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CHRISTIAN MISSION AND INDIAN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Introduction

The history of the expansion of Christianity is dominated by one recurring theme : uncompromising fidelity to orthodoxy in belief and practice. This consequently, brought her into conflict with religions with which she came into contact. St. Paul, the first great Christian missionary, was uncompromising in his polemics with his ancestral faith, Judaism, even in matters which to men of the twentieth century seem to be ridiculous.

When Christianity was brought to Rome, she came into conflict with the Roman political authorities, who were the most tolerant of all rulers of ancient times, as far as religious belief and practice were concerned. In Rome, thousands of innocent and law-abiding Christians were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character and according to the laws of an emperor distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies, which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Emperor Trajan, are filled with the most pathetic complaints that the Christians who obeyed the dictates and solicited the liberty of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government.[1] The exaggerated apocalyptic, Millenarianism and an other-worldly eschatology produced in many Christians of the early centuries a feeling of nausea towards involvement in secular pursuits. This made them suspect in the eyes of the State which accused the Christians of treason. "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" asked Tertullian. In his *magnum opus*, "City of God", St. Augustine developed a theology of history with an unhealthy dichotomy between

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1. E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 207.

the sacred and the secular. Augustine could not accept the view that, "history can be, as truly as it is, an image and expression of God".[2]

Anthropologists tell us that primitive men who were engaged in agricultural pursuits did not involve themselves in religious conflicts because the agricultural deities were a common denominator all over the world. A Mexican peasant would have felt at home in an Attic festival in honour of the wheat-goddess and both would not be strangers in rice-eating China or India. In India, the invading Aryans accepted the local agricultural deities after having Sanskritized their names. So too, the Dravidians had no difficulty in adopting some of the gods and goddesses of the conquerors, together with their own and develop an ecletic mythology.

But conflict arose when mankind extended its domain from nature-worship to man-worship, in which the object of worship is parochial collective human power.[3] The worship of nature tends to unite members of different communities because it is not self-centred, but the worship of parochial communities tends to set their respective members at variance because their religion is an expression of self-centredness, and self-centredness is the source of all conflict. The wars of the ancient Hebrews with the surrounding Gentiles are a classical example of such a conflict. It is more a socio-political conflict than a purely religious one.

The history of Christianity clearly shows the continuity of the polemic against the non-Christian religions similar to the Old Testament polemic against the other religions. St. Paul warns his Christians "not to turn away from listening to the Truth and wander into myths".[4] He tells his beloved disciple Timothy, "have nothing to do with godless and silly myths".[5] In 382 A.D. we see Symmachus, the last champion of Roman paganism, pleading with Emperor Gratian to spare the statue of Victory that was installed in the Roman Senate House. But Gratian, under pressure from St. Ambrose of Milan, did not oblige Symmachus.

2. H.U.v. Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970), p. 44.

3. A. Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 31.

4. *II Timothy:* 4, 4.

5. *I Timothy:* 4, 7.

This inconoclastic attitude towards other religions was to domi-
nate Christian missionary thought down the centuries. Under this
spirit, Christian colonial powers destroyed pagan monuments in the
civilizations of the Aztecs, the Mayas, and the Peruvians in South
America and in the name of Crusades, the European soldiers plundered
the Eastern Christian Empire and destroyed the noble elements of
Saracenic culture. It was the same spirit that made the Portuguese
invaders of Goa raze to the ground Hindu temples. The Portuguese
and Spanish conquerors did not heed to the pathetic plea of
Symmachus. That is why the historian Arnold Toynbee takes sides
with Symmachus.

