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Religious Education in the Christian Colleges in India

It is now unanimously accepted that the Church[1] has made pioneering efforts in the field of modern education in India. The educational institutions run by the Church provide for the Indians with education in every discipline at all levels in all parts of the country. There is no other single group of private institutions which serve the nation with quite the same range and scope, and enjoy the same amount of popularity. It is also well acknowledged that it was the missionary zeal which motivated the Church to undertake her educational endeavours in India. Therefore it is but natural that religious education occupied and still occupies a prominent position in all the Christian educational institutions.

But, what exactly is meant by religious education? The concept of religious education, as originally conceived has undergone a thorough change and has acquired new dimensions over the years. This position, the paper tries to establish through a historical survey. And it does so by indicating three phases of development to help understand the concept precisely.

The first phase, according to the author, consisted in imparting Christian faith to non-Christians with a view to converting them to Christianity. It corresponded with the 'aggressive' zeal of the missionaries towards the end of 18th century and the beginning of 19th century. This phase may be said to cover the period from 1770 to 1835. In the second phase, religious education meant imparting Christian faith to the Christians only. This understanding was prevalent for a long period, for nearly a century and a half, say between 1835 and 1975· The content of this concept has undergone a thorough change in the contemporary period. The change consists in re-interpreting Christian

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1. The term 'Church' is taken to mean the Christian community as a whole. Unless it is otherwise specified, this will be the meaning througout the paper.

faith so as to accommodate and promote social justice. It is this change
of meaning which is taken to be the third phase in our understanding
of reilgious education. These three phases are treated in three
successive parts in this paper.

I

Although Christianity came to India as early as the first century
A.D. yet it was only at the end of the 18th century and the beginning
of the 19th that the Church started its vigorous missionary expansion
in India. That also marked the beginning of Christian education in
India. Religious education at that time was taken to mean simply
the imparting of the Christian faith and morals, to all the natives,—
the 'pagans'. Many factors contributed to this specific understanding
of religious education. The most important of these was the socio-
religious conditions of Indian society at that time. The caste-ridden
society of the day, with its most cruel institution of untouchability,
the degraded status of women in society and, in particular the prac-
tices of *sati*, female infanticide, the *devadasi* system, and *Thugi* system
are but a few examples of the evils prevalent in the Indian society of
those days.[2] As regards the religious customs, even Hindu spokesmen
like Raja Rammohan Roy[3] and Swami Dayananda Saraswathi[4] admit-
ted that they had turned out to be superstitious, idolatrous, and in-
tolerant.

2. Any standard book on Indian history covering the period from the end of
   the eighteenth and early nineteenth century will deal with the various kinds
   of evils mentioned here. A comprehensive and yet a summary account of
   the socio-religious condition of India during the period in question is to be
   found in Piyus Kanti Das, *Raja Rammohan Roy and Brahmoism*, Calcutta:
   1970, pp. 1-34.

3. Almost all the major writings of Raja Rammohan Roy expose clearly the
   religious evils existing during his time. For example here in one extract :
   "I have never ceased to contemplate with the strongest feelings of regret
   the obstinate system of idolatry, for the sake of propitiating supposed
   deities, the violation of humane and social feelings. And this in various
   instances, but more especially in the dreadful acts of self-immolation and
   the immolation of the nearest relations, under the delusion of conforming
   to sacred religious rites." Cf. H. H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of
   India, Vol VI*, (New Delhi : Chand & Co., 1932) p. 102.

4. Swami Dayananda makes a scathing denunciation of the popular Hinduism
   in Ch. XI in his *Magnus opus Satyartha Prakash*. See Td. Chiranjiva
   Bharadwaja, *Light of Truth*, New Delhi: Sarvadesik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha,
   New edition, 1975 pp. 329-498.

When the Western Christians came into contact with the Indian culture for the first time, they believed that those evils were closely connected with the religious beliefs of the people. For, they noticed that the culture was in fact deeply religious. To cite the names of some Christians who felt that way: Claudius Buchanan, the chaplain of the British regiment at Calcutta, shocked by the ceremonies performed at Jagannath and the behaviour of the priests and pilgrims declared in a pamphlet[5] that the Hindu religious practices were the main cause for the moral degeneration of the Hindus. Charles Grant, a Civil Servant of the Company wrote a treatise[6] in which he maintained that the social abuses and moral degradation of the people were the result of the widespread ignorance and emanated from the very nature of their religion.

