmos, God and human being on a same platform which suits the non- dualistic understanding.

7.2.2.1 Cosmotheandrism

In his article, Ecology *from an Eastern Christian Perspective* (1975), Panikkar expands an overall presentation of radical relativity called cosmotheandrism. This vision is applied to all the dimensions of reality: the divine, the human and the cosmos, not as separated blocks of three storey building, but as the intrinsically constitutive dimensions of everything that is.[44]

Reality for Panikkar is the network of relationships, a network which is basically constituted by the Cosmos, the Human and the Divine. In other words, we cannot in effect search for the Divine except through the human in the cosmos, because it is only human that can make this discovery. We cannot work for the human except in the cosmos through the Divine, because real welfare of Human is possible only in this manner and we cannot encounter the cosmic except through the human in the Divine, because the cosmic cannot be the cosmic without the human and the divine.[45]

The consequence of such a vision is that every being in cosmotheandric that is constituted by the Divine, the Human and the cosmic but in different degrees and in diverse ways. In this manner everything in interrelated and interconnected. All reality is ultimately the Trinity at the Cosmic, the Human and the Divine.[46]Panikkar as an original reflective formulative theologian creates the term cosmotheandric to fit his theology which gives equal consideration to cosmos, God and humans.

7.2.2.1.1 Cosmotheandric Intuition

Cosmotheandric intuition means an insight into three fold core. Cosmic is material principle and objectifiable dimension. It is the house of reality and everything is understood in cosmos. Antropos is the consciousness and obejectifying dimension. Theos is the depth

dimension. It is the absolute principle and it interacts with cosmos and anthropos.[47]

Cosmotheandric "trinity" offers, a concept, both dynamics and coherence: the Cosmotheandric Reality is a differentiated reality which is in movement and holds together the three dimensions of God, Man and World. This "trinity" is relation; it is not monism or dualism but difference-in-relation: this aspect is shared by Panikkar on elaborations of the doctrine of the Trinity. He holds a hermeneutical approach to reality in which God, Man and World are connected to each other in the deep. Therefore, one can speak of the deep hermeneutics of reality.[48]

Only in relation to (Cosmotheandric) Reality can we learn from other religions, in the sense that Reality is, ultimately, one, although a differentiated one. This, however, does not constitute an essential insight into reality but an *existential* one that is the radical relativity of God, World and Man.[49]

Ecumenism for Panikkar not only involves various churches but also other religion in the view of the deepness of the Cosmotheandric Reality. This understanding happens in the combination of intra-religious and inter-religious dialogue, that is, in the dialogue between different religions and among different religious traditions within one human person. It does not only imply discourse but rather is a sharing and communicating of mystical experience.[50]

Furthermore, Panikkar wants to take seriously the claim of universality that is necessarily made by each religion.[45] This does not have to be given up but to be seen in relation with other, equally legitimate claims. In order not to fall into an exclusivistic (only one religion can be the true one) or inclusivistic (all religions ultimately meet in a common claim) misunderstanding or into a wrong understanding of pluralism (all religions are equal, viewed from an outside standpoint), Panikkar brings forward a relationship in "radical relativity" (being-in-relation) between the religions. The different religions, incommensurable as they are on the level of lived belief and doctrine, do meet in the depth of the Cosmotheandric Intuition.[46] People are invited to have a conversion towards the Cosmotheandric Reality.[51]

It is in this Cosmotheandric intuition that religions meet, and thus their effort is not nonsense or a reason for fighting each other. Rather, it is in this insight — and only in this? — that they can fecundate each other. In this way, the go against the fragmentation of the perception of reality that is typical of our times, according to Panikkar. From the constant conversion towards this Reality, as it occurs in specific ways in the different religions, follows a "cosmic confidence" that gives courage to live and to maintain a peaceful treatment of others despite basic differences. In this sense, eventually, there are practical consequences.[52]

Cosmotheandric intuition will create openness towards the Other (religion) and towards Reality. It is here that we best discover the difference between *orthopraxis* in Panikkar and in the Theology of Liberation: In Panikkar, it is primarily directed towards the experience of the Cosmotheandric Reality and not towards action in the world. "Reality", for Panikkar, is the wholeness of Being that is constituted through God, Man and World, not the empirical reality which is of merely provisional character — as is *maya*[53] in *Advaita-Vedanta*.[54]

Panikkar theology of religion is based on his vision of cosmotheandric. For Panikkar Christ belongs to God and not to Christianity alone. He replaces Christ with expression as theandric fact and cosmotheandric principle. This theandric fact is present effective and acknowledge in different religions of the world. In this sense Jesus is one of the names of the cosmotheandric principle. Religion becomes the integration of the human with the divine in the cosmos.[55]

7.2.2.1.2 Cosmotheandric Ecosophy

Ecosophy is the term coined by him. *Eco* is derived from the Greek *oikos* which means house. *Sophy* is again from Greek *Sophia* means wisdom. So ecosophy has two meaning, firstly it is the wisdom that we have about earth, but Panikkar prefer the second one, it is the wisdom of the earth, wisdom which we do not possess but which we learn and appreciate. If ecology is active discipline of study and involvement in nature, ecosophy is passive discipline of listening to nature and recognizing that we are always involve in nature.[56]

Pannikar sees dynamism of the Spirit moving reality to cosmotheandric unity. This dynamism of Spirit creates cosmotheandric awareness. Panikkar speaks of growth of consciousness through different kairological moments.[57] In Greek language, time can be expressed by two words: *chronos* is quantitative term deals with minutes, years, decades etc. and *kairos* is qualitative term deals with ancient, medieval, modern etc.[58] The first one is ecumenic period, where there is predominance of an antropocentric vision of reality; the divine is subsumed in nature. The second is economic period, the historical period where there predominates an anthropocentric vision of reality. The world is passing through what he calls an ecological interlude, which is the prelude to the third kairological moment- the cosmotheandric moment.[59]

The third in underway and it depends on us. Thus here we need the wisdom of the earth and movement of Holy Spirit. Panikkar introduced a uniquely *Advaitic* Christian perspective to the Trinitarian enigma which takes the role of spirit seriously. So role of Holy Spirit in Panikkar theology is the promise of pneumatology regarding ecology.[60]

Human has weary of alienation from human and earth. Modernism has damaged religion with God, earth and human soul. Man became increasingly lonely. He has spread the net of his intelligence like DDT and killed the intermediary being, he cannot master with his mind- the spirits, once his companions, are no longer credible- the God has- flown and a solitary and even more superfluous God fades away. [61]

We cannot expect God's wise creation to simply tolerate our perpetual abuse without exacting some price from us in return. The depletion of natural resources, the pollution of rivers, and the dramatic loss of bio diversity are but a few effect of the terrorism attach on nature. This is due to the dualistic world view and domination on nature is the symptoms of patriarchy.[62]

Modern man has killed an isolated and insular God; the contemporary Earth is killing a merciless and rapacious Man; and the God's often seem to have deserted both Man and cosmos.[63]

Panikkar proposes to liberate ecology from the suffocating logic

of modernism. We need an approach that is not dominated by the logic alone. The *ecos* has been far longer than we can comprehend and it is filled with the presence of Holy Spirit. Our ecology will be forever enhanced if we simply make room in the discussion for earth to share her wisdom. Our ecological voice should not be silenced, but they should pause, long enough to listen for ecosophical song.[64]

7.2.3 Christian Principle and Iswara

The Indian wisdom is the laconic section of the second Brahma Sutra of Badrayana. Panikkar begins his argument from Brahma Sutra 1:1, 2. 9 The most famous summary of it says, "whence the origin etc. of this and the universally accepted meaning is, *Brahman* is the total ultimate cause of the world.[65]

But there is a problem, if *Brahman* is the unconditional Absolute, as Sankara held, then how can the world said to proceed from him. Sankaras later follower clarified it by saying that it is not *Brahman* but *Iswara* who is the cause of the creation. So *Iswara* became the link between *Brahman* and the world.[66] But then this *Iswara* is understood from the perspective of *saguna*[67] *Brahman,* and it is understood as inferior to *nirguna*[68] *Brahman,* the Ultimate Absolute.Panikkar proposes that the problem of Hinduism can be solved if we realize that this *Iswara* is no other than Christ, the logos, the agent of creation, the mediator between God and man.[69]When Hindus think of *Iswara*- true revealer of *Brahman*, personal aspect of *Brahman*, agent of creation, origin of grace, yet as the same time himself fully*Brahman*- then, says Panikkar, they are in fact, though without realizing it, acknowledging the hidden Christ.[70]

He builds his case based on *Katha, Maundaka,* and *Svetasvetara* Upanishads as against the advaidic interpretation. He also neglects the fact that for many hindus *Iswara* is ontologically inferior to Brahman because it is preserved from the *vyavaharika*[71] level of existence thus affected by *maya*. Panikkar accept that both of them are different but they both point to the same ultimate reality: the personal God without the correction of Brahman may well become an anthropomorphic idol; the transpersonal Brahman without its complementary vision

as God may well dissolve in the mere abstraction of the personal God.[72]

There is identity because, *Brahman*, the Absolute is something more than an empty word, it cannot tolerate any ultimately besides itself and the first cause is by definition- the ultimate cause that our knowledge can- formally- conceive. Either there is first cause and then this first cause is *Brahman* or there is no first cause at all or vice-versa, either *Brahman* is the first cause or there is no But all.[73]

There is diversity because, if the first cause were only first cause and nothing else-i.e. *Brahman* would have only a kind of ontological priority regarding all other things, but it would not be ontologically different from them. It would be simply their cause. God would be only lord of world and but not God in Himself. And if first cause were not of different "nature" altogether from the world, it could not have the character of Immutability, Simplicity, Independence and the like that are required for being first cause. [74]

The "That" of God, it is identical with the Absolute, it is not a secondary *saguna* Brahman for there is only one source, only one ultimate Reality, but yet it is distinct from it, for it is its "expression", its image, its revealer, we may say that this divine, "That", this divine Person is begotten by God, equal is nature and yet distinct in its subsistence, in its Personality.[75]

The principle and End of all things has two nature, though not in the same way, and not on the same level. It has two faces, two aspects as it were. One face regarding the Divinity- is the full and equal expression and bearer of it. Another face is turned towards the "outside" world and its Maker, its sustainer, the Giver of its being. Yet it is not two, but one. One principle, one person.[76]

Christian *bhasya* stress two points "that" and "Whence"

The first one is *Yatah* which means that from which the world came and originated, in a sense begotten. The logos is in itself, the full word, the total manifestation, of God, the father, it is really God from God, light from Light. That is to say that even its proper face imaging the Divinity is distinct from it, and yet there is no lack of substantial identity, for the logos has the whole divine nature that

the father, source of the divinity has.[77] *Iswara* of Sankara can hardly resist the tremendous tension of being a real mediator and *saguna*. Our *Iswara* is, he is not only and not primarily as a creature, but is equal to *Brahman* and yet distinct in this form of subsistence. [78]

The *Iswara* of our commentary points towards what we would like to call the mystery of Christ, as a being unique in its existence and essence and as such equal to God. He has a double nature. These two nature are without mixture and without change, and yet inseperable and indivisible.[79]

He fulfills the antinomies that the History of Indian philosophy has found in this Mediator between *Brahman* and the world. It requires faith not on the blind belief but as a superior form of knowledge to accept Him, first of all because He is the living *Iswara* and not an Abstract mental hypothesis.[80]

The second one is *Janmadi* which signifies the origin etc. there is a production, sustenance etc. of being as such, in an intemporal if not eternal way. And there is also the continuation of all such action running though the temporal development of things. The *Iswara* of our *Bhasya* fulfills both rules. He is that from which being is, in an intemporal way and that towards which being becomes, within the temporal process.[81]

So Panikkar interpret this text as, *That from which this world comes forth and to which it returns and by which it is sustained, that "that"is Christ*.[82]

The author of neither Brahma sutra nor the commentators thought for a moment of Christ explicitly. It is also an incontrovertible fact that the living Christ in whom Christian believes cannot be equated with *Iswara* of *Vedanta*.[83]

But the burden of our tale is this- that many of mankind's philosophical and theological text contain a fuller sense. We must refrain from rejecting a text or tradition simply because it does not accord with our already crystallized idea or formulations. Only when we have arrived at the intended thing, have we the right to exercise a pure critique. Only then too can we reach a higher synthesis. This synthesis would utilize new and old elements- letting what is superfluous fall by the wayside.[84]

The unknown Christ of Hinduism is not another Christ, and yet it is not the same Christ Christians knows. It is unknown to them- and known to the Hindus under other names, aspects and dimensions of that Mystery for which the Christian has no other name than Christ. So I am not saying that the hidden Christ is the same as the Christian Christ. I am defending that mystery, which the Christian cannot but call Christ, has aspects manifestations, attributes and what not, unknown to the Christian, that other people, believe are revealed to them and for which they give different names.[85]

7.2.3.1 Ontic Christology

In Christology Panikkar highlights the universal savior hood of Christ to his cosmic, action and presence in all relation and being rather than action and presence in Jesus of Nazareth.[86]

Christ universal savior hood is to be derived primarily from his position as the second person in Trinity as the only ontological-temporal and eternal – link between God and the world. Every being is made in and though him and thus exists and participate in the son. In this ontic aspect, he is the only one who creates, saves and glorifies. Jesus of Nazareth to whom Christ was present is only one instance or name among many relations to his ontic salvific presence from the being of creation. The Buddist Tathagatha or Hindu *avatara* may be also relation to Christ's role as a savior.[87]

Christ the son of God, is the link, the only mediator between God and the rest. There is only one link between God and the rest. That is Christ from which everything has come, in whom everything subsits, to whom everything that shall endure the bite of time will come.[88] But it is not that Christ belongs to Christianity. Christ belongs only to God.[89]

Through Jesus is the way as the Christ, for a person to go through the way, the consciousness of Jesus is not necessary. Christ is the way whether people know they are following it or not. Christian faith consists in recognizing that Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the Iswara of Hinduism, the Tathagatha Buddhism, the Lord according to different faith.[90] Such views seem to contradict with the uniqueness of Jesus. Thus Panikkar explains, the concreteness of Christ (over against his particularity) does not destroy his

universality (over against generality) because the reality of Christ is revealed in his uniqueness. Christ stands for the cosmotheandric principle.[91] So Christ as cosmotheandric is present in all religion and creates a universal salvation.

If as contemporary reflection on Christ is to be faithful to the real- and not conceptual content- it must reflect Christ and not limit itself to the exegesis of texts; it must seek the identity of Christ and not to be contented with his identification.[92] Christians do not have the full knowledge of Christ, so they are not the masters of Christ and it also confirm that Christ transcends all understanding.[93]

7.2.3.1.1 Christophany

Christophany does not contest the historicity of Jesus. It's transcendence of historical Christology belongs to the cultural moment in which we live.[94]

Christophany will bring one in touch with the experience that the Christological doctrine refers to.[95] Christophany aims at experience so Jesus came to give life and not set of doctrines. It is this life that has to be realized and lived. Its lifeblood is the experience of the Ultimate.[96] Panikkar's christophany is the way to re-live the mystical experience of Jesus Christ; it is participate in the same spiritual experience, the same profound intuition that Jesus Christ had.[97]

Chritophany is an ongoing invitation to realize that we are immersed in and belong to the eternal process of "I" "thou-ing" the son, a process in which the Spirit urges me/us to respond with "Abba, Mother!" The process of regenerating is an eternal "thou-ing". Like Jesus, I too am the "you" of the Father. Here the*adhyatmic*[98] level the I and the you "constitute the two poles of the same reality", where a nondualistic relation obtains. Chritophany draws attention to the constant summons of the Spirit to realize with that "I and the Father are one" but Panikkar qualifies, "to the extent that my I disappears and allows itself to be shared by whoever comes to me, 'feeds' on me."[99] The experience of christophanic is a concrete form of living the human experience in its fullness.[100]

The Christ of christophany is the Christ that was, is, and will be at work in the whole of creation, that is, in every single being

and not only in Jesus. Jesus is Christ but Christ cannot be identified completely with Jesus.[101] The christophany from within which we are timidly suggesting constitutes the deepest interiority of all of us, the abyss in which, in each one of us, there is a meeting between the finite and the infinite, the material and spiritual, the cosmic and the divine. The christophany of the third millennium is a summons to us to live this experience.[102]

Our age has problems with all three centers of reality: God, World, and Man. Science ignore God; Man does not care for the world; and now the world is fighting back. The fullness of Man as a christophany undertakes a full- scale revision of our understanding of these three centers; this fullness is to be experienced, if at all, at the *adyatmic* level. It is a mission statement for a new millennium- a statement that can be understood only when read with the third eye.[103]

7.2.4 Evaluation

One western famous criticism against Indian Christians is that Indian Christians have not yet produced any theology. The theological articulation of Panikkar challenges such views and proves such views as western misunderstanding of eastern Christianity.