Myth versus Truth

The Pauline contrast between myth and truth has been the consis-
tent Christian paradigm in any controversy with non-Christian
religions. Till recently, myth was considered to be a primitive mode
of thought, especially in the "mythical school" of Bauer and Gunkel
which identified myth with polytheism. But thanks to the studies of
Mircea Eliade and Cassirer and others, today myth has been
respectably rehabilitated. It is surprising that even the Oxford
Dictionary has retained the old pejorative meaning of myth. Even
such a great Scripture scholar like Fr. Benoit, O.P., believes that
myth "introduces error and fiction into the very essence of religious
speculations about the divinity."[6]

Older apologists used to oppose Revealed religions to Natural
religions, prophetic religions to mythical religions and Supernatural
religions to Natural religions. R. C. Zaehner asserted the superiority
of the Monotheistic religions over the polytheistic and Monistic
religions. For one thing, not everything in the Bible is pure history
in the modern sense of the term; a good part of it is saga or poetic
and divinatory elaboration on history. Besides, the Biblical creation
story contains some elements from Babylonian myths, and the Judaeo-
Christian eschatology contains Iranian apocalyptic elements and
apocalyptic is not history. In this context, C.H. Dodd has a pertinent
remark to make: "These first and last things can be spoken only in
symbols. They lie, obviously, outside the realm of time and space to
which all factual statements refer. They are not events as the historian

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6. O.P. Benoit, *La Prophetie,* 1947.

knows events but realities of a supra-historical order; in referring to them the Biblical writers make free use of mythology."[7]   Christian speculative theology, making use of the Greek conceptual paradigm, and the excessively rationalistic Scholastic theology, have succeeded in converting Christianity into a philosophy.   Conceptual theology cannot claim any superiority over mythical theology, for in the final analysis, theological statements as well as theological myths are mere mental tools with the potentiality of degenerating into idols.   But in one sense, mythic theology is superior to conceptualistic theology, because, according to Vander Leeuw, "doctrine can never completely discard the mythical if it wishes to avoid falling to the level of a mere philosophical thesis." [8] Millar Burrow has summarized the new view of myth: "it implies not falsehood but truth; not primitive naive misunderstanding, but an insight more profound than scientific description and logical analysis can ever achieve.   The language of the myth, in this sense, is consciously inadequate, being simply the nearest we can come to a formulation of what we can see very darkly."[9]   Mythology is a way of thinking and imagining about the divine rather than a thinking and imagining about a number of gods .... myth is a way of thinking independently of a polytheistic setting.[10]

Christian missionaries, who came to India with the colonial powers, were appalled at the sight of "rampant" polytheism and "horrifying" myths of gods and goddesses.   The conscience of the invading Muslims was also shocked by Hindu "polytheism", and both the religions worked with untiring zeal to teach Monotheism to the Hindus.   But at a meta-theological level, monotheism is no better than polytheism.   This is the teaching of Sankara and the great Christian mystical theologian Pseudo-Dionysius.   For Plotinus and Augustine the highest category is One.   But the Areopagite goes beyond Neo-Platonism and asserts that God is neither One nor Unity. In other words, God transcends the antinomy of one-many.[11]   The reason for this statement is very simple: one and many are correlatives

7. C.H. Dodd, *The Bible Today,* p. 112; cf. also Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time,* pp. 94 - 96.

8. Van der Leeuw, *Religion: its Essence and Manifestation* (London), p. 444.

9. Millar Burrow, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia; 1946), pp. 115 - 16.

10. Cf. Davis Henton, '*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*', No. 88 (1956).

11. *P.G.,* Dionysius, III - 1048 - A.

of the purely temporal order, and any conceptual abstraction from them is inapplicable to the Supreme Reality, who is beyond all human categories, "wherefrom words turn back, together with the mind, not having attained" (*Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā sahā*).[12]