Compared with the religion of the natives here, their religion seemed sublime and superior, in direct contrast to one other. To quote the words of Wilberforce:

> Both their civil and religious systems are radically and essentially the opposites of our own. Our religion is sublime, pure and beneficent. Theirs is mean, licentious and cruel. Of our civil principles and condition, the common right of all ranks and classes to be governed, protected and punished by equal laws is the fundamental principle ... of theirs, the essential and universal pervading character is inequality; despotism in the higher classes, degradation and oppression in the lower.[7]

With such convictions about their own as well as the local religions, and possessing at the same time, ardent desire to improve the situation, they were compelled to think that the only way out was to introduce Christianity in India and to instil Christian principles into

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5. *A Memoir of the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment in India,* (1805).

6. *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with respect to Morals, and the means of Improving it.* It is contained in *Parliamentary Papers,* vol. X Part IV 1812-13. pp· 5-112.

7. Cf. T.C. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates,* 1813 *First Series,* Vol. XXVI. p. 865.

the minds of the Indian people. "The true cure of darkness is the introduction of light," wrote Grant. "The Hindus err because they are ignorant and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders.'[8]

This thesis of the Evangelicals was first enunciated before the English Parliament in 1793. But there was such a stiff opposition in the House of Commons that the whole thing had to be dropped. The East India Company was totally opposed to the introduction of Western education in India except for the Westerners and its own employees. However, the Evangelicals started such a powerful campaign that when the Charter of the Company was submitted for renewal in 1813, the Missionary clause was finally introduced in the charter Act of 1813. It declared "... it was the Duty of this country to promote the Interest and Happiness of the Native Inhabitants of British Dominions in India ... and ... the Introduction among them of Useful Knowledge, and of religious and moral Improvement..."[9] It also transferred from the Board of Directors to the Board of Control the ultimate power of licensing persons desirous of proceeding to India for the purpose of accomplishing these benevolent designs. This made the entry of missionaries into India easy and massive. Thus it was by virtue of the introduction of the Missionary clause in the 1813 Act that the Evangelicals began to flow into India in large numbers and they started their missionary work of 'demolishing the diabolic religion in India,' and of introducing in its place the 'civilizing religion of their own'. Education seemed one of the most powerful means of achieving their objectives. That is how the missionaries started their educational endeavours in India. This background must be borne in mind in order to understand the first meaning given to religious education, in India.

Along with a knowledge of this background, one must also keep in mind another important development. While the British Parliament yielded to the Evangelicals' stand, it did not, however, want to give up its erstwhile stand of neutrality on religious matters. Hence, in the inserted clause there was a further stipulation that "the principles

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8. Quoted by Bruce T. McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1940, p. 11.

9. *The Statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and (Ireland*; Vol. V 1814-53. Geo III, cl 155 Sect. 33).

of the British Government on which the natives of India had always relied for the free exercise of their religion must be inviolably maintained", and that "a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees should be set apart for revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India."[10] In pursuance of this provision of the Act in 1813, a Committee of Public Instruction was set up in 1823, and it was decided in the Committee to organize a Sanskrit College at Calcutta. The Government was about to establish it, but there was a strong protest from among the liberal Indians against the Committee's decision, questioning the very need and value of encouraging oriental scholarship and literature through Sanskrit. The most powerful critic was Rammohan Roy.[11] The influence exerted by him was so great that the Committee of Public Instruction was itself split into two, one known as the Orientalist Party, and the other the English Party. The latter held that the money earmarked for the college should be devoted only to the imparting of knowledge of modern science. They also contended that modern Western education and science could not be taught through Sanskrit. The appointment of Thomas Balington Macaulay, as President of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1834, marked a complete triumph for the English Party. He presented a lengthy Minute to Bentick, then Governor-General, strongly pleading for the English education and vehemently denouncing Oriental learning. Bentick concurred entirely with Macaulay's views and finally passed the momentous Resolution of 7 March 1835 which set the general tone of the Indian educational system. It involved two great decisions: One, the government's educational efforts would hereafter be devoted to the encouragement of education whose content would be western literature and science. Second, the medium of instruction would be English.[12]

However, a formal, comprehensive and coordinated system of education was yet to emerge. So, the British Government did not make education compulsory but allowed all private agencies to start schools and colleges by means of the grant-in-aid systems. Various missionary

10. *Ibid.,* Geo. III, cl. 155, Sect. 43. For an easy reference see H.H. Dodwell, *op. cit.,* p. 103.