The classical theology is mainly based on the doctrine of Trinity (God) and Christology, Panikkar addresses both these issues in his theology. At the same time Panikkar goes beyond the classical framework and addresses the issue of religious pluralism and ecology, so one can find (little) elements of liberation theology in Panikkar.

Panikkar is not a static theologian but one can find a positive development in his theology, for eg., in The Unknown Christ of Hinduism he tries to compare two religious traditions, Christianity and Hinduism to bring harmony. In Trinity and World Religion, the encounter of religions belongs to the *Kairos* of our time. In Cosmotheandric Experience the kairological moment is enlightening us to respond positively to the ecological problem. Thus a reader without the knowledge of development pattern in Panikkar will naturally struggle.

His theology elevated the universal Christ at the cost of Jesus

Christ of history. Therefore to make such theologies part of kerygmatic ministry of church is very difficult.

His views are interlinked and interconnected, thus it is very difficult to bring one aspect of his theology without touching another aspect which is altogether different from the previous. This is of course the *Advaitic* influence.

Panniker is one of the most influential Indian Christian theologians of contemporary era. He gave a new direction to the Indian Christian theological thinking by creating terminologies like cosmotheandric. Through cosmotheandric he tries to abolish the huge gap created by the dualism between Cosmos, God and human. Thus cosmotheandric dreams a cosmos with ecological, humanist and Godly values.

7.3 S.J. Samartha (1920-2001)

Stanley Jedidiah Samartha was born in 1920 at Karnal, Karnataka, and was an ordained minister of the Church of South India. His theological studies took him to the United Theological College, Bangalore, Union Theological Seminary, the University of Basel and Hartford Seminary, where he completed his doctorate. He was principal of the Basel Mission Theological Seminary, Mangalore (1947 – 1960), professor of history of religions and philosophy at the United Theological College (1960 – 1966) and principal of Serampore College (1966 – 1968). From 1968 to 1980 Samartha served the WCC, being the first director of the sub-unit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (1971 – 1980).[104] The height which he gained reflects his persona.

His theological apprehensions are part of *The Modern Hindu View of History According to Representative Thinkers (1958), Between Two Culture: Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World (1971), Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement (1971), Dialogue between Men of Living Faith (1971), Towards World Community: The Colombo Papers (1975) The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ (1974), Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Dialogue (1981), One Christ-Many Religions: Towards a Revised Christology (1991), Pilgrim Christ: Sermons, Poems and Bible Studies (1994).*

7.3.1 Influences

While at the Seminary, Samartha came under the influence of his Professors, particularly Marcus Ward and P. D. Devanandan. He was also fortunate to work under some prominent Western scholars of his time like Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, C.H. Dodd, Oscar Cullmann and Karl Barth.

7.3.2 Theology

Samartha was acknowledged as a leading authority on inter-religious dialogue. S. Wesley Ariarajah quotes Samartha on dialogue:

> Dialogue is not matter of discussion but of relationships. It has more to do with people than with ideas. It is a spirit, a mood, an attitude towards neighbors of other faiths. In a multi-religious country like India where the destinies of different religious communities are intertwined and where people of different persuasions and ideological convictions face the same human problems we need to remove suspicions and build up trust between people. So dialogue can become an expression of Christian neighbourliness and part of Christian ministry in a pluralist world.[105]

One of Samartha's major theological concerns in the context of religious pluralism has been to answer what it means to affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. In the earlier phase of his theological enterprise he examined this issue within the context of the response to the 'unbound' Christ by Hindus, and indicated elements for developing a Christology for India using insights especially from Sankara's *Advaita*. Later on he has been involved in examining this issue mainly within the context of religious pluralism where alternative claims are being made for other lords. Samartha rejects exclusivism which seeks to conquer other faiths, inclusivism which co-opts other faiths without their permission, and naïve pluralism that considers all religions as equally valid and which leads either to sterile coexistence or to an unworthy competition as unacceptable and fruitless. The best position, according to him, is to affirm God alone as absolute and consider all religions to be relative. This position asserts the distinctiveness of different religions and savior figures and makes possible a mutually critical and enriching

relationship between religions.[106] For him dialogue means living engagement with people of other faiths.

7.3.3 Re- thinking Mission[107]

For Samartha the time has come within the Christian tradition, and especially within ecumenical discourse, to restate the meaning of "Mission" in multi-religious contexts that it was not only about proselytism, but primarily about taking into account also the integrity of other faiths, and co-operation in pursuing common purposes like justice, peace and human rights.

He started questioning the age-old assumption about the essence of Christian mission by saying: "Is the Christian mission the only mission of God in the entire world at all times? To claim that only Christians have mission and that others only engage in proselytization would indeed be nothing less than arrogance although it might wear the cloak of deceptive Christian humility."[108] Samartha further asserted that conversion is not from one religion to another, but from unbelief in God to belief in God, and that mission is not the church's work but God's own work.[109]

In his book, *One Christ many Religions*, he stated "mission is God's continuing activity through the Spirit to mend the brokenness of creation, to overcome the fragmentation of humanity, and to heal the rift between humanity, nature, and God."[110] This mission is not only for Christians according to Samartha, but also for other faiths. In a religiously plural world, Christians together with their neighbors of other faiths are called to participate in God's continuing mission in the world. This has nothing to do with the expansion of Christianity as religion or the statistical increase of Christians in the world. Together with other Faiths, Christians are practicing their *mission* to serve the poor, to remove ignorance, to heal the sick, caring for the orphans and widows irrespective of their religious or ideological affiliations. These services must be done without a hidden agenda for conversion of some, but as the Christian response to God's love in Christ. Here, *diakonia* (service) becomes *marturia* (witness).[111] The distinctiveness of Christian mission lies precisely in its being Christian, that is, in its being rooted in God through Jesus Christ and being active in the world in the power of the Spirit, without denying, however, that neighbours of other faiths

have their "missions in the global community".[112] Christians are doing their work in the name of Jesus, and other neighbours are doing their missions according to their religious and ideological traditions. Mission thus was redefined as God's continuing activity through the Spirit.

7.3.4 Dialogue

For him dialogue is part of living relationship. There can be no dialogue between religions; dialogue can take place only between people of living faiths. While concepts and ideas are important, the first step in real dialogue is to realize that religion is much more than its creeds formulated in particular categories.[113] It involves larger relationships of living together and working together. Informed understanding, critical appreciation, and balanced judgment these cannot arise except where people meet in trust, openness and commitment.[114] Interreligious dialogue should not lead to syncretism, a kind of "fruit salad of religions". Syncretism is an uncritical mixture of different religions. It creates confusion, misunderstanding and panic.[115] It leads to spiritual poverty, theological confusion and ethical impotence. It would be foolish to eliminate fundamental differences between religions in the interest of shallow friendliness. In many situations of dialogue there is an authentic and inescapable commitment to share and to witness.[116] Dialogue has as its basis the commitment of all partners to their respective faiths and their openness to the insights of the others. The integrity of particular religions must be recognized.[117] Dialogue should not be limited to academic discussions of conceptual ideas. The other aspects of religion the meaning of ritual, the significance of symbols and experiences of devotion, and the ongoing dialogue in day-to-day life should not be ignored.[118] Dialogue should lead to the discovery of deeper dimensions of one's own faith, and to the re-examining and furthering of one's own understanding of one's faith and practice.[119] For Samartha dialogue is possible through the means of living relationship and commitment which helps one to understand own and the other faith properly.

Samartha was convinced that apart from the social and cultural need for dialogue, for the sake of better relations amongst people of different backgrounds, dialogue for Christians was also the

expression of their faith in Jesus Christ in and through life in the community. "Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility…for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father".[120] For him dialogue has both social and cultural needs and it leads to better relation among people of different faith but for Christians dialogue also is the expression of their faith in Jesus Christ in and through life in the community.

For Samartha this is the reason why Christians must take initiative to dialogue with people of other faiths. Religious boundaries had become walls of separation by tradition. Religions themselves become separated islands from each other instead of bridges of understanding between people. Therefore, he said "the quest for community today cuts across these boundaries, and persons of different faiths reach out to form new communities of greater freedom and love".[121] Samartha claims that the purpose of dialogue with people of other faith is to make mutual relationship which is broken because of religious and cultural reasons. So for him religion is part of culture of humanity.

7.3.5 Inter-religious Dialogue

Samartha has been an influential thinker in India and beyond in the ecumenical and inter-religious movements. He succeeded in shifting the framework from the Christian study of religions to actual engagement in dialogue with people of living faiths, in spite of some members' of the WCC strong resistance and fear of syncretism. With which for the first time brought together under the auspicious of the WCC a group of Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists to reflect about the experience of bilateral dialogue in different contexts and to draw out lessons for future relationship between people of living faiths.

Samartha rejects exclusivism which seeks to conquer other faiths, inclusivism which co-opts other faiths without their permission, and a naïve pluralism that considers all religions as equally valid, which results in either a sterile co-existence or an unworthy competition. The best position, according to him, is to affirm God alone as absolute and consider all religions to be relative. This position asserts the distinctiveness of different religions and

savior figures and makes possible a mutually critical and enriching relation between religions.[122] Inter-religious dialogue thus leads to mutual enrichment without compromise.

7.3.6 Theo- centric Christology

Development of Christology in the context of religious pluralism had always been central to Samartha. He had the opinion that the church in India has to develop several Christologies related to different context of India. So he moved to cosmic Christology. He says, "Christologies are formulation of faith in God through Jesus Christ in the process of being led by the power of the spirit in the history."[123] Concept of 'unbounded Christ' is the declaration of the universal lordship of Jesus Christ, going beyond the limits of geographical boundaries, cultural backgrounds and spiritual traditions.[124]

7.3.6.1 Bullock- Cart Christology

For Samartha, Christ is the centre of Christian life and the substance of Christian faith. Christologies are human attempts to understand and apply the meaning and the message of the Christ-event to the world. Every Christology seeks to grasp the content of the mystery of Christ and explain how God is related to humanity and humanity is related to God through Jesus Christ.[125] The whole Christological problem in a religiously plural world, in Samartha's view is how to understand and confess the particularly of the revelation of God's universal salvific will in Jesus Christ.

Samartha, in his early writings, attempted to develop a Christology relevant to India's pluralistic situation by insisting on the universal relevance of revelation in Jesus Christ. This early attempts of Samartha branched out into different lines. First, he linked the universality of God's revelation in Christ with the notion of "unbound Christ". By this attempt, he tried to extend the presence of Christ beyond the visible boundaries of the church. Secondly, he moved towards the indigenization of the Christian message of salvation in Jesus Christ. He argued for the emancipation o f Christ-event from its Aramaic and Greek setting to allow it to be meaningfully confessed in a land with a profound Hindu culture.[126]

Samartha opines for the need of a revised Christology in the

multi religious context. For Samartha, Christian identity has been distorted by emphasizing Christology from above, which is present dogmatic view. He calls for a revision of Christology from helicopter to bullock cart. The helicopter theology is providing emphasis to Christology from above. For him, "helicopter theology is an attempt to land on the religious plural terrain of Asia, makes a lot of missiological noise and kicks up so much of theological dust that people around are prevented from hearing the voice and seeing the vision of the descended divinity.[127] But in case of Bullock-cart, "it has its wheel always touching the unpaved roads of Asia, for without the continual friction with the ground, the cart cannot move forward at all. Moreover, it has the advantage of having its bullocks move on with a steady pace even when the driver sometimes falls asleep.[128] So it is people oriented theology based on the Indian reality.

7.3.7 Evaluation

What is imperative for Samartha is 'dialogue'. He stressed that dialogue take place in community because dialogue is not concerned about religion but the people who follow it. Thus he was concerned with 'living faith'.

Inter-religious dialogue for him was an integral part of Christian mission itself-mission of bearing witness to, and being, the channels of God's love as it was manifested especially in the life, death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Dialogue meant to him a silent revolution in terms of attitudinal change, and willingness to listen to one another and to allow the other person to be his/her own spokes-person. It is the willingness to see God at work everywhere, without giving up the integrity of the Christian faith and witness.

Sunand Sumitra in his doctoral dissertation criticized Samartha that he failed to project Christ's distiveness in a pluralistic context.[129] Here Sumitra just wants to distinguish Christ from others. For Samartha it was the tendency of Christians to erect fences around Jesus Christ by claiming him all for themselves that keeps others from seeing him in his true light and significance. He saw the uniqueness of Jesus in Jesus' unique ability to evoke wide-ranging positive responses from people of other faiths and ideologies. His theological thinking is characterized by his attempt to hold together

commitment and openness, knowing that God is always more than our limited and finite perceptions of God.

For Samatha the existential-theological concern of being sustained by faith is primary concern. Hence, Indian Christian Theology needs to listen to others and take their perception of Jesus Christ seriously and sustained it's faith in the face of suffering, in the light of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But he missed to understand the problem of suffering from human perspective. And here appears Indian Liberation Oriented Theologies to our rescue.

7.4 K.P. Aleaz (1946-)

Kalarikkal Paulose Aleaz comes from Ernakulam, Kerala, and is a priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church. He obtained B.D., M.Th and ThD degrees from the Senate of Serampore College in 1972, 1977, and 1985 respectively. He has been lecturer in religions at Bishop's College, Kolkata, since 1980 and professor since 1990, a professor with SATHRI, and dean in the North India Institute of Post Graduate Theological Studies.[130]

His works includes *Dialogue in India: Multi-Religious Perspectives and Practice (1991), The Role of Pramanas in Hindu-Christian Epistemology (1991), Harmony of religions: The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda (1993), The Gospel of Indian Culture (1994), Jesus in Neo-Vedanta: A Meeting of Hinduism and Christianity (1995), Dimension of Indian Religion: Study, Experience and Interaction (1995), Christian Thought Through Advaita Vedanta (1996), An Indian Jesus from Sankara's Thought (1997), From Exclusivism to Inclusivism: The Theological Writings of Krishna Mohan Banerjea (1999), Religions in Christian Theology (2001), The Quest for a Contextual Spirituality (2004)* etc.

7.4.1 Neo-*Vedantic* Significance

Indian context has the freedom and authority to decide the content of the gospel of God for India and a major factor of the Indian religious context is *Advaita Vedantic* experience.[131] Neo-*Vedanta* is a reconception of *Advaita Vedanta* for contemporary situation. It is similar to *Advaita Vedanta* which holds that Brahman is one

without the second, yet it is different from *Advaita Vedanta* because it tries to synthesize *Advaita, VisistAdvaita* and *Dvaita* and is also practical *Vedanta* is applicable to social life. According to it, history is a pattern of absolute significance; the world-process has a pattern and a goal and it is marching towards freedom.[132] Neo-*Vedantic* thought provides harmony to religions because the diversity of religions based on dogmas and ceremonies does not reflect the inner core or the spiritual essence of religion. The differences of religions are in expression and degrees and not in substance. God is the center and religions represent different radii converging to the same centre therefore we should aim for universality i.e. mutual acceptance of religions which goes beyond the idea of just mutual toleration.[133] For him the substance of all faith is same thus we need to acknowledge it for mutual acceptance of the other.