In our dialogue with Hinduism and Buddhism, instead of trying to 'convert' them into Monotheistic belief, we should try to deepen our understanding of their myths. There is nothing absolutistic or sacrosanct about the Semitic Patriarchal symbol of the Monotheistic God. It developed in a nomadic, patriarchal society with strong tribal exclusivism. Parochial, exclusivistic mentality is peculiar to a racial minority, surrounded by mighty belligerent powers, and the very instinct of socio-political survival gives birth to an exclusivistic thought pattern. In India, with vast uncultivated virgin lands, religious thought took a different pattern. It is accommodative in its orientation. To return to the theme of myth, just as we cannot look directly at the source of light, so too, we cannot look at myth and comprehend it. Light is invisible; so too myth. We take the myth for granted. It is an experience-*anubhava*. It is unspeakable. The myth is transparent and brilliant like the light. We do not question the myth. According to Aristotle, myth is also wisdom. *Logos* is a category that is assimilated to *mythos — mythologos*. The hermeneutic or interpretation of myth is *logos*. Myth is the horizon over against which any hermeneutic is possible. *Mythologumenon*, a third cognate term, is the mythical story or narration. It is the form or garment in which the myth happens to be expressed. Raimundo Panikkar says that myth is that on which we cannot lay our finger without dispelling it. It is something that we cannot manipulate. Thinking has a corrosive power. Myth, God, person, etc., cannot be objects of thought. If we think out God, He vanishes: if we think out a person, he escapes; if we think out religions, they are destroyed.[13]

Time : Linear Time versus Cyclic Time

Christian apologetics used to press for the superiority of the Judaeo - Christian traditions because of the historical nature of their religions and the linear concept of time found in these traditions. At the outset, it is necessary to point out that Indian systems of thought do

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12. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II.4.
13. Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Intra-religious Dialogue*, (New York, Paulist Press, 1978), *passim*.

not teach a purely cyclic concept of time. They do admit progress and the *eschaton* is the culmination of the cosmic salvation from the time process which is to be attained in the *Satya Yuga*.[14] According to the *aparōkshānubhūti*, there can be no return to *samsāra* for a liberated soul, just as there can be no return to the dream after waking.[15]

The linear concept of time itself is metaphysically inadequate as it leaves the beginning and the end unexplained. Besides, the Judaeo - Christian eschatology can be traced back to Iranian sources.[16] Again, the apocalyptic *genre* is the sign and paradigm of a decadent culture, whereby a down – trodden and humiliated minority race finds vicarious satisfaction and consolation in an imaginative projection of the racial subconscious into a far distant Golden Age (Messianism) to compensate for a traumatic catastrophe of their present.[17]   Here again, the antinomy between linear and cyclic time should be resolved in the region of meta-history just as the tension between polytheism and monotheism is to be solved in the region of meta - theology.

Whether it is Christian *Perfection*, or Buddhist *Nirvāna* or Hindu *Mukti*, the state of spiritual freedom is identical. This freedom, according to Panikkar, reveals a transhistorical perspective, that neither denies the temporal nor drowns it. Panikkar calls it "tempe-ternal present."[18] Both myth and apocalyptic try to get behind the temporal process.   Says Mircea Eliade : "Mythic or sacred time is qualitatively different from profane time, from the continuous and irreversible time of our profane existence . . .   The myth takes man out of his own time — his individual, chronological, historic time, and projects him, symbolically at least, into the Great Time, the *mahākāla* of Hinduisum, into a paradoxical instant, which cannot be measured, because it does not consist of duration".[19]

Christian Mission

Papal documents and Conciliar teachings have clearly set forth the nature and scope of the mission of the Church.   Right at the

14. Cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Time and Timeless,* (University of Madras, 1953), p. 83.

15. *Aparókshānubhūti*, verse 91

16. Cf. A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (Oxford: abridged ed.), p. 475.

17. F.C. Burkitt, *The Eschatological Idea in the Gospel* (Cambridge,) p. 207.

18. R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeeutic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 168.

19. M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* pp. 57 - 58.

beginning of his ministry, Jesus announced his mission : "to bring good news to the poor he has sent me, to proclaim to the captives release and sight to the blind."[20] Then there is the commission of Jesus to the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations.[21] Some doubt whether these texts are the authentic words of Jesus himself. But they are certainly in the consciousness of the early Church at least by 60-70 A.D., and they must have entered the Gospel tradition by 80 A.D.