11. For an extract of a petition addressed to Lord Amherst by Rammohan Roy, please see H.H. Dodwell, *op. cit.,* p. 105.

12. Cf. Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India.* (Fourth Edition, ed. Percival Spear, Second Indian impression, Delhi: OUP 1982.) p. 650.

bodies took the initiative to establish High Schools and Arts colleges
everywhere as means of accomplishing their mission. In the mean-
while, legal and administrative business also came to be transacted
through English. Hence many an Indian who wanted to secure a
white collar job was obliged to learn English and thus there was a
rush in their schools and colleges. The missionaries welcomed
this turn of events which made their schools popular. However, they
strongly felt that exclusion of religious teaching from the government
schools would leave a void which they must labour to fill. As the
natives were eager to learn the western system of science as well as
the English language, they would teach them effectively. But they also
adopted all possible opportunities to teach their "true" religion to the
"pagans". Religion was taught not only as a compulsory subject
along with other subjects, but also certain portions of the Bible were
included as part of the syllabus for the study of the English language.

In fact, they openly acknowledged that "The reason, the sole
reason why missionary societies established schools and colleges in
various parts of India is ... the same—the evangelization of the
heathen."[13] Therefore, "We cannot be satisfied with any amount of
mere civilization, enlightenment, or general elevation of character,
united with profoundest respect for Christianity. Our object is con-
version of India."[14] Of course they knew well that however much
they might try to impart religious education to their students it would
be very limited in scope as well as impact as the literates they could
hope to produce would be very few in number, compared with the
illiterate masses of the country. Even so they did not lose hope and
relax their efforts to inculcate Christianity into the minds and hearts
of their students. For the 'infiltration theory' of Alexander Duff
came in very handy here. He said:

> Christianity would first be accepted by the intelligentsia and
> would filter down from them to the masses and spread from
> the towns to the villages.[15]

To sum up, religious education in the first phase meant imparting
of Christianity to all those who attended the Church-run institutions,

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13. As quoted by Anot Karokaran, *Evangelization and Diakonia,* (Bangalore:
    Dharmaram Publications, 1978), p. 40.

14. *Ibid.,* p. 40.

15. *Ibid.*

irrespective of their own creed, with a view to converting them to Christianity. The situation of Indian society at that time, the poor and biassed understanding of the local religions by the missionaries of the time, coupled with their firm conviction about the superiority of their own religion and culture were the key factors responsible for such a misconstrued concept of religious education.

<h2 style="text-align:center">II</h2>

The concept of religious education delineated above began to change by the end of the 19th century. Instead of conceiving it as something to be imparted to everyone with a view to converting them, the Christian Colleges began to envisage Christianity as something to be diffused. By diffusion was meant the spreading of Christian ideas and principles from the focal point of the colleges to many concentric circles, via its scholars and alumni. This idea of diffusion was first proposed by Prof. Miller in an orientation paper which he read in the Allahabad Missionary Conference of 1872. The aim of Christian education, according to him, must not be proselytism but modification of character, a formation of principles in the Christian direction. There was a great deal of opposition from many of the participants of the Conference. However, it was not without enthusiastic supporters. Anyway by 1910, this changed view of educational missions became fairly established.[16]

The shift to the new view became ever more clear cut in the thirties. The Lindsay Commission which was appointed in 1930 for the purpose of evaluating Protestant colleges in India, enunciated in clear terms some new aims for Christian education. After the publication of its Report missionary education institutions were directed simply to equip Indian Christians with Christian formation and to enable them to become good leaders rather than to evangelize India through the education of her youth.[17] It is true that there were some missionaries even at that time who continued to think that the conversion of the youth was the primary object of their educational institutions. However, one could see clear evidence of Christian missions ceasing to think that conversion of the non-Christian was the primary aim of their education in their institutions. So, religious education,

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16. Cf. A. Karokaran, *op. cit.;* p. 71.
17. Cf. S. K. George, *Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, Reprint 1960), p. 32.

strictly speaking was meant to impart Christian belief and doctrines only to the Christian students.