Christ is also pictured in Neo-*Vedantic* Perspective. The philosophy of Christ can be identified in the words, 'I and my Father are one', 'I in my Father and my Father in me', 'You in me', 'The kingdom of God is within you'. So Christ was Vedantin preaching Indian doctrine of *So(h)ham*- I and He; *Tat tvam asi*- thou art that; or *Idam sarvam Brahmaiva*. The *Vedantic* teaching of Jesus is clear from the words of Jesus 'You shall know the truth and truth shall make you free (Jn. 8:32) according to which salvation is freedom from bondage and it is attained through knowledge.[134] According to Swami Vivekananda there is very little difference between the pure religion of Christ and that of the *Vedanta*. For Radhakrishnan Indian religions have to help Christian faith to revive its own mystic traditions. For Swami Ranganathananda, the emphasis of Jesus was *sadhana*, the practice of religion through renunciation.[135]

Here the *Advaita Vedantic* hermeneutical context of India through Neo-*Vedanta* proclaims the gospel that Jesus had a non-dual relation with God the Father and he is inspiring all the humans also to have the same relation with God through the renunciation of the lower self. Jesus shows us the way to become perfect, he shows us our true nature which is divine; he brings us to realization which involves the regaining of the lost selfhood. The central lesson of the life of Jesus to an Indian is the understanding of the false antithesis between human person and God.[136] Jesus was a yogi of

the highest type who practiced all the *yogas* namely *Karma, bhakti, raja* and *jnana*. Jesus as an incarnation had constant vision of God and through *samadhi*, he realized the identity and unity of the individual self with the Supreme Self. The difference between a human person and Christ is a difference in manifestation; but as Absolute Being there is no difference between the two. The resources of God which were available to Jesus are open to all and if we struggle as he did, we will develop the God in us. What Jesus does is setting an example by showing the path of perfection.[137] The Neo-*Vedantic* interpretation of Christ is related with religio-cultural expression of India and it further helps in developing Neo-*Vedantic* Christology.

7.4.2 Neo-*Vedantic* Christology[138]

We can identify a development in the conception of the person of Christ in Neo-*Vedanta*. The later Neo-Vedantins Swamijis Akhilananda, Prabhavananda and Ranganathananda are more emphatic on the role of Jesus as an Incarnation as distinguished from an individual human person. According to them, Jesus is one of the *avataras* or the descents of God, born without *karmas* and above *maya*. An *avatara* has the unique power to transmit spirituality, transform human lives by touch, look or wish, and reveal divinity through transfiguration. There is an important difference even between saints and incarnations. Whereas saints are at first bound souls who later became illumined, the incarnations are the veritable embodiments of divine light and power from the very beginning of their lives. As a divine incarnation, Jesus had much compassion and the power to redeem. Also, as an incarnation Jesus was a *yogi* of the highest type who practiced all the yogas namely *karma*, *bhakti*, *raja*, and *jnana*. Jesus as an incarnation had constant vision of God and through *samadhi* he realized the identity and unity of the individual self with the Supreme Self.

But, we should note that in the earlier Neo-Vedantins like Swamijis Vivekananda, Abhedananda and S. Radhakrishnan the emphasis is more on presenting Jesus as an ideal, perfect human person. The difference between a human person and Christ is a difference in manifestation; but as Absolute Being there is no difference between the two. The resources of God which were

available to Jesus are open to all and if we struggle as he did, we will develop the God in us. What Jesus does is setting an example, by showing the path of perfection. True, those earlier Neo-Vedantins also had no problem in worshipping Jesus as Divine; as one who reveals the Absolute, as a herald of truth on earth. So we can say that Neo-*Vedanta* keeps a balance between following the path shown by Christ and worshipping him. Jesus is simultaneously a Divinity for us to worship and an ideal for us to imitate.

Though Neo-*Vedantic* Christology may agree that as a divine incarnation Jesus has the power to redeem, transmit spirituality and transform human lives, according to it this is realized not in the way the Christian Church conceives the atonement. In Neo-*Vedantic* view, the Christian doctrines, especially the doctrine of atonement goes against the spirit of Jesus. What Jesus does is to show us the way to become perfect, to show us our true nature which is divine, to bring us to realization which involves the regaining of the lost selfhood. Cross signifies dying to the lower self and resurrection means rising to the higher universal Self. Cross is the expression of spiritual power or soul force through which alone we can conquer evil. Cross is the very perfection of the teaching of nonresistance of evil. Resurrection affirms that human person is really spirit. Resurrection means the resurrection of the subtle body made of subtle elements. Above all, it is the affirmation of the Neo-*Vedantic* Christology that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are not so much historical events which occurred once upon a time as universal processes of spiritual life, which are being continually accomplished in human lives. Following the example of Jesus, we can also die and resurrect and Jesus as an *avatara* can of course help us in our endeavour. Thus we may both worship Jesus and follow his path.

7.4.3 Pluralistic Inclusivism[139]

A Christian understanding of Church raises the issue of a viable theology of religions, which we identify as Pluralistic Inclusivism and which is different from Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism. Pluralistic Inclusivism is an approach, which is totally open to receive insights from other religious experiences and theologies. The suggestion is, to go beyond a comparative approach to an

interrelational approach, as religious traditions are not static finished products, rather dynamic inter-related experiences of growth. Pluralistic Inclusivism stands for dialogical theologies that encourage the relational convergence of religions, conceiving on the one hand the diverse religious resources of the world as the common property of humanity and on the other a possible growth in the richness of each of the religious experience through mutual inter-relation.

It inspires each religious faith to be pluralistically inclusive i.e., on the one hand each living faith is to become truly pluralistic by other faiths contributing to its conceptual content and on the other, Inclusivism is to transform its meaning to witness the fulfillment of the theological and spiritual contents of one's own faith in and through the contributions of other living faiths. It inspires Christian faith to be pluralistically inclusive i.e., the content of the revelation of God in Jesus is to become truly pluralistic by other faiths contributing to it as per the requirement of different places and times and it is through such pluralistic understanding of the gospel that its true inclusivism is to shine forth. Here Pluralism transforms itself to focus on its centre, which is God as God in a universally conceived Jesus, and Inclusivism transforms itself to bear witness to the fulfillment of the Christian understanding of Christ in and through the theological contributions from people of other faiths. The basic affirmation here is that there is a possibility of the fulfillment of the theological and spiritual contents of one's own faith in and through the contributions of other living faiths and this perspective can be applicable in the case of any faith.

Pluralistic Inclusivism is a perspective in inter-religious relations in which all the religious resources of the world are considered as the common property of the whole humanity. All religious experiences and traditions are simultaneously ours. We do not have any one particular religious tradition alone as our own and others as belonging to others. All are mine as well as all are for all others. All belong to all. It is a religious perspective in which while remaining in one's own religious faith-experience, one can consider other faiths as one's own, as the common property of humanity, for an increasingly blessed and enriched life. Here the otherness of the other is negated.

7.4.4 Indian Christian Epistemology

Pramana is the term used in Indian Philosophy to describe the valid knowledge. There are six pramanas or valid sources of knowledge in Indian epistemology to arrive at Indian metaphysics or the Indian theory of Reality and Sabda or testimony or authority or scripture is the most important of the pramanas. An Indian Christian epistemology receiving insights from the Indian philosophical schools, especially *Advaita Vedanta*. We identified the important meanings of all the six *Pramanas* (sources of valid knowledge) of Indian Philosophy, namely Perception, Inference, Scripture, Comparison, Postulation, and Non-cognition in order to discover these *Pramanas* as sources of valid knowledge in Indian Christian theology so that an authentic Indian Christian theological method as well as an understanding of Indian Christian sources of authority may be clarified for the benefit of all the Indian theological constructions. If Scripture (*sabda*) can be classified under revelation, the other five *Pramanas* come under reason and there is an integral relationship between reason and revelation in Indian epistemology and consequently in Indian Christian thought. Perception (*pratyaksa*) proclaims the integral relation between humans, nature and the Innermost Reality, Atman and makes theology rooted in day-to-day experience. Inference (*anumana*) challenges us to identify the invariable concomitances (*vyaptis*) in Christian theological issues in terms of the present day Indian context. A word (*sabda*) signifies the universal class-character (*jati* or *akriti*) over against the particular (*vyakti*) and so we have to cross over from the particular Bible to the universal Bible. On perceiving Jesus to be like the person pointed out by the Hebrew Scripture and the Upanishads, we come to know that the Hebrew Scripture and the Upanisads definitely point to Jesus through comparison (*upamana*). By means of postulation (*arthapatti*), we can arrive at theological statements that explain seemingly inexplicable phenomena in Christian theology and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*).[140]

7.4.4.1 Bible as Pramana

For transcendental knowledge Sabda is the only pramana, the other pramanas being mainly aids to reason which are to support the revelation provided by Sabda or Scripture. If that is so Indian Christian experience can proclaim the Bible as the primary Sabda pramana or Scriptural valid source of Transcendental knowledge. For transcendental knowledge or knowledge which is beyond the world-human realm, Bible is the authoritative source. Bible gives us knowledge regarding God and His dealings with humans and the whole creation and the other pramanas namely perception, inference, comparison, postulation and non-perception which are aids of human reason and experience, clarify and affirm the revelation of God and his relationship with us in the Bible.[141] Bible plays a very significant place for faith community therefore it is considered as the primary pramana.

After hearing the revelation of pramana Bible through the guidance of *hermeneutical principle* we have to ponder over the meaning of it and arrive at conclusion through reasoning with the assistance of other pramanas of perception, inference, comparison, postulation and non-perception and also make the insights of this revelation our own experience. God has given us the gift of intellect. The fruits of the use of intellect in the critical study of Bible through many generations are before us. Let us utilize our own intellect and the fruits of the use of other people's intellect in arriving at viable conclusions regarding our studies of the Bible. Uncritical study of the Bible is a negation of the precious gift of God in the Bible as well as in us. But we are not ending with mere critical reflection of the Bible. The final step of Nidhidhyasana is our own transformation through the message of the Bible. The content of what we read and reflect in the Bible is to be made our own experience and this is the final step in making the Bible a primary pramana or valid source of knowledge in Christian life.[142] Other pramanas should be utilized to derive the meaning of the sabda pramana and this meaning should reflect of our personal life. For many pramanas are part of philosophy thus no practical relevance but purpose of Indian philosophy is life.

Another insight which we can wholeheartedly receive from Indian epistemology regarding Sabda or scripture as pramana is 'what is eternal regarding the Bible is the universal' in it. As written words they are identical with God as reflected in the extrinsic denominator of the human mind. Also the 'universal' in the Bible is

the emergent meaning and significance actualized as a result of the fusion together of the 'horizon' of the interpreter and that of the text, setting aside as per the direction of modern western hermeneutics the three common myths namely the 'mind of the author', 'the original reader', and the 'original meaning.' Thus Indian theologians should receive not the 'particular Jesus' but the 'universal Jesus.' The 'universal Jesus' is identical with the absolute Consciousness or God but the 'particular Jesus' is a mere reflection of God in the extrinsic denominator of the mind of First century Palestine. Bible as an Indian Christian pramana always points to the universalities of the gospel which should not be hindered by the particularities of the time and place of its origination and it is Bible in this universal aspect which is eternal and everlasting. The real place of the Bible as pramana according to Indian experience claims for its universality.[143] Bible as pramana also highlights its universality breaking the barriers of particularity.

7.4.5 Evaluation

K. P. Aleaz theological methodology based on Pluralistic Inclusivism is open to receive insights from other faith. Pluralistic Inclusivism stands for dialogical theologies that encourage the relational convergence of religions, conceiving, on the one hand, the diverse religious resources of the world as the common property of humanity, and on the other, a possible growth in the richness of each, of religious experience through mutual interrelation.[144]

The Christology based on Neo-*Vedantic* theme presents Jesus having non-dual relation with God and it challenges humanity to follow these footsteps thus to find God in us.

He constructively used six *pramanas* of Indian Philosophy in constructing Indian Christian epistemology as a result validating the Christian source of knowledge.

Inter-religious and Intra-religious dialogue invites the Christian theology to move towards the goal of establishing harmony of religions. It can happen in a contemplative environment of Christian Ashram or at the ultimate level of "cave of heart" or in practical level of dialoguing with the people or at the deeper *Advaitic* revelation. The call for the theology is to be light and salt for our nation.

END NOTES

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4 Ibid.
5 Emmanuel Vattakuzhy, "*Swami Abhishiktananda and his Contemplative Prayer*", 375-84.
6 Ibid.
7 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu Christian Meeting Point, Within the Cave of the Heart* (Bangalore, CISRS, 1969), 11.
8 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Further Shore* (N Delhi: ISPCK, 1975), 27.
9 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu Christian Meeting Point, Within the Cave of the Heart*, 104-105.
10 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda. A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1974), 7.
11 Ibid., 48-49.
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21 Abhishiktananda uses this image in reference to his former life D 27.8.55, 118.
22 Christianity in India, *M A Christian Studies*, 76-77.
23 *Ibid.*, 115.
24 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Prayer* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1967), 57.
25 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu Christian Meeting Point, Within the Cave of the Heart*, 19.
26 Swami Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda. A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1974), 62-63.
27 *Ibid.*, 108.
28 *Ibid.*, 167.

[29] *Ibid.*, 177.
[30] *Ibid.*, 178.
[31] *Ibid.*, 179.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*, 180.
[34] *Ibid.* ,184.
[35] Christianity in India, *M A Christian Studies*, 78.
[36] KP Aleaz, "*Dialogical Theologies. A Search for an Indian Perspective,"*
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2005), 526.
[39] R. Panikkar, "Indian Theology: A Theological Mutation", in Theologizing in India, M Amaladoss et al. Bangalore, 1981, 23 quoted J. Parappally, Emerging Trends in Indian Christology, 108.
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[66] Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005) , 223.
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[68] Brahman without attributes, meditated by the enlightened.
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[71] This is the level of lay people.
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[91] Raymond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 29.
[92] Raimon Panikkar, *The Fullness of Man: A Christophany* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 154.
[93] Ibid., 157.
[94] Ibid., 162.
[95] Ibid., xix.
[96] Ibid., xx.
[97] Ibid., xxi.
[98] This means the spiritual life which will help us to recognize the being.

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[100] Ibid., 187.
[101] Ibid., xxvii.
[102] Ibid., 189.
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[109] Nelson 1971:145.
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[118] S. J. Samartha, "*Ecumenical Issues in Community Relations"*, Lecture delivered at the Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies, Rome, 1978, (Typed script), p. 7.
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[121] Ibid., 13.
[122] Mathew Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians. Context and Contributions*, 434.

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[124] SJ Samartha, *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ* (Madras: CLS, 1974), 10.
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[131] K.P. Aleaz, *Jesus in Neo-Vedanta: A Meeting of Hinduism and Christianity* (Delhi: Kant Publications, 1995), 158.
[132] Ibid., 8.
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8

CHRISTOLOGY IN INDIAN CONTEXTUAL APPROACH

One of the major tasks of theology is to interpret the person and work of Jesus Christ and the challenges for theology is to re-interpret the meaning of Jesus to the given context so that his significance will impact the communities. Interpreting Christ requires a committed encounter with the context because it is the context which becomes the locus of theological reflection. The hallmark of today's context is the awareness of one's own identity and this awareness definitely shapes Christology i.e. Dalit Christology, Feminist Christology, Tribal Christology etc.