The Second Vatican Council Decree on the Missions speak of in-direct mission work, when direct mission work is not possible due to historical circumstances.[22] This work consists in making Christ present among people, especially in the developing countries, by the living witness of the missionaries to the charity of Christ by means of education, social work, care for the starving masses, liberation of the oppressed from exploitation.[23] Frisque defines mission as, "the continual effort that the Church makes to convert the non—Christian world to faith in Jesus Christ".[24] According to Pope Pius XII the mission of the Church is that "the light of the Christian Truth may more richly shine upon the new peoples and that there be new Christians".[25] The mission is said to be accomplished with the establishment of native Hierarchies.[26] Therefore, the task is not one that continues indefinitely.[27] The historian Toynbee says that "every Church is orthodox to itself ; to others, erroneous and heretical".[28] From phenomenology of religion it is evident that every new faith is invested with a tremendous amount of energy and dynamism and zeal to spread its faith far and wide. If Karl Müller could see the divine element in the marvellous spread of Christianity,[29] the spread of Islam and Buddhism is no less marvellous. Edward Gibbon has depicted for us the spread of Christianity among the "barbarians" who over-threw the Roman empire. They were mass conversions brought about by means that are unrepeatable today.

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20. Cf. *Luke:* 4,18.
21. Cf. *Matthew:* 28, 19; *Mark:* 16, 15.
22. *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity,* No. 6.
23. *Ibid,* No. 9 and No. 12.
24. J. Frisque, "Pour une theologie des rapports entre la mission et la paroisse", in *La Revue Nouvelle,* 35, (1962), p. 519.
25. Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones,* A.A.S., (1951), p. 507.
26. Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud,* A.A.S., (1919), p. 445.
27. E. Hillman, "The Main Task of the Mission", in *Concilium,* (Vol. XII) p. 7.
28. A. Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion,* (Oxford: 1979) p. 257.
29. *Concilium,* Vol. XIII, p. 11.

The Goths, Visigoths, Vandals and Franks were enchanted into conversion by the magnificance of the Roman culture, the beauty of Christian liturgy, or the message of a superior religion. These barbarous hordes had nothing to lose but their inferiority complex. But the case is totally different in Asia, the cradle of ancient cultures and religious traditions that are more venerable than Christianity. People who are proud of such an immortal heritage cannot be "converted" so easily. The history of the Christian missions in Asia bears it out. The main blocks of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam remain practically untouched by the heroic efforts of thousands of zealous missionaries for over four centuries; in spite of these men and women having poured their life-blood and sweat on the shores of these vast land masses.

The conversion of tribals and the untouchables is a totally different phenomenon and its rationale has a lot to do with the dynamics of economics and sociology. Mission work in India has hardly nibbled at the hard core of Hinduism. And yet, the process of planetization has been felt even in India. Technology, science and the mass media have thrown heterogeneous peoples into a vortex, from where there is no escape without mutual encounter. Even the etherial Dalai Lama, who had lived for centuries in glorious isolation, is today in the centre of inter-religious dialogue. Co-existence of religions has come to stay as a twentieth century phenomenon, thanks to the two World Wars, and global commerce. So, as far as India is concerned, the form of evangelization will take the form of dialogue for ages to come. This dialogue is not a merely academic luxury meant for a few intellectuals who have the leisure and means to travel and participate in continual dialogue meetings. This is but one aspect of dialogue, but not the most important one, which is a dialogue at the deepest level of spiritual experience between members of different religious traditions and even with people who have no religion. This applies equally to the so-called Christian nations of Europe and America, where there is an acute need of re-evangelization, though Hillman is against this process of "re-evangelization".[30] But according to the famous French Theologian Yves Congar, the Church's mission is permanent and co-extensive with the life of the Church. Interpreting the thought of Congar, P. Haubtman says : "The mission exists everywhere, in countries referred to as missions, as well as in Catholic

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30. Hillman, *op. cit.*, p. 10

countries".[31] With this end in view, M. D. Chenu uses the phrase, ''the Church in the state of mission".[32] According to Chenu, "mission finds itself integrated with the whole web of history, with all creation".[33]

Dialogue and Liberty :