As regards Catholic institutions of education, they had always a twofold objective. Their main purpose was to give Catholic education by good Catholic teachers in a suitable atmosphere. This was considered a sure way of not only inculcating a sound religious and moral training among the children, but also of fostering priestly and religious vocations. The other objective was to raise the social and economic standards of the Catholic population.[18]

Thus the Church in general, directed her attention to the Christian youth in order to instruct and educate them right from the start in the true Christian spirit, because it was difficult to impart to them a mature knowledge of the faith when they would be grown up.[19] So the concept of religious education came to be applied only to Christian youth in the Christian schools and colleges. As regards the non-Christians who formed the majority of Christian educational institutions, the purpose of collegiate education was to produce an over-all development of the individual. It was supposed to impart culture to the individual and to form a 'finished gentleman' a man of taste and distinction. In other words, it was to produce the 'elite' of the nation and mould leaders for the benefit of the masses.[20] In keeping with this kind of understanding a strict discipline was enforced on all.

There were many important factors which contributed to this kind of broad understanding of Christian education. The chief of them are the following. The first and foremost was the *State control*. By the third decade of the last century the government which had assumed greater responsibility in the field of education, started to impose restrictions on the missionaries in their use of education as a means of evangelization. This deprived the Christian missions of their initiative in educational service and of using their institutions as an

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18. Cf. F. A. Plattner, *Catholic India Yesterday and Today*, Allahabad: St Paul's Publications, 1963), p. 114.

19. Cf. C. Beeker, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India* (1890-1915) Td., G. Stadler and S. Karotemprel, (Shillong: Vendreuse Missiological Institute, 1980), p. 259.

20. Cf. H. Miranda, "Education for Responsible Participation in a Democratic Society", in T. A. Mathias, Ed., *Education and Social Concern*, (Delhi: Jesuit Educational Association of India, 1968), pp. 122-27.

important instrument of missionary activities. The next important factor was a *Renascent spirit* among modern Hindus. The Hindu thinkers and leaders agreed that the popular Hindu practices with which the past missionaries had come into contact were superstitious. The most illustrious names of such leaders are Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswathi and Swami Vivekananda. They also accepted the need for reform of Hinduism at the religious and social levels. They took upon themselves the mission of urging people to change their practices, bringing to light many of the hidden treasures of the great Hindu Sources. So the missionaries were increasingly becoming aware of the fact that Hindu religion was not completely degenerate and intrinsically immoral and that it could not simply be judged by its outward manifestations and popular practices. *Rise of Comparative Religion* was yet another factor which brought about a change of aim of Christian education. In the universities of the West a new science came into being, described in various terms as the Science of Religion or Comparative Religion or the History of Religions. It revealed the greater ideals of other religions and brought out the need to study them for their own sake and not just for the sake of discovering faults and weakness in them as the early missionaries of Serampore had done. This new subject brought to light many areas of agreement among the different religions. So the Christians' claim to uniqueness of their religion and their complacency about their religion lost much of its validity. Christianity did not now seem to be the only faith which was purely spiritual and essentially ethical.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, there were certain developments, both in India and abroad, which reinforced the broader understanding of Christian education as well the mission of the Church. One such development was the attempt at *Re-interpretation of Missionary texts*. Even the simple acceptance of the biblical authority came in for attack by the 'liberal' wing of the Protestants in European countries, in the last century. But the recent findings of Bible research have raised doubts regarding the authenticity of key missionary texts like Mt. 28, 19-20 and Mk. 16, 9-20. Such discoveries have not only created a kind of 'missionary crisis' but have enabled the Church to understand her missionary nature in the proper perspective. There is greater awareness of the need to re-interpret the missionary texts, and re-orientate them in the over-all context of 'life' rather than the one-sided emphasis on simple oral proclamation, with a view to converting others.

Another factor is the emergence of *Theology of Religions:* In the light of anthropology and the discipline of Comparative Religion, and specially the positive approach shown by Vatican II towards other religions, a new theology of religions has emerged. Other World Religions are not seen as being necessarily in opposition to Christianity but in consonance with the cosmic revelation through the Logos of the One and the same Father. Efforts are being made to remove the apparent conflicts arising out of the stand taken by the Church, and the tenets of other religions, and to discover the complementarity among religions.