8.1 Christ the Liberator

The Latin American Liberation theology brought the issue of socio-economic factor as part of theological exercise. According to S. Kappen "What we have in India is a form of dependent capitalism characterized by the vast concentration of the means of production (agricultural and industrial) in a few hands. Though it has contributed to the development of the productive forces, capitalism has created wide disparities in income and opportunity, which have only increased since Independence. 47 percent are doomed to live below subsistence level. Here is how an economist sums up the result of capitalist development thus far: Nine-tenths of India's populations are left behind in economic backwaters. Mass poverty is on the rise; the non-availability of the most basic human necessities *per capita*such as food grains and clothing are scarce; rural indebtedness has multiplied; unemployment and underemployment have reached the level of 20.8 million person-years'. To this must be added the proliferation of slums, the marginalization of tribals

and the outcastes, the destruction of traditional handicrafts and the ecological ravages wrought by profit-oriented production."[1]Kappen here evaluate the Indian society and his mark sheet presents the real face of India.

It is important to hold all this in mind today, when we speak of a Christology from the struggles of the marginalized peoples of India. Their being marginal in society and being oppressed is a point which brings them together in search of freedom and a fuller life. Their Christology is not centered on the titles of Jesus, or the dogmatic definitions of his person. These are not questions of any immediate concern to them. Their interpretation of Jesus is as someone who dwells among them (Jn. 1:14), who shares their life, its struggles and sorrows. Therefore, in the gospel stories of Jesus' dealing with the poor, those at the periphery of society have found great echo in the hearts of the poor in India.[2]As a result, the socio-economic reality of the community requires a Christology that can present Jesus as the liberator.

8.1.1 Christ and Our Search for New Humanity[3]

Many Indian theologians started realizing that God's revelation in Jesus Christ and the Gospel contain answers and powerful resources for the socio-economic, political, cultural and religious questions and aspirations of the nation.[4] They also saw a link between the Gospel of Christ and the social and religious movements of the country. As many Christians and missionaries began to involve in the struggles of the people and to identify with the poor and the marginalized, they realized that are proclaiming Christ in a new way and found the relevance of the Gospel for the country and for the lives of the people. More number of Indian Christians and theologians began to realize that evangelization is much more than merely baptizing people and planting the Church. They realized that evangelization as proclaiming God's love manifested in Christ called for communion and humanization. Authentic humanization is at the same time divinization.

India's rich religious experience, our time-old tradition of harmony among the plurality of religions, the nations' resolve to construct a new society based on equal justice and freedom for all, and our strong commitment to eliminate poverty and misery, and

solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, all these were seen Jesus Christ is the Prototype of the new humanity and the new creation.

8.1.2 Jesus Ministry of Liberation

As far as his ministry is concerned, Jesus' response to the '*anawim*' of his times consisted first of all in his self-identification with the poor, by means of which he showed his active concern for them. This was in view of ending their "poverty" (understood in the broader sense as dehumanization). It is to this end that he called for a life of "spiritual poverty", which he believed would set both the rich and the poor free from the stranglehold of compulsive urge to possess (the worship of Mammon). The freeing ministry that he engaged himself in consisted mainly in setting people free from sin and guilt (Mk. 2:1-12; Matt. 26,28), from demons (Mk. 1:21-28), from ritualism (Matt 6,7) and from the oppressive burden of the Law (Matt. 11:28-30).[5]

The new social order that he envisages is characterized by the freedom of the socially ostracized (Mk. 1: 40 -45; Luke. 19: 1- 10), freedom from the burden of possessions (Mk. 1:16-18; 10:17-23; Mt. 6:24), freedom to love (Lk. 7: 36-40) and freedom from false securities of life (Mt 6: 25 -34). Such freedom is both a prerequisite and constitutive of the Kingdom of God. This does not amount to reducing the Kingdom to social liberation, but to seeing the fact that one cannot have the Kingdom without liberation. That is why we see a strong social thrust in the mission statement of Jesus (Lk. 4: 16-21). This actually is taken from Is. 61:1-2 (LXX), but with two modifications. First, the clause "to heal the broken hearted" is omitted and "to set the oppressed free" (Is. 58:6) is added. The good news proclaimed by Jesus thus gets a clear social thrust.[6]We can clearly find the motif of liberation underlying in Jesus' ministry.

The Church's main task is to proclaim this arrival of 'the new humanity in Christ' and to be at the service of it. This new theological trend emphasized the hidden presence of Christ and Holy Spirit in all cultures and religions and in all human societies calling for communion and authentic human development or humanization. Christ is seen here not merely as the center of the whole creation. The transformation of human life and human societies in all its

dimensions is the goal of the mission of the Church. It is not only the task of the Church and Christians, but also the task of all believers as well as non-believers. Hence, the Christian mission needs the collaboration and co-operation with the people of all religions and ideologies, and thus the need for dialogue. All these call for the redefining of Christian mission and a different style of missionary praxis.[7] The Church as a community following the tradition set by the Lord need to re-grip itself with the concern of liberation.

Since Jesus is the liberator of the oppressed the following of Jesus must have other emphasis on spirituality. The systemic analysis of societies and of religious institutions have to be part of the process of discerning the human quest for liberationand discovering God's will in a given situation. Prophetic witness, a relevant Catechesis, a socially live liturgy and participation by the Christian community in the process of human liberation can also be training grounds of holiness and unionwith Christ. Sanctity would then not be so exclusively linked to the sanctuary, the monk's cowl and complacent non-participation in public life. Then we can lookforward to a new flowering of faith in the Master, crucified because of his unflinchingloyalty to the values of justice, love, freedom, truth and peace. Hope in the realizationof these values within human communities will grow, and love would expand to amore genuine level of commitment to persons and groups including justice andliberation. New prophets, martyrs, and servants of human liberation will arise among the Christians. Fortunately this is already taking place in many countries of the world.[8]The Christology of Christ the liberator challenges the theologians to shape their theology with liberation as its core message.

8.2 Dalit Theology

Caste system is a social evil of Indian society. This system resulted in labeling a major sections of society as outcaste who are considered as inferior. Religiously, socially, economically and humanly they are deprived people. Dalit theology which originated in India as a result of liberation theology is an innovative expression in the field of progressive theologies. It is an authentic theology (doing theology for and from the experience of Dalits who are the most oppressed sections of Indian society) effectively utilizing the

subaltern realities and categories. Therefore, the source and process of theology is in the agony and suffering of Dalit community.

According to A.P. Nirmal, "A Christian Dalit Theology is a story of the afflictions, the bondage, the harsh treatment, the toil and tears of the Dalits. A genuinely Dalit Theology will be characterized by pathos, by suffering.[9] It also advocates for methodological exclusivism.[10] Dalit theology is a doing theology.

Dalit theology is also a doing theology because it puts into practice the theological objectives to challenge and eradicate the cruel injustices, harsh treatment and prolonged oppressiveness faced by the Dalit masses. It is also conscientizing the Dalits in the context of their sufferings and struggles for building a new life-order. It further creates awareness among them that their position in life is not simply to undergo sufferings as their destiny but to take responsibility and to involve themselves in social changes in order to remove their miserable, degraded and lowly existence. [11]

8.2.1 Dalit Christology

A.P. Nirmal claims God of Old Testament prophets is a servant God- a God who serves. Service of others has always been the privilege of Dalit community in India.[12]In order to prove the dalitness of Jesus A.P. Nirmal brings pathos from Jesus' genealogy. The genealogy highlights Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, who outwitted her father-in-law by sleeping with him; Rahab the harlot who helped the Israelite spies; Solomon Son of David. These minute details of Jesus' ancestry suggest his dalit conditions. Jesus used the title 'son of Man', this title got three significance and the second way in which the Son of Man is used to indicate his suffering and death. These saying speak of him encountering rejection, mockery, and contempt, suffering and final death. He underwent these Dalit experience as the prototype of all dalits.[13]According to Maria Arul Raja, God deliberately took on vulnerable human flesh to show complete solidarity with the suffering masses as well as restoring their lost human dignity.[14] Jesus is viewed as the Messiah in relation with his suffering to provide salvation to the marginalized including the Dalits.For James Massey, God preferred to be born as a poor person and this reflects the fact that in our context Jesus is a Dalit,

the poorest of the poor.[15]Dalit theologians rightly connect the dalit experience and Jesus experience.

Nirmal also believes that Jesus had the Dalitness in him both to serve and suffer. He says that Jesus is like a *dhobi* (washerman) or *bhangi* (sweeper) who strives to eradicate the dirt from society, but still he was rejected, treated as inferior and humiliated. He quotes Isaiah (Is. 53:1-8) describing Jesus as a suffering servant who is like a lamb, oppressed, grief-stricken, humiliated, whipped and led to be put to death for no wrong that he committed.[16]So Nirmal presents that the servant-hood of Jesus, his rejection, and the humiliations that he faced are related to dalit experience. This view of Nirmal is criticized by Balasundaram, who argues that the servility of Dalits should not be glorified as that of Christ as it was an imposed humility, whereas the serving nature of Jesus was his preferred option to save others.[17]This position of Balasundaram clarifies that the servant-hood of Dalits was forced on them against their will, but Jesus's servant-hood was by his own voluntary will and was a preferential choice to save all humans.

Felix Wilfred claims that the death of Jesus "outside the gate" of the city of Jerusalem is a particular moving events for Dalits. For, in traditional Indian society, since the Dalits were treated as untouchables, they were segregated from the main village, and they had to confine themselves to habitations in a separate place outside the village. Here the Dalits identify their plight with the situation of Jesus, cast out and killed outside the gates of Jerusalem.[18] The Dalit experience of rejection also finds connection with the life of Jesus.

For M.E. Prabhakar Christology is not to be understood in terms of power but what is humble and frailly human… it is a call to make sacrifices on behalf of the poor.[19] He wants an Indian expression of Dalit Christology and urges to create indigenous Dalit concepts or expressions. The Dalit way of expression is actually quite contrary; they are very fuming in nature and we could find a protest in them; be it songs, dances, musical instruments, worship or rituals. So therefore, when we use these Dalit expressions to spell Christology, we will certainly end up with an active, effective and result-oriented Christology.

Today, there is a shift in the concepts of Dalit Christology among Dalit Christians, thereby clearly setting aside the erstwhile archaic models put forward since the birth of Dalit theology. Jesus not only showed his solidarity by suffering with the suffering people, but also tried to find the root cause of the suffering and oppression, and intended to motivate them to overcome their suffering conditions, by going to the extent of making far-reaching statements, when he said that he "had not come to bring peace, but a sword".[20]

While having mostly focused on the aspects of suffering and pain, Dalit theology overlooked the liberation aspect, which is an integral part of Dalit social and cultural life. However, newer and more relevant ideas and models, which have been able to overcome the drawbacks of previous models continued to flow from other quarters. For instance, Sathianathan Clarke presents Christ as a "Drum", which is a vibrating source for Dalit Liberation. Antony Raj advocates logical disobedience to celebrate their human dignity. Commenting on this he says, "I feel that is better for us Dalits to die on our feet than to live on our knees before insolent men".[21]Dalit Christology sees in Jesus the embodiment of equality, respect for human persons and dignity. It highlights Jesus' non-hierarchical approach to people, and his resistance to traditional oppressive laws and injunctions.[22]Dalit Christology present Jesus as the Messiah of the Dalit community and there is a visible connection between the life of Jesus and the dehumanized life experience of Dalit community thus he provide them hope against all atrocities and injustice.

8.3 Tribal Identity

Along with the Dalits, the tribals of India form the 'subaltern' section of Indian society. This sector forms four-fifth of India's population, but their corporate religious and cultural experience has been treated as inferior to that of the dominant class and less important for the India theological enterprise.[23]The English word 'tribe' is derived from the Latin word*Tribus (Tri*- three, *bhuour* or *bu* – to be) which means 'to be three'. It was used to identify the three basic divisions of the Romans – the Tintieneses, Ramneses and Luceres for the purpose of taxation, military conscription and census taking. The use of the term 'tribal' became popular with the colonization and spread of Christianity and it was used to denote a group of

people speaking a common language, observing uniform rules of social of social organization and working together for some common purpose such as trade, agriculture and welfare.[24]It is interesting to note that the term 'tribe' or 'tribal' does not originate with those people who are identified as tribals but it was imposed upon by the anthropologists, missionaries and later by the Constitution of India. The term carries a strong pejorative, negative and derogatory meaning in India that it implies backward, primitive and uncivilized people living in the hills and forests.[25]

8.3.1.Tribal Christology

Taking the Biblical verse from Hebrews 1 : 1 ff, "*in the past God spoke to our ancestors…but in these days he has spoken to us through his Son Jesus Christ"*, Keitzar speaks on making Christ present in our midst as one of us, not as a foreigner, because God has spoken to our people, too, through him. Since God spoke to our ancestors, writes Keitzar, our cultural traditions are important, but it is in Christ God has finally spoken and so all our heritages must be reinterpreted in terms of God's final revelation in Christ Jesus. Keitzar insists that we have to take risks to reinterpret Christ in the contexts of our socio-cultural traditions and contemporary realities.[26]

In order to develop tribal Christology we need to know the tribal ethos. Tribal people have a strong sense of community. Each tribal exists because the community exists, and each one lives for the community and is ready to give his/her life for it. This community feeling is seen particularly in times of celebrations, clearing of jungles, preparation of fields for cultivation, wedding, harvesting, construction of houses, collaboration in times of need, of natural calamities, etc. It is enough to entrust something to a group of tribals, and one can be sure that it will be carried out provided thatthey have accepted it whole-heartedly. This sense of corporate identity is very strong among the tribals. It is the communion of mind and heart the Good News in the Christian sense.[27]A second characteristic is closeness to creation and attachment to the land. Land is more than a means of production. It is what gives birth to all the other gifts. It is "mother" earth. There is a strong spiritual relationship between tribal people and their land. It is strongly interwoven with their tribal identity. In the words of S. Tuwere, "it

(land) is a heavily loaded term and combines together economics, politics, history, sociology, ethnicity tradition, identity and spirituality.[28]A third characteristic is a bunch of qualities together, namely, their democratic orientation, sense of equality, sense of independence, habit of open, frank discussion, absence of inhibitions, creatively, simplicity, sincerity, truthfulness, happy and jovial disposition, hardworking, hospitality, sociability, practicality, peace loving, etc. all these positive qualities are a reflection of the Goodness of God and an affirmation of Gospel values.[29]

8.3.2 Presenting Jesus as a Tribal[30]

Presenting Jesus as a Tribal would help to show that Biblical revelation and early Christian tradition have much in common with tribal cultural realities; that the Old Testament expresses the faith of the tribes of Israel; that the Bible remains faithful to its tribal ethos even when its tribal structure was replaced by a monarchy and that the teaching of Jesus can be seen as a return to this tribal ethos in its most authentic meaning.

Presenting Jesus as a Tribal would mean that biblical symbols can be very appealing and meaningful to tribal cultures; Jesus as the Healer, the Liberator, the Compassionate Friend of the poor and the needy, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the obedient one, the Servant of all, the One who is interested in all peoples, the One who stands for truth, the One who wants to free us from evil and all corrupt practices and habits, the One who suffered for us all, the one who gives abundant life, the One who can lead us to Life Eternal- Life without end, the One who loves "My culture" and "All the Cultures," the One who cares for our integral development and well-being, the One who builds communion of mind and heart with the whole creation, the One who is ever ready to listen to us, the One who has no prejudice, the One who respects human dignity and freedom, the One who has a preferential love for the poor and the weak, the defenseless and the voiceless, the One who is the fulfillment of all our hopes, and the One who can obtain forgiveness of all our sins.

Presenting Jesus as the Tribal will help the tribal people as the fulfillment of the people's mythologies, folklore, stories, proverbs, festivals etc. Jesus the Tribal does not negate but radicalizes true,

noble, good and pure, loving and honorable, virtuous or worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8-9).