The only true and possible aim of genuine inter-religious dialogue could be none other than mutual enrichment. And this is to be done in full liberty. Faith and coercion are antipodal concepts. And yet, the history of religions unfolds to us unending streams of bloodshed, persecution, torture and death. In the field of faith, even God respects human liberty. Says Pope John XXIII : "Every human being has a right to liberty in the pursuit of truth".[34] This liberty is not simply a respect for being, for life, for conscience, as one respects a growing plant; it involves reciprocity among the spokesmen or the partisans of an encounter or dialogue. It is an internal law for the growth of a society which intends to go beyond the heterogeneous juxtaposition and to involve itself deliberately in an organic effort towards unity in which all are transformed.

According to this point of view, the encounter presupposes complete disinterestedness, to the point of not trying to 'convert' people. Fr. de Montcheuil keenly aware of the human value of going to God freely, emphasizes, "the absurdity of any purely intellectual effort". The point is not to persuade or convince, but "to awaken to a new life... We are not in the realm of proving anything, but of communicating values".[35] According to P. Liege, the Church appears as the true place of liberity, the place of brotherly respect.[36] Fr. H. de Lubac, S. J. said : "(The Church) secures liberty for men and the spread of the testament of liberty".[37]

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31. P. Haubtman, *Semaine Religieuse de Paris,* (Oct. 26, 1963), p. 1031.

32. Cf. M.D. Chenu, *La Parole de Dieu, L'Evangile dans le temps* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1964), pp. 237 - 42.

33. M.D. Chenu, *La Foi dans l'intelligence,* p. 260.

34. Cf. *Pacem in Terris.*

35. Y. de Monteheuil, *Problems de vie Spirituelle* (Paris: 1957), p. 35.

36. P. Liege, "La Liberte religieuse imperatif de la Mission" in *Parole et Mission* 27, (1964), p. 538.

37. H. de Lubac, S.J., *Meditations sur l'Eglise* (Coll. Theologie 27) (Paris: 1952), pp. 126-36.

Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Dialogue

Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament has given us a theology of other religions. The Old Testament polemic against the *Gentiles* should be viewed against its socio-political background. The Hebrew sacred writers did not treat this topic *exprofesso*. Their message was simple : Yahweh is "their God" and they should not go after "other Gods". In primitive and tribal societies, the religion of a group is intimately connected with its economy, sociology and political outlook. There was no theorization about religion. In such social groups, particularism was always there, since it was taken for granted that every people had its own God and its own traditions. "Particularism became exclusivism," says Bruce Vawter, "only under the stress of peculiar historical developments".[38] According to Kaufmann's thesis, there is no O. T. polemic against heathen religion, except the contention that it is folly to apotheosize material objects. But Rowley and McKenzie reject this view.[39] But since the Hebrew language has no term for "false god", there cannot be any speculation on polytheism among the ancient Jews. The New Testament too does not contain any theology of religions. Recently John Hick has edited a book entitled, *Christianity And Other Religions*. It gives a brief *exposé* of some nine contemporary views on the burning problem of the encounter of religions. The approaches range from the uncompromising dialectical theology of Karl Barth to the view of John Hick that there is to be a Copernican revolution in our theology of religions whereby we abandon the "Ptolemaic" view that there is "no salvation outside Christianity" and see the various faiths including our own, as revolving round the sun which they all reflect in their different ways. Hick's view is a far cry from that of Barth, for whom the Christian revelation in Jesus Christ is the abrogation of other religions.[40] Discarding the outmoded "Fulfilment Theory" of Farquhar and others, we come across the "Synthetic Theory" of Rahner, Charles Davis, Richard Niehbuhr and others. These thinkers are willing to accept the absolute claims of the various religions. Its elements, according to Davis, are: 1) Belief in Christ's universality and finality as distinct from Jesus' time-conditioned teachings ;2) Acceptance

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38. B. Vawter, *Israel's Encounter with the Nations,* (Nagapur Seminar Paper) p. 3.