In India *the rise of nationalism and secularism* have a great deal to do with the ushering in of the second phase we have alluded to above. As the Indian nation provided almost full financial support to all the educational institutions—except the ones which are running purely on the fees collected from the students—the Christian schools and colleges were forced to balance their religious objective of strengthening the Church and spreading the Gospel with the perception of the needs of the nation, for instance, preparing leaders for the modern democratic society. Further, in acceptance of the modern secular framework of the Indian Constitution, the Church has tended to stress the social dimension of religion, instead of emphasizing her religious superiority. During this phase, the Church educationists were increasingly becoming convinced that "India needs large numbers of well-educated modern, enterprising, forward-looking youth to get her economy moving, to transform her social structure and stabilize her political framework." Some even maintained that it was "more important in the long run to produce young men who are achievement-oriented and will use their skills to raise the level of production in the nation that to do any amount of charitable work. One industrial entrepreneur is more precious and can do more real good to a country than a dozen saints!"[21]

In the context of all these new developments it was but natural that the Christian education in India attached great importance to such goals as character-formation, discipline, and academic excellence. The relevant point for our purpose from the above is religious education, as was understood in the first phase, has become secondary and it has been given a low priority and more importance is given to the moulding of future leaders of the nation, and the development of the

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21. Cf. T. A. Mathias, *op. cit.,* p. xiv.

individual virtues of the wards. This is what I call the second phase of religious education. This phase lasted from the third decade of the last century up to recent times. That it has been continued even till recently is evident from the statement of objectives made by the Christian schools and colleges. Just to give one example, a Christian school calendar states: "The school aims at the integral, personal formation of the young ... to help the students to become mature, spiritually oriented men of character ... (and thereby) to become agents of needed social change in the country."[22]

The point we have made above is further confirmed by recent studies like that of J. Murickan's *Catholic colleges in India*.[23] This study, according to Fr. Alfred De Souza, "suggest that Catholic colleges are rated high on competence and academic performance and rather low on the teaching of religion and the achievement of their specific mission."[24] De Souza's own observation is that "*in fact*, the specific mission of Catholic colleges, interpreted as bearing witness to Christ and instilling Christian values among non-Christians, is given low priority."[25] "It is a paradox" he says, "that Catholic colleges, whose rationale is derived from their sense of mission and their religious purpose, are not perceived to have successfully accomplished what is seen as their main task of religious formation, however it is understood."[26]

III

Of late, there has been a new emergence of a conception of religious education as well as the mission of the Church. It is in the direction of promotion of social justice. There are numerous factors contributing to this change of direction. They arise both out of global and Christian contexts. An explanation of these contexts is necessary before we can explain this new phase of understanding religious education.

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22. Cf. *The Search Point*, (Delhi: Jesuit Educational Association of India, 1979), pp. 76-77.

23. J. Murickan, *Catholic Colleges in India*, (Mangalore: Xavier Board of Higher Education, 1981).

24. See Alfred De Souza, "What Catholic Colleges can do for the New Society in India", in *Vidyajyoti*, (Feb. 1984 Vol. XLVIII No. 2) pp. 69-70.

25. *Ibid* , p. 70.

26. *Ibid* , p. 69.

The global Context

One of the most powerful signs of contemporary times is a world-wide passion for justice and the insistent demand for social justice at all levels. The growing resentment of the masses in every nation, the increasing number of strikes and lockouts in every industry, the long marches of the peasants, workers and students to draw the attention of rulers, the universal cynicism about the 'Super-Powers', the over-all struggle of the Third World countries for establishing a new society, are all the manifest expressions of the deep yearning and efforts of peoples for getting an equitable share in the goods, services, and opportunities that the world produces. The demand for social or distributive justice has been accentuated over the last two decades. People are beginning to recognize the inadequacy of the development paradigm and are becoming more and more keen to transform the structures of society—political, economic and technological. There seems to be a growing conviction among people that the emergence of the new society will not be a gift of the well-to-do to the poor but the outcome of the struggle of the poor and the oppressed who can overcome their powerlessness by organizing themselves to act upon the structures that oppress them.

The context in the Church

The Church, being a community of faith, and living in the concrete situation of society cannot be a silent spectator of acts of injustice, inequality, oppression and poverty, witnessed in the present-day world. Called to witness the Kingdom of God in this very same world, the Church cannot accept the sin of injustice and inequality, but must act to set them right. In fact the Church, of late, has been deeply involving herself in the social questions. Specifically Vatican II's *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* unambiguously declared her role as one of being involved in the world and with the people, in their conditions and circumstances and feeling the feelings and participating in the struggles of the people.[27] The three important social Encyclicals[28] that followed in quick succession reiterated the Church's

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27. The first four chapters are of great importance in this connection.