It is in the nature of tribal ethos to remain open to Healing ministry, Praying ministry and Music ministry as we proclaim and present Jesus Christ. He is the healthiest ancestor who is still alive among them. He is the master of initiation. "Who do you say I am"? (Mark16:16) is one question that can receive the most enriching answers from the tribals. The tribals are continually writing theology with dances and celebration, with their music and drama, with their art forms and architecture, with their living experience as disciples of Jesus Christ. The tribal response to God who has spoken through his son is being formulated from the struggles they go through, from their joys, their pains, their hopes and anxieties and frustrations of everyday life.

Though basically the tribals are the same, they are different in their resourcefulness, aspirations and characteristics. The adivasis of Chotanagpur origin, for example are different from the Nagas and Kuki-chin tribals of North East India. Hence, in developing a mission theology for the tribals, and in making Jesus "Real" to them, the tribal contexts must get more attention: their spirituality, their poems, myths, songs, tales, legends, dances, stories, music, rites of passage (birth and childhood rituals, marriage customs, family, death ceremonies) which become also part of the resources to theologizing. The place of Christ who is originally related to everything in creation etc., are part of a tribal theology in the making.

Presenting Jesus as a Tribal will give more relevance to Christian faith among the tribal people when Jesus appears to them as their Primeval Ancestor, Tribal Chief, the Centre of their festivals and celebrations, the Guardian of Creation, the One who will never separate them from their land.

8.4. Feminist Theology

Feminism is the struggle for the achievements of women's equality, dignity and freedom of choices to control lives and bodies within and outside the homes.[31] Feminist theology deals with the experience of women and how this experience is based on suffering due to the patriarchal domination. Theology in a feminist perspective has to

situate itself at the center of all oppression and exploitation. It also has to conceptualize how categories and structures of oppression and exploitation are linked with each other.[32]

Feminist theology has been engaged in reformulating the whole of Christian theology. The movements for inclusive language and for the admission of women in ministry and priestly ordination lead to the exploration and development of new understanding of the major themes of Christian thought. Feminist scholars argues that the explicit incorporation of the perspective of women have consequences for Christian understanding of God, Christ, Church, theological anthropology, sin, salvation, grace etc.[33] The feminist theology evolves feminist hermeneutics of suspicion where the stories of women's experience serve as the critical paradigms for theology. Feminist theology presupposes ecclesial and theological praxis so liberation and humanization is considered as partners of theology. Feminist theology can contribute in humanization based on compassion, love, sensibility, care, nurture etc.

8.4.1 Feminist Christology

Feminist theology tries to solve the puzzle of relevance of Jesus to the context of women. Can a male figure like Jesus can emancipate women's cause? There are various answers to this Christological issue, for some the tradition itself is affected by patriarchy thus the need is to reject idolatry of Christ but there are many theologians who view Jesus as promoting the cause of women liberation.

R.L. Hnuni evaluates Jesus' concern for women, Jesus' attitude for women comes across from every source, and in every form, every parable, miracle, story, discourse and his actions. Luke is often presented as the gospel writer who has a particular concern to present Jesus as caring for women that are not related to other gospel writers (Lk. 7:36-50, 13:10ff). Nevertheless, all the gospel writers give us the same picture of Jesus as one who not only showed concern for the well-being of women but gave them their full worth and dignity as full human beings. In spite of the indifferent orthodox Jewish' attitude of the day, it is quite remarkable that Jesus is presented as showing no reluctance in outwardly showing his concern to women.[34]When Jesus is presented as the one who has concern for women, it does in no way imply that he has a

particular liking for women, he loves them and shows sympathetic attitude towards them because they are one of the oppressed and down-trodden groups of the society.[35]One can find Jesus acting on behalf of women to provide dignity and equality.

In today's world violence against women and girls isthe most pervasive human rights violation. It can be seen in every corner of the streets, in families and in places of work. It is a grave social problem that threatens the safety, equality and bodily integrity of every woman. It is one of the cruelest social mechanisms to suppress women. Gender violence manifests itself in multiple forms – selective female foeticide and infanticide, sexual abuse, incest, molestation, sexual harassment at work and on the streets, marital rape, domestic violence in the form of wife assault and women battering.[36] Violence against women is part of our society and in this context women liberation requires rejection of all forms of violence.

8.4.2 Jesus' Response to Violence

Jesus strikes at the root cause of violence against women by treating women not as inferiors but as persons whohas equal dignity and worth. He "lifts up women to equal status both through his words and his deeds, recognizing them as persons of worth, never talking down to them or putting them in a second class position."[37] Violence is used against women to control them and claim their helpless and inferior nature but Jesus considered women as equals.

Jesus' healing of the bent woman in Lk. 13: 10 -17 signifies not only the condition of women in his society, but also his sensitivity to their plight. The woman's "bent condition" is a paradigm of the suppressed and disadvantageous condition of women in the male-dominated Jewish society where they could not stand straight and claim their rights.[38] Jesus does not wait for the bent woman to ask for healing but rather he takes the initiative to heal her. By healing her Jesus express his desire and intention to bring wholeness into the lives of women. His dealings with women in each instance of the Gospels unambiguously proclaim that women too are full human beings created in the image of God and unconditionally loved by God his Abba.[39]By ministering to the need of bent women Jesus claimed her equality by calling her daughter of Abraham.

Jesus did not discriminate women in his teachings or in his works. His impartiality and equal treatment of women are symbolically presented in the life of the Samaritan woman. He healed women and allowed the so called impure women to touch him. In a culture where women were segregated and secluded within the four walls of their homes, Jesus allows women to follow him and to be with him in public places and travel with him from Galilee to Jerusalem (Lk. 8: 1-3). Going against the culture, Jesus befriends women and enjoys their company and shares meals with them (Lk. 10:38-42).[40]The gospels also tell us that Jesus did not approve of the patriarchal views of Judaism that viewed women as sex objects and a source of temptation. In his teaching he rejected the idea that lust is uncontrollable. He did not warn his hearers against looking at women, but looking at them lustfully (Mk. 5:28). "To speak freely with woman without considering her an evil thing, to be able to take her hand in purity is to honor her …" Jesus' categorical teaching on divorce also teaches that women are not sexual objects which men can discard at will after use; they are as much human persons as men.[41]So we can find in Jesus a revolutionary who acted on behalf of others so that their life situation should be improved.

The message of the gospels is loud and clear from the way Jesus treated women and responded to them. He addressed the problem of violence against women in his time. In his words and deeds he emphasized that women are not less human beings but are equal in dignity and worth. He related to them as persons with body, spirit, heart and intelligence. He did not reduce their role to reproduction or domestic affairs but rather recognized and affirmed their roles in other areas as well.[42]The feminist theology invites us to re-read the gospels in order to shape Christologies relevant to the needs of communities.

Christology is an attempt to interpret Jesus Christ in a particular context. Today's Christologies provide much importance to the context therefore Christologies are shaped through the experience of the communities i.e. Dalit, Tribal, economically oppressed, Women etc. this also challenges theologies to present new interpretation of Jesus so that emerging context can shape new and relevant Christologies.

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9

SEARCH FOR AN INDIAN ECCLESIOLOGY

The word Church is derived from the Greek *kuriakos* which means belonging to the Lord, the English word 'church' is derived from old English *cir(i)ce* which is from German word *Kirche* which comes from *kuriakondoma* means house of the Lord.It also stands for another Greek word *ekklesia* which is derived from *ek* means 'out of' and *kaleo* means 'call'. *Ekklesia* was commonly used in the ancient Near East to describe an assembly of citizens meeting officially or casually. It refers to the assembly of citizens in the Greek cities who are called out by a herald to proclaim the official decree.*Ekklesia* is the word that the Septuagint most frequently uses to translate the Old Testament term *qahal*, the word used to speak of the 'congregation' or 'assembly' of God's people. *Ekklesia* translates *qahal* as assembly 69 times in LXX. The next most frequent translation is *synagogue*, synagogue or meeting, place of meeting 37 times. The translation process, which has transformed *Ekklesia* into *kyriarche* indicates a historical development that has privileged the *kyriarchal*/hierarchical form of church. The word church promotes a Christian self-understanding that is derived from the *kyriarchal* models of household and state in antiquity, which was governed by the lord/master/father of the house, to whom freeborn, wo/men, clients, workers and slaves were subordinated as his property.

In today's world the word Church is commonly used to denote the structure used by the Christians for religious service based on rituals and sacraments. The biblical image of the Church portrays not the building but the assembled people who worship in a given geographical location. It also refers to the gathering of all the believers throughout history. Therefore, there is a need to rediscover

the democratic vision of the Church where as it is understood as assembly of equals.

9.1 Social Ministry of the Church

There is a general criticism that the Church is less concern about the social issues and the prophetic voice of the church is still and quite. But social mission has been one of the defining characteristics of Christianity. The "option" of God for the poor is as old as the history of humanity. The engagement of the Church with the poor is as old as the history of the Church itself. The engagement of the Church in India with the poor of India is centuries old. The numerous Christian educational, medical and charitable institutions in India are the impressive signposts of the work of the Indian Church for the poor in India. The educational ministry of the Christian churches in India is noteworthy and the contributions in the area of health services of Christian hospitals are also commendable. Institutions like Bethel Agricultural Fellowship is supporting and nurturing thousands of unprivileged children by providing a safe environment which will lead to mental, physical and spiritual growth. A school is here to impart the knowledge and lead these children to be the pillars of the society. A baby rescue home shelters the babies who are rejected by their parents especially the new born girl babies and a hospital offering health benefits not only to Bethel but also to the surrounding communities.

While there is no denying that the Church in India has done great charity to the poor, one can yet perceive in the life and ministry of the church in India certain "uncomfortable distance" from the poor. It works for the poor, but it is not yet poor; it is for the poor, but not with the poor, nor of the poor. Church seems to live like a "neighbor" to the poor.[1] For Aloysius Pieris, evangelization in Asia would mean evoking in the poor for liberative dimension of Asian religiousness. He calls for a mutual evangelization where the "theologians are awakened into the liberative dimension of poverty and the poor are conscientized into the liberative potentialities of their religiousness.[2] The Church must be sensitive to the aspirations, movements of the poor and the oppressed in the world; it must be in dialogue with the life-realities of the poor and for their authentic liberation; it needs to be in deep solidarity with the poor in their

struggles and liberative action.[3] Social ministry of the church should be shaped by the emerging new realities of society.

The Church in India is known by its numerous educational institutions, and education remains the primary and the most visible ministry of the Church in India. Undoubtedly, church's services to the nation in the field of education are indeed magnanimous and valuable. But, today we cannot deny the "perennial and distressing void" in educational ministry of the church in India to the poor. The church in India runs numerous good educational institutions, higher institution that carter to the non-poor and lower institution mostly catering the needs of poor. It is hard to find the poor in the "best" educational institutions of the church in India. It is an irony that a Catholic institute that celebrates a century of service in India, does not have on record even 5% of poor Catholic students. When a significant number of its personnel are engaged in educational ministry that is dislocated from the poor and their welfare, it is not easy to say that it is a church for the poor.[4]No doubt, the Church has many educational/charitable institutions for the poor, but these are undoubtedly neither the best of its institutes nor the most productive of its institutes. So, does not the Church in India give its "best fruits" to the rich but grant only token "discarded fruits" to the poor? This is quite true of the protestant educational institutions. Due to the globalization education is a business and the church is reaping its harvest i.e. chicken laying golden eggs.

In the context of the Indian church it is usually a rich church working for the poor! Is the Church in India poor? Yes, most people are poor, but are the bishops, priest and religious in India poor? Most bishops, priest and religious in India enjoy a far comfortable and luxurious living than many poor of the communities they serve. It is true that bishops, priests and religious in India are engaged in working for the poor, but they themselves are not poor. We are usually the rich working for the poor! But such a mode of ministering – being rich and working for the poor – is neither liberative nor salvific, neither for us nor for the poor do we serve! We need the conversion of the bishops, priests and religious of India, a conversion from being rich to being poor, a conversion from working for the poor to working with the poor, a conversion from being for the poor to being of the poor.[5] The church should reject the charity oriented

vision and understand that to serve is its real existence.

We need a radical change in our perspectives towards the poor. We always envision the poor as "objects of compassion" and as people who are always on the receiving end. We always are the givers. But we need to become receivers from the poor. We need to look at them not merely as people who need our help, but as a "liberative locus" where we can experience salvation. When we approach them as receivers, then we will become capable of hearing the voice of God spoken through the poor. As Pieris appropriately affirms:"It is not enough to consider the poor passively as the sacramental recipients of our ministry, as if their function in life were merely to help us, the rich, to save our souls by our retaining them as perpetual objects of our compassion… the poor must be seen as those through whom God shapes our salvation history".[6]

So how can the church in India become a "church of the poor?" It is not by running numerous educational and healthcare and charitable institutions through which the church dispenses charity to the poor; it is not dispensing aid to the poor. The church becomes a "church of the poor" when the poor themselves become the church and the rich in solidarity with the poor. We need to transform ourselves into the poor, live in deep solidarity with the poor, share the struggles and plight of the poor, be deeply immersed in the lives of the poor, and then the church becomes a "church of the poor". What is the needed today is not the extensions and multiplications of the educational/healthcare/charitable institutions of the church, but extension and multiplication of the efforts and willingness of the church to become poor. Until that happens, we can wonder if one can call the church in India as an authentic local church.[7] The church should demonstrate the compassion of Jesus to the society whereby it should also struggle with the community and provide liberation.

9.2 Churchless Christianity

Churchless Christianity is an approach of evangelism and it is also known as "movements to Jesus" or "insider Movements". Insider movements are defined as "popular movements to Christ that bypass both formal and explicit expression of Christian religion."[8] So it

means that insider movement has no link with the visible faith expression of Jesus Christ or Church. "Insiders" are new disciples of Jesus whore main "inside" the relationships and communities of their social and religious culture. Insider discipleship is said to "express itself in culturally appropriate communities of believers who will also continue to live within as much of their culture, including the religious life of the culture, as is biblically faithful."[9] It means that they remain attached to their own religious or faith traditions and additionally they believe in Jesus.

As early as 1938, the Near East Christian Council, a group of Protestant missionaries to the Middle East, concluded that the best way to bring Muslims to Christ was to develop followers of Jesus who remained loyal to their Islamic social and political groups. In the decades to follow, early missionaries were sometimes blamed for encouraging converts to adopt a foreign, Western culture along with their new faith. Missionaries trained in the social sciences influenced mission work, and culture came to be viewed as a "neutral vehicle." In a 1974 conference on the cross-cultural communication of the Gospel, speaker Charles Kraft called for a faith renewal movement within Islam, viewing "Muslim" as a cultural, rather than a religious, term. During the 1970s, mission conference leaders spoke of using the *Quran* as a bridge to lead Muslims to Christ. John Wilder, a Presbyterian missionary among Muslims in Pakistan, described the possibility of a people movement to Christ that would remain within Islam. He advocated Messianic Judaism as a model for Muslim evangelism.[10]LCMS missionary Herbert Hoefer published his book, *Churchless Christianity*, a study of Jesus devotees in Tamil Nadu in India.

9.2.1 Churchless Christianity in the City[11]

Our statistics have shown that there is a solid 25% of Hindus and Muslims population in Madras city which has integrated Jesus deeply into their spiritual life. Half of the population have attempted spiritual relationships with Jesus and had satisfying and learning experience through it. Three fourths speak very highly of Jesus and could easily relate to Him as their personal Lord if so motivated. In addition to this population we have the ten percent who are "of the fold",

formerly Christians. It would be fair, then to say that a good one-third of Madras city population relate to Jesus regularly and fairly deeply in their spiritual life.

Madras has been spoken of as the "most Christian" city in India, since it has the largest Christian population in country around 3,00,000. However, this Christian population is hardly one-third of the "Churchless Christianity" surrounding it and occasionally relating to it. Adding all these believers in Christ together, on might say that Madras is a "Christian city".