39. J.L. McKenzie, *Myth and Realities* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1967), p. 138.

40. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Chicago University Press), Vol. I, part 2.

of genuine grace-given faith in non-Christian religions; 3) Christians can learn "religiously" from other religions; 4) Giving a providential place to non-Christian religions; 5) Christianity's role as one of *representation*, i.e., service to the world and redemptive suffering on its behalf. According to Teselle, the universal finality of Jesus Christ is the result of the triumph of Christianity in the West and this triumph itself was, perhaps, projected on to the person of Christ by Christian thinkers.[41] Karl Rahner sees two epochs in the development of Christian thought: first, the historical process of this development and secondly, the global dialogue of the Church with the entire unified mind of Christianity.[42] This means that the understanding of the Christian faith must be detached from the mental horizons of Judaism and Hellenism, to become, as it ought to be, a dialogue with the entire world. Rahner seems to think that the experience of planetiz-ation enables us to distinguish more clearly between the culturally limiting from the universally significant features of the Church.

Thomas Merton speaks of a transcultural psyche which matures as a result of planetization of man. This gives him a unified vision and experience of the one Truth, shining out in all its various mani-festations in different religious traditions. Merton does not see these views in opposition to each other, but unified in an insight of complementarity.[43] The "Fulfilment Theory" can be traced to the Roman-Byzantine court.[44] Thomas Merton is a really qualified medi-ator between the West and the East with his theory of religious complementarity. Merton had entered into mystic communion with the spirit of Eastern religions at the deepest level.

Pluralism

"The very nature of reality is pluralistic", says Panikkar.[45] To say that truth is one or even to say that God is one, is philosophically ambiguous. Either the statement refers to a non-numerical transcen-dent one, and then we have simply the principle of identity, or it is a categorical and hence a purely formal statement, or if filled with my

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41. TeSelle, *Christ in Context* (Philadelphia: 1975), p. 168.
42. K. Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi,* Vol. II, p. 104.
43. T. Merton *Contemplation in a world of Action* (New York: 1973), pp. 225-26.
44. H. Schmidt, *Politics and Christianity In Concilium* (1969), pp. 72 - 84.
45. R. Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism" in *Cross Currents,* Vol. XXIX, 1979. p. 216.

particular content, it is wrong outright; it is either a tautology or an empty statement with no particular content.

The pluralistic man renders false all the absolutisms, fanaticisms, and reductionisms to artificial unities. Says Panikkar : "Man is not monistic nor God monotheistic nor truth monolithic".[46] True dialogue presupposes religious pluralism as a God-established fact. It calls for *dialogical* dialogue and not *dialectical* dialogue to which we have been so long accustomed. It implies what Panikkar calls a *perichoresis*, a dwelling within one another". It is an art as well as a knowledge, involving *teche* and *praxis* as much as *gnisis* and *theoria*.

Jaina Epistemology as a Paradigm for Dialogue

According to the Jaina text, *Sad-darśana-samuchaya*, every object and truth has innumerable characters : *anantadharmakam vastu*.[47] According to Jain Philosophers, only the infinite being can have an all comprehensive view of reality. All imperfect beings have only partial views of reality. This partial view is called *naya*.[48] So, every judgement should be qualified by some word like "some-how" (*syāt*) expressing conditionality. This theory is known as *syāt-vāda* This theory makes Jaina philosophy catholic and tolerant. Jaina epistemology recognizes seven different kinds of judgements.

India was ever averse to accepting any one-sided statement. Polarity is one of the basic axioms of Indian thought. This is being characterised in the dialogical key called *Samvāda*. *Samvāda* holds that one part of a pair of opposites cannot be exclusively taken into account. Such statements should be balanced by the simultaneous acknowledgement of its counter-statement. Truth can only be gathered by *samvāda*, i. e., the gathering of conclusions from different aspects.

In the West, Nicholas of Cusa had hit upon the same concept in his celebrated distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus*. The former keeps opposites distinct under the law of contradiction, while the latter sees that the opposites are reconcilable.