28. *Mater et Magistra* (1961), and *Pacem in Terris* (1963), by Pope John XXIII and *Populorum Progressio* (1967), by Pope Paul VI.

deep concern with the world's grief and anxieties, with the problems of hunger, unemployment and disease. The Third Synod of Bishops also dealt with the theme of justice. It brought out a document[29] which concretely and realistically manifested a sense of conscious participation in the struggle for justice. Most recently, Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*[30] developed the theme of the humanization of society and made the principle of human rights the corner-stone of his understanding of the question.

Taking the cue and inspiration from the *Magisterium*, a number of religious congregations have also spelled out their goals and plan of action in the direction of promoting social justice. For example, the *Jesuit General Congregation* (1975) stated its decisive choice "to engage, under the standard of the Cross, in the crucial struggle of our time: the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it includes . . ." It has also affirmed that the way to faith and the way to justice are inseparable ways . . . and that "the service of faith and the promotion of justice cannot be one ministry among others", but "the integrating factor of all our ministries."[31] Likewise, the Acts of the General Chapter of the *Sisters of Apostolic Carmel* (1978) declares its option in the following words: ". . . . We see that the time has come to move away from the opening of new institutions in the traditional pattern, to identify ourselves much more with our people, especially with the under-privileged and to collaborate more with others . . ."[32] To cite one more example, the Constitution of the *Religious of Jesus and Mary* states its objective thus: "The aim of the Congregation is to make Jesus and Mary known and loved by means of Christian education in all social milieux with the preference . . . for the young and, among these, for the poor."[33]

The Type of Religious Education Needed in the Present Context

It is in the light of this new great awakening in the Church regarding its social concern that the role of religious education is seen by many today. Some have, for instance, deplored that the present-day religious education does not reflect this prophetic condemnation of the social sin-situation which has deprived people of their divinity and

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29. Cf. The Statement of the Third Synod of Bishops: *Justice in the World*. It should be noted that his documet is not so much a theoretical statement as a call to action.

30. See particularly Nos. 13, 15, 16.

31-33. These citations are culled from *the Search Point, op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

tarnished God's image in them.[34]   On the contrary, it "has in its content and method become an encouragement to narrow individualism." So they have expressed the need of our education becoming a "means of liberation of men and women as members of society and citizens of the Kingdom of God."[35]

The kind of religious instruction that is expected of the Christian education may be explained by contrasting it with the traditional type. With regard to a concrete issue like poverty, the former way of religious education would be to consider it as caused simply by God's will. Now, the modern critic says that this kind of explanation is abstract, theoretical, spiritualistic and other-worldly. It brings in a factor which is entirely *outside man's control* or states it simply as uncontrollable, and so it will not-inculcate any active concern for social change in the learners.   Such an explanation of the social problem, according to the critic, is bound to be mythological in content, and be filled with fantasies and superstitions.   The values and virtues advanced by such a religious education, first, on the part of the sufferer will be submission, blind obedience, patience and long-suffering, and on the part of others, compassion on the victims, fidelity to the rules, conformity to the prevailing system.

As against this, in the liberative model of religious education, the same issue of poverty will be seen as something *historically* created by man, particularly by the conscious and deliberate decision on the part of few individuals to accumulate wealth and power.   Such an education will cultivate a critical reflection, instilling confidence in the oppressed to assume responsibility for radical change, participating in the creation of "new earth and the new heaven" on earth.   Such a model will in content be demythologizing because it is rooted in the social realities and the historical explanation.   And the methodology involved in this model will be a progressive dialogue between the teacher and the learner, constant mutual criticism, continuous evaluation, growing social awareness etc.   The virtues implied in this model will be a critical attitude, spirit of questioning, violation of rules and revolt if necessary.

In the present-day context of the growing awareness of the unjust structures of society, and of the Church's great concern to change them,

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34-35. Cf. Gabriel J. Gonsalves, "Values and Trends in Todays Education" in *Jeevadhara*, No. 69, May-June 1982, p. 202.

it is argued that the second model of religious education is certainly what is needed for the Church if her educational mission is to be of any worth and relevant to the needs of the day. This line of argument,[36] outlined above, has become common among the Church circles today. This is what I call, the third and the emerging phase of religious education.