What is the general nature of this "Churches Christianity" in the city? Most of the time, these believers in Christ relate to Him only in their private prayer and meditation. Occasionally they go to Church anonymously, but for the most past they are on their own to nurture their faith. Thus, they easily fall away from a disciplined worship life and into a syncretistic way of thinking. When some need or anxiety arises in their life, they will again turn to Lord Jesus for help, strength and guidance.

There "weaker brothers and sisters" in the faith desire to draw upon the strength of the Church in their spiritual pilgrimage of life. Especially they desire to meet their pastors or Bible women. Those of more education welcome Bible study and other Christian literature. Many use the Christian radio programme also. When they have nothing else to turn, they even rely on the movies and T.V. programme of Christian Themes to reform and refresh their faith. A large number of these people come to faith through the influence of Christian living around them. Christian school teachers have been a significant influence on those who have gone to Christian schools. However, for the most part it has been their informal contacts with sincere Christian individuals and families which have attracted them to seek and find Christ for their lives. The confirmation of Jesus' place in their lives often comes through experience of physical health, moral growth and forgiveness of sin.

Although the stronger responses to Jesus is found among the Harijan community in the city, in terms of numbers the believers of other Hindu castes are many more. Typically the follower of Jesus will be poorer member of the society, young and high school

educated. The response among women also is greater than among men. The most dedicated followers of our Lord, then, among the "other sheep" are to be found among the teenager, the housewives, the high school educated and the poor, from all caste communities. Our Lord truly has sheep in every human flock around the city of Madras.

There is also a *christubhakta* movement in North India. This group is found in Varanasi, Gorakpur, Lucknow, Agra and Faridabad. It is estimated that the c*hristubhaktas* in Varanasi is around 15,000,in Allahabad the group consist of 50,000. The spirituality of *christubhakta*emerges from the grassroots, from the spirituality of their own, influenced by Hindu *Bhakti* movement. The new search for identity of *christubhaktas*finds a response in the teachings of Jesus and in the experience of his person, and he becomes their *Ishtadevata*- personal deity.[12]This is "faith encountering faith" in the deeper subjecthood of the believers. The dialogue the Christubhaktas enter into with the Christian experience is shaped already by their experience of faith in Hinduism and other indigenous religious traditions. The encounter with the Christian experience deepens their experience nurtured through their traditional rites, practices, etc. The oft-repeated allegation of syncretism or double-loyalty in such cases stand challenged. There is on the one hand an appropriation of Christian faith through the experience of faith already nurtured by their religious tradition. And at the same time, their faith reaches organically another level of depth in the encounter with Christianity. The case of Christubhaktas is one of faith-journey. There is no break with one's past religious experience to embrace a totally new faith and message. The experience and spiritual process the Christubhaktas undergo is a journey in which their past accompanies them while they move ahead in their faith-quest. We have in their experience the meeting of two worlds of religious experience. In short, the experience of Christubhaktas could be characterized as religious cosmopolitanism.[13] The question that really needs our reflection is how long one can continue to travel in two boats after maturing in one faith one need to identify with it fully.

Herbert Hoefer presentation of Churchless Christianity should be evaluated. Churchless Christianity tries to protect the religious

and cultural aspect of one's faith so that there should not be disturbance or persecution or disorder to the cause of the gospel. In case of the city of Madras the elements of disturbance and disorder is minimal and thus it can be safe for the believing people to confess their faith. At the same time there is no denial that there are many elements in the visible body of Christ i.e. Church which can hinder a few but that does not validate one not to be part of the Church. Christian faith is having a strong community life and individual dimension of faith is very much part of the social life of the person and the individual faith is being nurtured in the community of disciples of Jesus.

9.3 Church as People's Movement

Peoples Movement is important phenomenon in today world. There are many kinds of social movements or people movements in India like peasant movements, fisher community movements, Dalit movement, women's movement, environment movements etc.According to T.K. Oommen, social movements are mechanisms through which human attempts to move from the periphery of a system to its center. They are conscious efforts by the people on the periphery "to mitigate their deprivation and secure justice" and emerge "when people committed to a specified set of goals participate in protest-oriented, purposive collective actions."[14] M.S.A. Rao describes social movements as an organized effort on the part of a section of the population, involving collective mobilization based on an ideology, to bring about changes in the social system.[15]

The Indian society is marked by grave injustice and violence built into its structures and institutions of civil life. Economic exploitation and social exclusion based on caste, marginalization of large sections of people in the civil and political processes, unfair distribution of the benefits of scientific and economic progress, unequal access to educational and employment opportunities, forced poverty, discrimination against rural people etc. are all different forms of conflicts, injustice and violence imbedded in our social fabric. The movements are having concern about these issues. They play a vital role in conscientizing the civil society in areas such as human rights, social justice and ecology. They compel the civil society and the state to address issues like corruption, poverty,

marginalization of women and girl children, oppression and exploitation of dalits and tribals, iniquity in the distribution of natural resources like water and land, exploitative incursion of MNCs into the nation's economy and ecological degradation.[16] The social movements provide an option to the struggling community to move from the periphery and to start a search for freedom and justice. Church surely got a mandate for liberative motive and thus it should participate in the issues of people and support these social movements.

For the church and for people's movements human dignity is a primary value. Everyone has a right to live with dignity irrespective of their gender, race, language, region, religion, caste or socio-political and economic status. The church's social doctrine and the social vision of movements place the human person at the center of all economic and social life must be at the service of human beings, especially the disprivileged. Further, they agree that human dignity is not an abstract principle but a value which needs to become tangible in the actual life of people and communities, in the rights to life and security, livelihood, education, property, gender equity, etc.[17] Providing dignity and equality is one of the fundamental vision and goal of the body of Christ and leading the de-humanized into humanity is the mission of church consequently church and people's movement can be partners in this venture.

The movements want the pursuit of development to accord priority to the livelihood needs of the weaker sections of society over the consumeristic demands of the elite. In the case of people's movement, solidarity with the poor is seen first of all in marginalization. Solidarity leads the activists to consistent, sustained and committed involvement in people's struggles for justice, liberation and inclusion. It demands a lot of sacrifice. Solidarity with the socially marginalized was a characteristic trait of the life and mission of Jesus, who sought to defend the human dignity of the despised of his society that included tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes and victims of leprosy. He took the good news of God's reign of love, mercy, justice, reconciliation, and healing into their daily life and struggles. The contemporary church sees solidarity as a fundamental social virtue directed to the common good.[18]The life of Jesus provides hope and solidarity for the discriminated people because

the biblical pictures of Jesus presented in the gospel traditions present Jesus being in solidarity with the margins. Jesus movement was movement providing a voice to the voiceless in Galilee and the early Christians were from socially deprived group. Church as the herald of Jesus's life and ministry should show sensitivity to the issue of solidarity with the struggling community by supporting various social movements.

Justice is the chief issue which most people's movements try to address. The priority of the disprivileged with regard to opportunities for education, employment, etc. is integral to their understanding of justice. Gender justice too is a necessary component of social justice. The people's movements are a prophetic reminder in our times of the priority of justice to the oppressed. They call for the empowerment of people, especially the poor and the marginalized. The foundational experience of Israel was the Exodus in which God revealed himself as a God of justice and liberation. The classical prophets were fierce in their condemnation of injustice in the land and violation of the rights of the poor. Amos and Micah laid stress on social morality and justice (cf. Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:7,11,24;8:4-6 and Mic. 2:1-5;3:1-12;6:6-8;7:1-6). The message of Jesus, which is good news to the poor (cf. Lk. 4:18-19), enjoins upon us the demands of justice in personal and social life. The priority of the downtrodden is a crucial component of the social doctrine of the church which teaches that "the poor, marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern."[19]Justice refers to the quality of relations between people and groups of people and the resources they share for life. Today justice is viewed as the transformative participation in the structures of the society and church should strive to embody structures of justice as an alternative community.

The contemporary church and many movements stand for a non-consumeristic and sustainable lifestyle that keeps us from unduly exploiting natural resources. There are several movements that advocate environmentally sustainable technologies in the management of natural resources. The church agrees with such movements that the pursuit of development must be oriented towards creating just, humane and sustainable societies based on harmonious

and non-exploitative relationships within and between human communities and between human beings and the eco-system.[20]People's movement based on environmental crisis provide sense of reverence to the nature, earth, trees, rivers, mountains, animals etc. and by doing so one becomes aware of the oneness of life that we are part of the nature. It provides a holistic vision of life in general and of the corporate life of the human community. Church can easily identify itself with these concerns because these are the attempts to find the goodness in creation (Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31).

9.4 Ashram – A Model of Adaptation during 20th Century[21]

The Christian ashram movement in India owes much to the Protestants. E. Stanley Jones, an American Methodist Missionary brought together different religious people for sharing religious experience. He came to Indian in 1907. He called this meeting as Round Table Conferences, where people of different religions would share their personal experiences as to what religion meant to them in their life, whether and how it helped their search for God. These conferences are really instances of inter-religious dialogue at the beginning of 20th century. The independence movement brought people of different religions together where common worship services were conducted. YMCA in Madras composed of Christians, Muslims, and Hindus used to start their proceedings with a prayer by the Christian secretary. Yet, there were some who raised voice against this attempt.

It was in 1921, the first Christian ashram known as *Christukula* Ashram was established by two protestant Christians namely S. Jesudason and E. Forrester Paton. They both were doctors, who adopted a simple way of life in conformity with local culture, and dedicated themselves to the service of the poor through medical care and social work projects. The second ashram was the *Christa PremaSeva* Ashram founded in Pune in 1927 by an Anglican, Father Jack Winslow. The objective is to build up a body of men and women who will seek to follow Christ in the way of renunciation and sacrifice for the fruitful service and uplift of fellow beings in the world. The members were advised to adopt a way of life suited to Indian conditions, and the ashram should seek in all ways to be

truly Indian.

In the Catholic circles, the church did not encourage shared prayer with members of other religions. For, all forms of shared prayer, even conscious cooperation is some way with the worship of other religions was discouraged. While it was a general rule, two Indian priests in 1947 started the *Siluvaigiri Ashram*, in Salem District of Tamil Nadu. Two foreign missionaries J. Monchanin and Henri Le Saux were allowed and encouraged to make a study of the Hindu ashram by living in ashram and sharing the life of *ashramites* in 1949. They had spent a week at the ashram of Sri Ramana Maharishi at Tiruvannamalai where Le Saux had a deep spiritual experience. He spent long time in the ashrams of Sri Ramana Maharishi and Sri Gnananda learning and imbibing the spiritual heritage of India. They are of the conviction that Monasticism was to be the meeting point between Christianity and India at the deepest level. Taking into account the customs of India ascetic heritage and the rule of St. Benedict, they founded on March 21, 1950 the Saccidananda Ashram on the banks of river Kaveri, Tamilnadu in India.

Henri Le Saux adopted the Indian name Abishiktananda. The objectives of his ashram are to fulfill the mission of the church to be universal; to fulfill the mission of the church by making the church more Indian and spiritual. A few years later, in 1958, Fr. Francis Mahiew and Fr. Bede Griffiths, founded an ashram called *Kurisumala* in Kerala, a syro-Malankara rite ashram. The founders of these ashrams were of the opinion that once the Indian Catholics were able to establish their own monastic tradition and deepen contemplation, they would be able to enter into a living dialogue with the Hindu tradition and through this dialogue the East would find the fulfillment of its history, life and thought and its search of God in the living truth of the Church.

Thus, the ashrams were founded to give a common witness to Christian life, to meet the needs of adaptation, to facilitate evangelization, to create communities where equality and fraternity reigned. On course of time, many other ashrams were started in India at various places which later became the centers of inter-religious dialogue.

9.4.1 Kinds of Ashrams[22]

Today, there are number of ashrams spread all over India carrying out different activities. The important protestant ashrams are: *Christukula* ashram in Tirupattur, Tamilnadu, *ChristaPremaSeva* Ashram in Pune; *Christa Sishya Sangham* at Tadagam near Coimbatore; *Christadasa* Ashram near Palghat; Christian Ashram at Brindavan; Bethel Ashram near Tiruvalla, Kerala; Gethsemane Ashram at Muvattupuzha and the *Christava* ashrams. Among the Catholic ashrams, the *Anjali* Ashram of D.S. Amalorpavadass is prominent one which was founded at Mysore in 1979. There are people who use the term ashram 'for all types of institutions such as seminaries, hotels, dispensaries, converts, religious houses and presbyteries. But as ashram is a place of an intense and sustained spiritual quest, centered around a *guru*, man or woman recognized by others as a person of deep spiritual experience. In ashram privacy is given to this relentless quest through *sadhanas* – spiritual experiences. So, it is the place open to anyone who comes in search of peace and enlightenment irrespective of caste, race, sex and religion. In ashrams, one follows three *margas* (ways): *Jnana Marga*, *Bhakti Marga* and *Karma Marga*, though one of them may predominate. They are not primarily pastoral centers, apostolic communities, but by the very existence, they proclaim Christ. At the same time, as ashram may not be primarily devoted to contemplation and that it can even play an important role in promoting and struggling for justice. However, the emerging consensus among Christians seems to be that contemplation should have a significant place in an ashram. Thus, each ashram is focused on particular activities. For example, we have *Saccidananda* Ashram, and *Kurisumala* Ashram which engaged mainly in contemplation. *Anjali* Ashram offers the service of a number of courses in India spiritual traditions as well as retreats. *Christukula* Ashram, *Jyoti Niketan* and *Shanti* Ashram engaged in social services while *Vishram* and *Gyan* Ashram are engaged in the development of various branches of fine arts.

9.4.2 The contribution of Ashrams to Inter-religious Dialogue[23]

Many Ashrams considered inter-religious dialogue as one of their

major activities, and claim that it is a privileged place of dialogue with persons of other religions. The reasons are:

a. Members of other religions feel at home in an ashram, because of the Indian atmosphere of food, dress, building and so on.

b. It is a place of accommodation where dedicated group of persons welcome newcomers for openness in sharing the spiritual quest.

c. It is a place of silence and prayer that is conductive to listening to God and to one another.

d. In ashrams, primacy is given to prayer (personal, contemplative, community) where all can participate irrespective of religion.

e. Where ashram is engaged in different activities, people collaborate to get it done with a commitment to common cause. Thus, by its very nature, it is an open community welcoming people of different religions and of no religion.

f. There is a fellowship and unity among Christian ashrams through annual meetings and other activities.

g. Those who are engaged in inter-religious dialogue should understand one's partner well through a study of the other's socio-religious context, beliefs, practices, and scriptures and so on. Ashram provides different facilities to have interior dialogue.

h. An ashram can serve as a common place for people of different religions to meet, share their experiences and carry on the quest in union with one another, since one of the primary concerns of those in an ashram is the sustained quest for the Ultimate.

i. It has been the undeniable experience of many of those engaged in dialogue that the deepest meeting between people of different religions takes place at the core level. Only one who has experienced God, can recognize the presence of God, in every manifestations to express the mystery of the Absolute in a fully integral manner. Thus, the experiential knowledge of God enables one to understand the mystical experience of God in other religions and to enter into dialogue with people of these religions to share with them one's God experience, and in that sharing to discover the common elements and elements of difference in the corresponding experiences of God or the ultimate reality.

So, Ashram is in principle open to any genuine *sadhaka*(spiritual aspirant). *Sadhakas* are to be welcomed at all times. Christian ashrams use English as medium which makes impossible for people of different linguistic backgrounds to understand one another. Some are of the view that Christian ashrams lack enthusiasm. The reason given by Richard W. Taylor is that "they are leader – centered rather than institution – centered, and so it is going to be unusual ashram that has a thriving second generation. However, ashrams should be honored for their contribution directed towards lived dialogue.