46. *Ibid*

47. *Sad - darśana - samuchaya*, 55.

48. *Vide*: *Nyāyāvatāra.*

The Indian logical *samvāda* has immense theological possibilities. It does not look upon various religions as opposed to one another. The fulfilment theory is based on Aristotle's theory of excluded middle. According to this theory, there can be only one true religion, all others being false, but finding their fulfilment in Christianity. The soldiers of Charlemagne used to say : "Christians are right, pagans are wrong". But Aristotle's law of excluded middle has since been rejected by quantum physics. Aristotle's logic has been questioned by Max Planck's Quantum Theory. The nuclear physics of Werner Heisenberg and Weizsaecker had shown that the principal maxim of Aristotle's logic had become untenable. This maxim stated that there is only an "either-or". Today we know from quantum physics that matter is both corpuscular and wave-like, so that both are different aspects of the same reality. Heisenberg held that the universe is both void and fullness. Here we have a clue to the Hindu understanding of the metaphysical concept of zero and the Buddhist *śūnya*." Either-or" belongs to the sphere of the mind; the "this as well as that" belongs to the metaphysical region, within which polarity and not opposition is the valid rule. This is precisely the function of *samvāda*, "the gathering of conclusions from different aspects".[49]

Valuation in the West tends to be selective and not collective as in India. The West works by elimination and not by accumulation. The Western mind is confused and frightened by too many equally valid possibilities existing side by side. The Indian mind on the other hand, rejoices in the dynamic changes and divergent possibilities as a congenial expression of divine productivity. The Sanskrit verbal root is a fine paradigm of theological and religious pluralism. It is capable of infinite expansion by the addition of suffixes and prefixes.

The Hindu Concept of Truth

The Hindu concept of truth is for us a clue for the study of the relationship between different religions in dialogue. Truth for the Hindu philosopher is only the crossing-point of straight drawn radii; each of them contributes in its due place to the finding of the centre, but none of them is alone capable of establishing the centre. Each aspect serves as a facet, as a segmentary part through which the hidden whole reveals itself. God is the *coicidentia oppositorum* : the falling together of all opposites. The Hindu is not prepared to concede that

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49. Heimann Betty, *Facets of Indian Thought*, p. 56.

the finality of revelation has been achieved in Jesus Christ.   Besides, categories like "revelation", "inspiration", "redemption", "covenant", etc., are meaningless for the Hindu and the Buddhist.

We can build a multi-valued theology based on a multi-valued logic.   Modern German intuitionistic Mathematics also comes to the same conclusion. Bruer seeks a constructive interpretation of all existential propositions and he denies unrestricted validity of the law of excluded middle.[50] Following E. L. Post, Lukaisewicz and others, multi-valued logic can be constructed by generalizing the method of truth tables, adopted for a two-valued logic.   In classical Boolean logic, $a = 1$ means that "a" is always true and "a" $= 0$ means that 'a' is always false.   But in Brouwerian logic we have three truth values: "a" $= 1$ (true), "a" $\pm$ (a thing fails to be true) and "a" $= 0$ (a thing is false). Hans Reichenback has tried to show that quantum mechanics can be assimilated to a three valued logic which recognizes besides T and F also I (indeterminable).[51]

Sankara also has a three-valued system of reality[52] and the Advaitin Citsukha describes the indefinable value (*anirvacanīya*) as that which cannot be thought as existent, as non-existent, and as both.   Another Advaitin - Pratyagrupa - defines an indefinable entity as being endued with the absence of the counterentity of existence, of non - existence, and of both together.[53]   The Advaitic doctrine of *anirvacanīya* has given a subtle turn to the dialectic of mysticism.   Here *anirvacanīya* means "indefinable" and not ineffable as in other contexts.