IV

Concluding Remarks

a) *By way of Summing up:*

1. The paper has just made a historical survey of the understanding of religious education in the Church in India over the years. In the beginning, religious education meant imparting Christian principles to others with a view to converting them and making them members of the Church. Later, the concept was secularized enough to acquire a 'reformist' connotation, i.e. to include the task of forming leaders by developing in them such qualities as decency, discipline, enterpreneurship, etc. But today's conception of religious education is 'revolutionary' because it tends to train people for a deep involvement with the work of transformation of the unjust society into a just one.

2. We also observed in the foregoing that the present phase of understanding religious education has been emerging from the over-all context of society, as well as from the re-interpreted understanding of the Church's mission. The general view about today's society is that it "is marked by the grave sin of injustice",[37] and that "by its perversity it contradicts the plan of its Creator".[38] The duty of the Church, in such a context, is seen as witnessing to justice because the God of its faith is a God of justice and love. The Church's mission of witnessing Christ is interpreted as one of proclaiming the presence of Christ as liberator in the struggle for justice and human dignity, and to create an environment for the reconciliation of poor and oppressed

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36. This argument is actually a modified version of G. J. Gonsalves' views, expressed in *art. cit.*, pp. 203-206.

37. *Justice in the world*, the Statement of the Third Synod of Bishops. English Text. p. 13.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

who are alienated by the structure of society from their vocation to be human."[39]

3. Against the background of such a re-interpreted over-all mission of the Church, her educational mission is seen to be that of conscientizing people to the prevailing sin of injustice and orienting them to the work of eradicating it.

b) *By Way of Reflection :*

4. It is heartening to observe that the over-all mission of the Church—especially the mission of Christian education in general, and of religious education in particular—is in the direction of promoting social justice. This is very much in evidence in every quarter of the Church. It is talked about in every seminar and conferences. And much is being written about it in all important journals and papers.

5. If this emerging concept of religious education is really to carry weight it is not enough for the Church to simply voice it. What is really needed is a dramatic change of orientation and a radical redefinition of the objectives and priorities of the Christian colleges, and a clear formulation of strategies and methods, along with training of the staff for implementing this programme.

6. As it is, a Church-run school or college is a highly centralized organization with concentration of power in the head of the institution who is invariably a priest or religious person. There is practically no say for the lay staff in the management and in the day to day administration of the college. In this situation, virtues like submissiveness, servitude are appreciated and even encouraged. There is a conspicuous absence of such virtues as freedom, initiatives, fellowship, co-operation, participation etc. If a microscopic minority of the staff manage to possess and retain these virtues in spite of the present set-up, and if they happen to make some healthy and constructive criticism, they will immediately be branded as 'anti-management', 'anti-clerical' and even as 'anti-church'. Not only that; steps will be taken, and have actually been taken to threaten them with sus-

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39. Alfred De Souza, *art. cit.,* p. 73.

pension and even termination of service, taking full advantage of the minority rights[40] enshrined in the Constitution.

The Christian colleges, therefore, stand in need of proving their credibility first by re-orienting their own structures in such a way as to show themselves as living examples of what they proclaim about justice! Then alone will the re-interpreted conception of religious education have any meaning and convey the right message to the people in India.

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40. Clause 31(a) of the Indian constitution provides the religious minorities of the country with rights to start and run their own educational institutions in their own way without any interference from outside. Accordingly, the minority-run institutions do not come under Private College Regulation Act, nor can their activities like appointment of teachers, etc. be questioned by the Court. Such provisions are advantageous to the religious minorities because they are enabled to maintain the integrity of their religious traditions, and educate their people in that tradition, without any outside interference. So far so good.

However, if the Principal/Headmaster turns out to be despotic and autocratic, then his employees are the worst sufferers. For they are unable to take recourse to many of the protective measures like the employees in other instiutions. For the Private College Regulation Act insists that prior approval or concurrence of the University/Government be obtained by a Principal of a private college, before suspending or terminating the services of an employee who, he thinks, is a challenge to him or to the management. Further, if the affected individual is not satisfied with the decision of the University/Government, he can appeal to the Court seeking justice. Such checks and balances are not, in fact, applicable to the minority-run institutions. Taking cover under the minority clause of the Constitution, the Principal here, can suspend or dismiss his employees without the prior approval or concurrence of the University/Government.