Even though the root of the church was laid in Asia the structures are now colonial therefore that task of authentic theology is to search for an Indian ecclesiology. It is commonly presented that the only task of church is to convert others even though it is not conversion but to make disciples i.e. *shishyas* or *bhaktas*. Church as an agent of reign of God should know the socio-economic-political struggles of *bhaktas* and should partners with agencies that provide hope and support to *bhaktas*. Church as an indigenous community should use the available traditions of the land to shape its ecclesiology i.e. ashram way of spirituality.

END NOTES

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10

SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE: AN INVITATION TO HERMENEUTICS

Scripture is the recorded sacred traditions of any community and we need to know that all sacred traditions are not part of scripture. That means there are some parameters to determine traditions as scriptures and scripture itself originated from different tradition i.e. oral tradition, written traditions and canonized tradition. In Christianity the process of approving the scripture is known as canonization and canon stands as measuring rod. Therefore, a book considered canonical is a book that has met certain criteria or standard. The general criteria for the New Testaments were apostolicity, universality, contents and inspiration. Three of the four criteria to which a book were subjected were objective, a matter of factual truth and only the matter of inspiration could be considered subjective i.e. the matter of personal judgment.

The scripture may not have any special significance when kept with other books in a shelf but it receives special significance when it is received by the faith community. It is the community which provides special significance to the scripture. For e.g. when a Christian during quiet time reads a passage from Jesus' healing narrative it leads to spiritual edification but if the same person is on sick bed and reads the same passage of Jesus healing there is all possibility of that person linking the healing event with his/her own recovery and the desire to recover may lead to healing. That means the knowledge of Scripture is affected by the situation of the reader or the interpretation of the text by the reader. So knowing Scripture is synonymous to interpreting Scripture and thus interpreting the text itself is a science i.e. hermeneutics. The modern science of interpretation i.e Hermeneutics has developed the process of

interpreting Scripture and we will focus on few Indian interpretative tools.

10.1 Hermeneutics: Tool to Understand Scripture

The word hermeneutics comes from the Greek word *hermeneuein* which means inclusively to express, to explain, to translate and to interpret. The root is apparently derived from the divine name Hermes, the messenger of the gods who makes intelligible to human beings that which otherwise cannot be grasped. The Greeks associated Hermes with the discovery of language and writing, the indispensable tools of understanding.[1] So here the goal is to make the message clear.

In the Christian circles hermeneutics has been often associated with the biblical study where it is referred to the methods of exegesis, i.e. arriving at the original intention of a biblical writer. There is definitely affinity between exegesis and hermeneutics but the latter is not restricted to biblical investigation alone. In fundamental theology hermeneutical science touches upon various issues such as art of understanding, the history of truth, the role of the subject in interpretation, the different functions of language, the relationship between the philosophies and ideologies, etc. It focuses on a network of topics including understanding, explanation, analysis, meaning, meaningfulness, interpretation, experience, textuality, appropriation, language and historicity. In this sense hermeneutics is seen as responsible for the cognitive, ontological, historical and linguistic problems involved in the entire field of systematic theology.[2] So hermeneutics is a dynamic process leading to interpretation.

Hermeneutical studies take two main directions: one concerned with the methods and conditions of valid interpretations and the other concerned with understanding as the fundamental way of human being. The first drift deals with the issues like clarification of an author's intent, methods of linguistic, compositional and symbolic analysis, specification of procedural criteria and clarification of the conditions for understanding. The second movement engages in the discussion of historicity, the role of imagination, dialogue as a model of textual interaction, the relation of truth to textuality and the like which bring reflective awareness

regarding the conditions for and possibilities of understanding.[3] Judaism met with the need of hermeneutics as it had to give meaning to the Law and rule the Israelites in a variety of situations. This was provided by the two forms of *midrash*: *halacha* explaining Law from judicial aspect and *haggadah* offering interpretation through edifying stories and thoughts. Jesus as a rabbinical commentator, gave new meaning to the OT passages and he did it by showing how the prophecies regarding God's reign were fulfilled in Him. One of the most significant instances is Lk 24:27 where Jesus interprets to the disciples at Emmaus the texts beginning from Moses and from all the prophets concerning him.[4] And now it is the church which need to provide the message of the past to the present so that our prejudices should be challenged and new horizons should emerge.

10.2 George M. Soares-Prabhu's Exegetical Method: Reading the Bible from the Indian Context[5]

Soares-Prabhu developed a method in theology in order to understand the Indian and Asian problems to which he sought to respond from a Christian perspective. He constructed an exegetical structure made up of the biblical texts and their world and he brought out an interpretation of their significance.

Soares-Prabhu proposed an Indian approach to the Bible. He was well aware of the contribution of the historical method to the study of the Bible. However, he was very critical of this method. He deemed it ineffective because, it was lost in the labyrinth of innumerable hypotheses and counter hypothesis taking the readers nowhere. He judged it irrelevant, for its jargons kept for itself a preserve of a small community. Hence, he proposed an exegetical method of the New Testament comprising of three integral and mutually contemporary readings: a religious reading, a social reading and an inter-textual reading.

11.2.1 A Religious Reading of the Bible[6]

By a religious reading of the Bible, Soares-Prabhu meant using the traditional methods of Indian exegesis to the biblical text and transposing its Greek and Hebrew symbols into Indian context without destroying the social concern endemic to biblical message.

This reading is influenced by the 'aim' of the bible in terms of historical criticism. At the same time, it brings to the text a pre-understanding informed by India's rich religious tradition.

Soares-Prabhu argued that every religious tradition begins with an ordinary experience of the Absolute mystery that we name God. The Christian tradition too begins with Jesus' experience of God as unconditionally loving parent and himself as God's unique son. This experience gives birth to genuine freedom into Jesus' life, i.e., freedom from inner conditioning (compulsion and fears) and exterior pressures. With unfathomable freedom and unconditional love he relates very personally with despised sections of the society, such as tax collectors as well as the oppressed ones such as women. Such a ministry created legalism of the time, on the other. These two aspects, Jesus' experience of God as unconditionally loving parent and his central message, the Kingdom of God, form the basis of the religious reading.

Though Soares-Prabhu was suspicious of all superficial modes of "Indianization" and inculturation, he considered the religions of India as treasure lenses, which can contribute substantially to decoding the sings of our time. He was always appreciative of attempts that made these riches accessible to Christians. He was extremely happy to find the re-interpretation of non-Christian faith traditions as liberative.

10.2.2 A Social Reading of the Bible[7]

The social reading of the Bible proposed by Soares-Prabhu shares similar features with South American liberation theology in terms of socio-economic concerns. But it is dissimilar in terms of the Indian stress on personal (not just structural) liberation from aggression, fantasy and greed (*dvesa, moha, lobha*) as well as the recognition of the prophetic elements found in the Indian religious traditions this will helps us read the Bible in the light of liberating praxis among the socially oppressed without succumbing to the sociological reductionism of a strictly Marxist approach. His reading of the scriptures emphasizes liberation of the very structure of society from its oppressive moorings.

According to Soares-Prabhu, a social reading is extremely

significant, as salvation for Christians is conditioned by his/her effective concern for the poor and needy. He explained this in two steps. 1) By "poor" Jesus understood the economically and socially oppressed section of the society and that they are "blessed" precisely because eradication of poverty is a key concern of Jesus. The rich are, on the contrary, "cursed" because they are heartless to the needy and godless to the creator. 2) The imperative stemming from God's unconditional love consists in loving one's neighbor in need with effective concern.

10.2.3 An Inter-Textual Reading of the Bible[8]

Soares-Prabhu's most outstanding contribution is to the area of inter-textual reading of the Bible. For example, he adds an Indian dimension to Jesus stilling the storm (Mk. 4:35-41) by applying the *dhvani* theory of Indian poetics. It evokes deeper meaning in the hearers because of the reasoning effect of a word which otherwise would not be perceived at all. By comparing the context and content of the mission command of Jesus (Mt. 28:16-20) and that of Buddha (Mahavagga 1,10-11,1), he shows how they are complementary and how a richer meaning is possible by such a comparison.

His two important articles ("A Dalit Reading of the Decalogue" and "Reading of John with an Indian Mind") are the best examples for inter-textual reading of the bible. In the first article he contrasts the Decalogue (Ex. 20: 1-7) with the kula-jati-dharma of Hindusim, the former respects the sacredness of every human being because, humankind has been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) whereas, according to Manu (the ancient Indian codifier of Law), persons are not equal before law. The Decalogue thus functions as a corrective to the law of Manu. In the second article Soares-Prabhu focuses on the significance of 'flesh' in Jn.1:14. Since the Word became 'flesh', the humanity of Jesus and in fact, human as such, becomes the locus of encounter with God. This implicitly warns us against exploiting human kind as such, becomes the locus of encounter with God. This implicitly warns us against exploiting humankind. According to the *Isaya-Sya* Upanishad 1:1, the world is pervaded by the Lord: therefore, it is the symbol of the Lord. The Upanishad thereby warns us against our destructive abuse of

the world. The Johannine doctrine in 1,14 and the *Upanishadic* doctrine in 1,1 complements each other.

10.3 Maria Arul Raja: Dalit Reading of the Bible

Dalit hermeneutics is not merely for understanding but for transformation. It seeks to move away from the present order of caste hierarchy to new world order of egalitarianism. As a contextualized liberative hermeneutics with the social option of promoting the political agenda of the Dalits, it seeks to enable them to emancipate themselves from the clutches of untouchability. Dalit Biblical heremeneutics, therefore, can never be elitist, authoritarian and individualistic but subaltern, participatory and communitarian.

The interpretative key of the Dalit hermeneutics consists in a 'rejection' and at the same time in an affirmation. What is it that is rejected and what is it that is affirmed? Dalit heremeneutics rejects exclusion (the imposed identity) and affirms inclusion (the identity of being co-human with other humans). This is the foundational norm of the critical principle of the Dalit hermeneutics. It does not engage itself with the pretension of scientific objectivity. It is not interested in archaeology of meaning to be excavated from the Biblical texts set in the context of the world of antiquity. Rather it is a future-oriented enterprise.[9]

For the emergence of Dalit consciousness and the practice of liberation it is necessary to bring together "hermeneutics, social theory and the search for a transcendental dimension which will allow a psycho-social critique of societies and traditions which is not merely contextually internal to them". That is why Dalit hermeneutics tends to become more socio-critical (actual conflicts) than socio-pragmatic (apparent harmony). Moreover, it is convinced that every form of dehumanization of the other is ultimately dehumanization of oneself.[10] Such a principle of interpretation is not only a contribution to Dalit liberation, but equally it is a contribution to the liberation of the entire human community.

The Dalit world creating its own texts and Biblical texts creating its worlds are in dialogue with each other: Complex philological intricacies may not occupy the primacy of place; rather the thread – line of stories and discourses will be the central characteristics

of Dalit interpretation. By its foundational orientation, Dalit hermeneutics is free from 'excessive textualism, disparagement of both major and popular religions, and homogenization of the poor'. To speak about 'Dalit hermeneutics" as a single category is an inadvertent denial of the identity-specific modes of interpretation of the meaning-giving stories for the empowerment of various Dalit communities across the sub-continent of India.[11]

Having been kept illiterate for centuries by the dominant Brahminic ideological power, Dalits' first encounter with Christianity – the religion of the Book – would have faced the difficulty of an oral culture encountering a world of written texts. Even for the succeeding generation of Dalit Christians, the textual world is predominantly of the order of orality, especially during the moments of facing crisis. That is why, perhaps, the written texts of the Bible have not become active ideological and rhetorical field of the collective consciousness of the Dalits in India. Even before Dalits were converted to Christianity, they had their own traditions, mythology, legends, proverbs, moral teachings, customs, festivals and folk religions. Dalit hermeneutics transcends the binary notions of Christian and non-Christian, and sees religious pluralism not as an exception but as a norm. It is able to draw on a larger theological pool, and is not confined to a particular religious source. Those whose faith understands the Bible as 'inspired' could attempt at deploying its text for emancipating the Dalits.[12]

The common heritage of the Dalits like popular tales, legends, fold dramas (kuthu), riddles, lullaby, lamentations, songs, sung during collective labor, are to be placed along with the texts to be hermeneutised. This is to enable the common heritage and another text to engage each other with mutual osmosis. In this process, such texts (say the Bible or any other) cannot claim a special privilege or authority for setting norms to the native non-textual traditions of the Dalits. The overriding criterion for the genuine Dalit hermeneutics is the ethical necessity of annihilation of discriminatory hierarchy.[13]

10.3.1 Image of God[14]

By and large Dalits are the *anawim* of an agrarian culture whereas the Tribal people of the Bible are of nomadic culture. From an

anthropological perspective, Dalit experience of divinity could be characterized as the agrarian pluralism of deities. These deities emerge from the human as a continuum. But on the other hand, the Biblical experience of God could be constructed as the nomadic monotheism from high heavens. When immanent here and now is the hall-mark of Dalit deities, the transcendental otherness is the overriding trait of Biblical God. The agricultural symbolism (the Earth-related world) marks Dalit worship; whereas the desert symbolism (the Heaven-related world) marks Biblical worship.

The native Dalit religiosity revolves around the down-to-earth deities. In the Dalit world and consciousness, the mother goddesses play a vital and indispensable role. On the other hand, the feminine face of God cannot be directly traced from the Biblical literature. But this aspect is brought forth by, somewhat in a roundabout way, elaborating on the experience of *hesed* (compassionate affirmation) and the motherly sensitivity of the fatherly Yahweh. And hence Dalits may find a regrettable lacuna while entering the Biblical world with the image of a dominant male God. The absence of symbolism of fertility attributed to Biblical God may not positively vibrate with Dalit religious sensibilities; so too the Biblical condemnation of the symbols of fertility from the Cannanite soil.

Yahweh as the deity of a large family (*kuladeivam*) or of an ethnic group of people (*nammasaami*) evokes positive response from Dalits. They are at home with the Biblical image of the Protector-God (*kaavaldeivam*) and Powerful God with expression of wrath (the Lord of Hosts). The God of mobility (ark of Covenant) is very dear to them than the God of stability (Temple at Jerusalem as God's feet). While the former represents the on-going solidarity of God as Emmanuel (God-with-us), the latter alienates God from their daily lives; it is God domesticated by royal ideology.

10.4 Felix Wilfred: Reinterpretation of Christianity for the Sake of the Poor[15]

Though all the major religions of the world have both prophetic and mystical streams in them, there is a difference in accent and orientation. Therefore, some religious traditions are said to be prophetical and others mystical. In the Semitic tradition martyrdom is highly regarded but it is not so in the mystical traditions. The

possibility for a deeper encounter with our neighbors is possible, if we attempt another balancing act by re-interpreting the prophetic through the mystical. This can start already from the Christian scriptures themselves. A re-reading of the scriptures from the mystical perspective will help us understand our neighbors and the difficulties they have on the basis of the nature of their religious tradition in understanding Christianity.

The ultimate aim of evangelization is nothing but to establish God's rule over human beings, society and the world. It is really the atmosphere of truth, love and freedom. If one is true to the core of the Christian message, one must admit that there can be no room for a ghetto identity of Christians as a minority. For Christianity believes that every human being, no matter how lowly s/he may be, is the image of God (Gen. 1:26). It is in this universalistic human spirit that Christianity has to respond to the human plight in the continent of Asia.

Indian missiological theology is also linked to solidarity with the poor, participation in their experience and involvement in their struggles for liberation. Because of the domination in India today by the higher castes and high classes in the social, political, cultural and economic fields, and the marginalization of the lower classes and castes, Indian liberation theology is today centering its attention on the liberation of dalits, the most oppressed group of people. Attempts have been made to read the Old Testament and the New Testament from the perspective of the dalits. A major concern of the dalit movement is to reinterpret history and to create a counterculture.