So it must be clear that Aristotle's logic cannot be the parodigm for a logic of mysticism and for a theology of dialogue. The unity of all unities and of all pluralities is metalogical; it stands above the logic of human reason. Lossky's contrast of the Christian "super-personally personal" with the "super-personally impersonal" of Buddhism is unwarranted.[54] An apparent communication block between Christianity and Hinduism in their inter-religious dialogue is the tension between

50. E.J. Brouwer, *Mathematische Annalen*, (Berlin) pp. 244 - 57.

51. H. Richenpack, *Philosophic Foundations of Quantum Mechanics* (University of California Press, 1946), III, 28 - 32.

52. Cf. *Māṇdukya - kārika - Śankara - bhāshya* i.1.; i. 6

53. Citsukha, *Tattvapradīpika* and Pratyagrupa, *Nayanaprasādinī*, p. 79.

54. Cf. C.T.K. Chari, "On the Dialectical Affinities between the East and the West", in *Philosophy East and West*, pp. 212 - 13.

God's "personality" and Brahman's "impersonality". Here too, the law of excluded middle is useless to solve the tension, since it only leads to an antinomy. But let us remember that the "super-personal" here can only mean the "That" of the mystical dialectic - *Tat tvam asi* - which stands above the personal as well as the non-personal of our ordinary experience. Just because different religious traditions do not converge at the conceptual level - the level of rational philosophy and rational theology - we cannot say that they are incompatible at the level of experience. Every genuine religious experience must be true. We do not have a criterion to make a value judgement on the truth of another man's innermost religious experience which, by its very nature, is incommunicable. Ultimate truths are unintelligible but not inaccessible.[55] It means that the supra-logical is accessible to our spirit, though not intelligible to thought.

There is nothing sacred about the hitherto "infallible" first principles of Aristotle's logic, with special reference to the law of identity and the law of excluded middle. Even Witgenstein concedes that language should conform to the structure of Reality.

There is a contrast between the Western Christian and Hindu approach to religion: the former is logical while the latter is aesthetic. Logic is fulfilled in poetry not destroyed. The *rishis* used poetry to present their supra-rational intuitions.

In the earlier days of the Vienna circle, philosophers like Schlick and others held that primitive sentences - also called protocol sentences - that directly report experiences, are incommunicable.

Conversion and Morality

The second Vatican Council in its Decree on the Missions clearly teaches that, "the Church strongly forbids anyone to be forced to embrace the Faith or to be induced or enticed to do so by any unworthy means".[56] Everybody accepts that conversion is a matter between man and God. In this connection Gandhi says: "I believe that there is no such thing as conversion from one faith to another, in the accepted sense of the term. It is a highly personal matter for the

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55. Cf. L. Shestov, *Anton Tchekkov and other Essays* (Dublin: 1916), pp. 162 - 63.

56. Cf. *Vatican II, Decree on the Missions,* No. 13.

individual and his God''.[57] In another context Gandhi clearly states :
"Cases of real honest conversion are quite possible''.[58]

Recently the Supreme Court of India rejected the Christian plea
that Article 25 (1) contains the right to convert. The Court said
regarding article 25 that, "what the article grants is not the right to
convert another person to one's own religion, but to transmit or
spread one's religion by an exposition of its tenets''.[59] The Supreme
Court's ruling is that no one has a fundamental right to convert
another.

We are living in a pluralistic society in India. It is a land of
immensely rich spiritual heritage, and the Church has to enter into
dialogue with the various religious traditions of this country in a
spirit of humility. The *perichoresis*, of which Panikkar speaks, im-
plies that we should also enter into communion with other religious
traditions in order to share in their unspeakable religious experience
to enrich our own Christ experience. There is no inner contradiction
between my Christ experience and my Hindu brethren's God experi-
ence, whatever may be the *sādhanās* they use. Similarly, the Christ
experience will enrich Hinduism especially in its caritative dimension.
Our own enrichment will be in the field of interiority, so sadly lacking
in the Western form of Christianity we have inherited from Europe.
The most fruitful forms of our religious dialogue should be prayer,
work of liberation and social uplift.

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57. *Harijan, 28 - 9 - 1935.*
58. *Young India,* 19-1-1928
59. Cf. *The Hindu,* Jan. 18, 1977.