The option of the dalits to build up their dalit-consciousness is reinforced by reconstructing their historic origins as a people. The dalits understand themselves as the original inhabitants of India, led to the humiliation of untouchability and slavery by the invading Aryans.

Conversion has been one of the ways in which the dalit self-assertion has found expression. These conversions were not for economic benefits but were part of the dalit search for human dignity, respect and equality and thus a new identity. But even within the church they are discriminated and separated from the higher

castes. Even the constitutional provision of reservation for them has become an extremely sensitive political issue in the country. The solidarity of the church with the dalits and their cause is the challenge of the hour.

There are three aspects for a proper understanding of conversion today. They are: (a) The centrality of the kingdom of God (b) The historical and concrete situation (c) The priority of the people or nation as such over individuals. Therefore, the church in India today should concern not primarily with individual conversion rather should be directed to the presentation of the gospel confronting the whole country and calling it to conversion from its present state of oppression.

The exploitation of women in the field of tourism in the Third World countries and the debt-crisis of these countries to the First World countries are really serious issues when they are considered as problems of the minorities and the weaker sections of the society. Wealth and prosperity are God's blessings, and they enhance human life. But when they become an end in themselves they take a heavy toll on other human beings. When wealth ceases to serve human needs and goals, it becomes a source of dehumanization of oneself and others.

According to Wilfred, Hindus today critically question the meaning of proclaiming the good news while the traditionally Christian countries of the West are engaged in the destruction of life, the plundering of wealth and the selling of lethal arms to poor countries. Christianity is also seen as a religion that is a spent force in the traditionally Christian countries of the West but is now being imported into India.

In societies like India, the relationship of the church to the world has to be thought out in new terms taking into cognizance the past history as well as the present political character of cultural and ethnic identities. In the biblical tradition God is portrayed as the defender of the poor as they are weak. We are called to follow this divine compassion. To be Indian is a challenge to be truly human. There is a new humanistic approach starting from the experience of *dukha* – an approach of the human from the dusty soil. The inner connection between the process of humanization and salvation

was stated as the action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world as a constitutive element of the preaching of the gospel.

10.4.1 The Church's Commitment to the Poor in the Age of Globalization[16]

Wilfred argues that transcending narrow institutional interests, the church must reiterate its option for the poor and create a critical consciousness to combat the evil of globalization. Modern features like globalization and economic liberalization, finance capital and 'free' market lead to the forgetfulness of the poor and their exclusion from our consciousness. It is the logica of the system, its part and parcel. The worst thing happening with globalization is that the poor are told in many words that they are not wanted, that they are a burden and that they are simply redundant. The whole atmosphere seems to be charged with the spirit of eugenics and the philosophy of the survival of the fittest.

The choice before the Asian local churches is opt to be on the side of God and the manifestations of the divine power among the Asian poor, or to be on the side of the mighty of the world, the upper castes and enjoy the privileges and influences deriving thereof. But even if the siding with the mighty of the world is 'for the sake of the church', it is ungodly, while, even if the church loses the privileges it enjoys by opting to be with the poor, it will retain its Godly power.

The role of the church in this context is precisely to help create a culture of solidarity. When we speak of solidarity, we need to be aware of the fact that there are two sides for India today: the India of the rich and the powerful towards which a highly competitive middle class is moving, and the India of the masses of the poor – in the slums of the cities and in rural areas. The involvement of the church needs to be realized also through the world of media, which is a very powerful instrument to affect the spirit of servanthood, a culture of solidarity and critical consciousness. The committed Christians must enter into secular and government media, news agencies, etc. And create public opinion so as to influence the decisions affecting the people, especially the poor and the marginalized.

10.5 R. S. Sugirtharajah: Inter- Faith Hermeneutics

For Sugirtharajah, the task of the hermeneutic is not to change the world but to understand it. Hermeneutics does not create revolution; it changes people's perceptions and makes them aware of the need for revolution. Its function is to make people see more, feel more, rekindle the fire of resistance.[17]

Biblical interpretation in a multi-faith context should be aware of two realities: firstly, it needs to be sensitive to the scriptural texts of other faith communities and the spiritual sustenance they provide for the faith community. Secondly, Christian spiritual interpreters should be conscious that their literary output is likely to reach a wide audience which is not necessarily exclusively Christians. Therefore the task for biblical interpreters is not only to discover how to live as member of a multi-faith society, but also how, to interpret the scriptural texts taking note of the presence and the spiritual intuitions of people of other faiths. One clue is to take indication from the Latin American liberation theologians and re-read some of the biblical materials in the light of the multi-faith context.[18]Sugirtharajah tries to use the liberation methodology and applies it to the multi-faith context to develop Inter-faith hermeneutics.

Sugirtharajah claims that liberation hermeneutics as, "An interpreter has to take an option; liberation theologians unapologetically,openly and consciously side with the poor, and it is from that perspective that a reading is undertaken."[19]Sugiritharajah prefers to call this mode of interpretation the "people's reading" which enables a synthesis of "ordinary people's critical consciousness of their own society and the text."[20] Sugirtharajah thinks that liberation hermeneutics leads to romanticizing the poor other. So the need is to move beyond liberation hermeneutics to Post-colonial hermeneutics, "Unlike liberation hermeneutics, postcolonialism does not perceive the Other as a homogenous category, but acknowledges multiple identities based upon class, sex, ethnicity and gender."[21]Sugirtharajah states that "postcolonial studies emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed bythe historical reality of colonial presence."[22] So it is not only

colonial outsider but the colonial insider who suppress the voices of the margins and here the attempt is to recognize those silent voices.

10.5.1 Post-Colonial Hermeneutics

An unmistakable theme associated with postcolonialism, according to Sugirtharajah, is alterity. For Sugirthrajah this is one of the main issues identified with the debut of the discipline onto the intellectual scene: "Postcolonialisme merged as a critical activity within what is known as Commonwealth or Third World Literature…. it was the first time that the colonized other was placed at the center of academic discourse."[23] For Sugirtharajah, "postcolonialism tries to integrate and forge a new perspective by critically and profitably syncretizing ingredients from both vernacular and metropolitan centres…. For both parties it must be a process of liberation."[24] Sugirtharajah goes on to invoke Edward Said, one of the pioneers of postcolonial theory, whose seminal text *Orientalism* (1978) was in large part devoted to a study of how the West formulated a knowledge base about the non-West other that was intentionally self-serving and paved the way for a lasting legacy of hostile bigotry. Nonetheless, Sugirtharajah showcases Said's idea of a "contrapuntal reading" as a means to maintain the tension of otherness between standard and revisionist interpretations while at the same time cultivating a more conciliatory hermeneutics of generosity. He paraphrases Said's contrapuntal phenomenological method in this way:

> This is a reading strategy advocated by [Said] with a view to encouraging the experiences of the exploited and the exploiter to best udied together. In other words, texts from metropolitan centres and peripheries are studied simultaneously. Contrapuntal reading paves the way for a situation that goes beyond reified binary characterizations of Eastern and Western writings. To read contrapuntally means to beaware simultaneously of mainstream scholarship and of other scholarship which the dominant discourse tries to domesticate and speaks and acts against.[25]

Sugirtharajah gravitates to Said's thinking since it emboldens his own convictions that postcolonial hermeneutics advances a much more complex and nuanced sense of otherness in its interpretive

encounters. More specifically, an additional dimension of otherness is preserved by coupling Said's recommendation, that any genuine hermeneutical rendezvous should include both those who have been exploited and those who have done the exploiting, with Sugirtharajah's claim that such interactions should be liberating, transformative, and even cathartic for eachside. Speaking in the broadest terms about the streams of postcoloniality that have ramifications for hermeneutics, Sugirtharajah writes:

> It goes beyond the binary notions of colonized and colonizer and laysweighty emphasis on critical exchanges and mutual transformation between the two. Postcolonialism does not mean that the colonized are innocent, generous, and principled, where as the former colonizers, and now neo-colonizers, are all innately culpable, greedy and responsible for Sugirtharajah, Postcolonial Reconfigurations, all social evils….The current postcolonialism tries to emphasize that this relationship between the ruler and the ruled is complex.[26]
>
> Postcolonial hermeneutics has to be a pragmatic engagement, an engagement in which praxis is not an extra option or a subsidiary enterprise taken on in the aftermath of judicious deconstruction and reconstruction of the texts. Rather, this praxiological involvement is there from the outset of the hermeneutical process, informing and contesting the whole procedure.[27]
>
> Textual reclamations and resistant reading practices will make senseonly if they address the questions people face today. Ultimately, the question is not whether our reading practice is seen as colonial or postcolonial, modern or postmodern. Its usefulness will not be judged by its ability to offer a critique of the complex heritage that colonial occupation produced. Its critical relevance will be apparent when it has a bearing on the issues that cause concern to our people, such as housing, education, homeland, healthcare, social security and the justice system…. The task of postcolonialism is ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the exploited are catered to, rather than being merely an interesting and engaging avenue of inquiry.[28]
>
> The Christian bible is not subjected to a postcolonial gaze in order to make the texts come alive and provide solace and comfort to those devout (or in some cases not so devout) readers who also have social and political perceptiveness…. [The postcolonial gaze] seeks to puncture the Christian Bible's Western protection and pretensions, and to help reposition it in relation to its oriental roots and Eastern heritage.[29]
>
> Historical critical methods were not only colonial in the sense that they displaced the norms and practices of our indigenous reading methods, but in that they were also used to justify the superiority of Christian texts and to undermine the sacred writings of the others, thus creating a division between us and our neighbors. Such material functions as mark for exploitation and abet and involuntarily cultural assimilation.[30]
>
> In contrast a postcolonial scriptural reading is marked by five features: first, it looks for oppositional or protest voices in the text by bringing marginal elements to the center and in the process, subverts the traditional meaning; secondly, it will not romanticize or idealize the poor; thirdly, it will not blame the victims but will direct the attention to the social structures and institutions that spawn victimhood; fourthly, it places the sacred texts together and reads them within an intertextual continuum, embodying a multiplicity of perspectives; and fifthly, it will address the question of how oppressed people can take pride and affirm their own language, multiracial, multicultural and multireligious societies.[31]

Sugirtharajah brings the colonial impact on the Bible and presents that Bible is also used for colonial motives. Sugirtharajah in *The Bible and The Third World* points that Bible was introduced in Asia and Africa by Catholic missionaries before significant role in the lines of believers and was only known through oral transmission mainly through liturgy and sermons so "non-textual means came to be regarded as the prime media of God's revelation and presence".[32] Furthermore, prior to the arrival of the Protestant missions, there were no translations available in the languages of Asia and Africa. The Bible was regarded as one among many sacred books and Christians did not try to subsume or suppress the religious tents of other religion. "in the contrast to this, Sugirtharajah accuses Protestants of a dogmatic attitude of "acknowledgement of the

sufficiency of scripture, assertion of its authority over tradition, treating it as the incorruptible world against human error.[33] So, the pattern of Protestant mission has been one of "the denunciation of the natives" idolatrous practices and "preaching accompanied by the presentation and dissemination of the Bible as the answer to their miserable state". He further calls the work of Bible society as "scriptural imperialism".

> Scriptural imperialism had its roots in the image the society invented for itself. It saw Holy Spirit mission in millennial terms and projected itself as the chosen agent of God to whose care the enormous task of transmitting God's word had been entrusted. The oracles of God, which were first given into the custody of God's chosen, the Jews had now been passed on to the Christians, especially the British…[34]

Sugirtharajah found that the work of BFBS was modeled on the administration of the British Empire.

> The society's intention of providing the Bible in the vernacular was another mark of scriptural imperialism. In colonization's cultural conquest, vernacular Bibles, enabling the natives to read the word of God in their own languages, could be seen as the sympathetic and acceptable face of its civilizing mission: it appeared to be a noble cause. But, behind this noble cause one come across constant complaints by the society's translations who found that the indigenous language not only had no suitable vocabulary but also lacked concepts the ideas of gospel.[35]
>
> Scriptural imperialism was furthered by the society's ambition to print the Bible at affordable prices and place it within the reach of all people, it was also prepared to print and distribute Bibles at a loss. Its aim was to make the Bible the 'cheapest book' that had been published.[36]

Sugirtharajah's argument is that the Bible was used as a key part of colonial discourse and that the Western imperial powers, especially the British, used the Bible not only as chief mean to penetrate the people but also to control the people. Now the native people received the Bible when their own scripture was not available to them or denied to them for e.g. in India it is only one Caste that has the right to use the Scripture and thus when someone receive

the Scripture that itself provides dignity so while discussing the colonial use of the Bible we need to acknowledge the liberative nature of Bible to the recipients.

In *The Bible and Asia* he claims that with the emergence of modern colonialism, the Bible was introduced as an artifact of modernity in the form of the King James Bible, 'the national Bible' of English people. In this incarnation Bible became a very European book lost all its oriental traits, and became less Asiantic…the imported 'white man's book' was seen as a strange instrument, an entrapment to live them away from their own traditions. So, Asian reading of the Bible is always contrived one. He advice Christianity to claim is own by finding ancestral Asian sources.

Understanding scripture occurs from one's own cultural and contextual standpoint. Hermeneutics as the science of understanding Scripture in India wrestle with the Indian realities like poverty, religious pluralism, caste system, colonial impact etc. The hermeneutical engagement provides awareness that we need to approve other traditions and Scriptures which can enrich one's own understanding and interpretation. There is also a need to transcend the notion of Christian and Non-Christian norms because indigenous communities have their own traditions which require acceptance. Hermeneutics is also the act of re-reading history to create counter-culture and it is possible when we remove the colonial biases and feel the Indianess in our Scripture.

END NOTES

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[32] Sugiritharajah, The Bible and The Third World (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 37.
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CONCLUSION

The presence of Christianity in India goes back to the first century and there is a Christian community in Kerala that traces its origin to Apostle Thomas nevertheless this community effort to produce any dogmatic systems is not visible. It was only when the western missionary arrived this efforts got prominence and here Christianity and colonial interpretation got intermingled.

It was the Hindu reformers who while remaining faithful to their own religious upbringing searched the meaning of Christ and the gospel for their own faith community and thus started a project "*Jesus Made in India*." Gradually Christians sought some connection between Christian faith and their own culture resulting in the Brahmanical captivity of Indian theology.

The emergence of nationalistic movement raised curiosity among few Christians to recognize that to know Jesus means to know human struggle and their generosity of spirit helped them to support Indians who opposed the colonial Christians in power. Today's context of mass poverty, inequality, rising price, human right violation, abuses by the totalitarian state, terror and violence all over challenges Indian Christian theologies to offer ingredients that provide nutrition for healthy society.

Foreign missionaries also served India and the social location of their mission motivated them to develop diverse theological responses. They emphasized on adoption, fulfillment, reinterpreting gospel truths according to Indian context and their quest for presenting Jesus for India proves their passion.

Indian Christian theologies are surrounded by such a great cloud of religious systems that theology emerges within the context of dialogue. The task of dialogue is to build trust, meeting common

challenges and addressing conflicting issues. The Indian context is one of the great diversities, contracts and it may seems to be contradictions and here Christian theologies of dialogue leads to connectivity.

Christological reflections are essentials characteristic of Christian theology and in India the aim of Christian theology is to present Jesus in Indian context. The emergence of liberation theology and the acceptance of contextual theology guided towards methodological shift in Indian Christian Theologies and Jesus is presented from the perspective of community i.e. as liberator, Dalit messiah, tribal redeemer, champion of women cause etc. Church is the body of Christ and the ministry of Church based on social concern portrays communion in praxis. Churchless Christianity model communicates that there are many followers of Jesus from other fold. Recognizing the injustice, exploitation and domination in the society conscientize the body to search for partners in constructing justice and people's movement focus on the matter of common good to comprehend the web of life.

This journey through Indian Christian Theologies is "*A Tour de France of learning*" where we should rejoice in the unknowableness of truth and continue to search to gain new approaches.